

"ICON OF THE DEFENDER PART II"

Written by

Stefano Pavone

Based on the novel "Icon of the Defender" by

Stefano Pavone

Copyright (c) Stefano Pavone - 2023

28th Draft - 25 March 2023

Email: Stefanopavone@live.co.uk

Telephone: +44(0)7591938371

FADE IN:

INT. MOUNTAIN HOUSE — DAY

SUPER: "LORENZAGO DI CADORE, VENETO, ITALY — 2020"

A tall man with a tan face, pale body and pink hands and feet complete with a round bald head and spectacles — Italian pilot VINCENZO CORBUCCI — is checking out his handgun before decocking and holstering it. His girlfriend, Japanese beauty SAKURA NOGUCHI, complete with jet-black hair and golden skin, enters as he holsters his Serbo-Tokarev semiautomatic pistol. She looks at him with mild amusement.

All dialogue written in *italic* is in a foreign language and subtitled.

SAKURA

(In Japanese)

Old habits die hard, don't they, Vincenzo?

Vincenzo turns to face Sakura with a slightly nervous smile.

VINCENZO

You know what my line of work is like, Sakura — you never know what kind of crazy wino you might get for a passenger.

Sakura laughs slightly.

SAKURA

Vincenzo, you chauffeur VIPs and celebrities for a living — you don't need a gun.

VINCENZO

I am allowed to use it if I have to — certain professions over here allow you to carry a weapon for self-defence.

She approaches him as her face turns to an expression of mild worry, her eyes meeting his.

SAKURA

I'll never forget what you did for us... for me.

VINCENZO

I couldn't just leave you there in that subzero slumber.

(MORE)

VINCENZO (cont'd)
*Besides, I figured you'd rather be
 woken up by a slightly eccentric
 Italian than that psychopathic Iron
 Bitch.*

Vincenzo's joke misfires as he is met by a cold stare from his girlfriend.

SAKURA
 (Sadly)
Don't joke about that... please.

VINCENZO
 (Humbled)
*You're right, I apologise. Will you
 be OK on your own?*

SAKURA
*I'll be fine – they'll probably tell
 me I should go back to Japan and find
 a man of my own there, but I don't
 want that... I've got you. I've got a
 rehearsal tonight and we're shooting
 tomorrow, so I'll see you quite late...
 if you come back.*

VINCENZO
 (In Japanese)
I'll try.
 (In Italian)
Good luck, Sakura.

Sakura smiles at Vincenzo as she puts her hands on his shoulders. She kisses his cheek and says goodbye to him in Japanese before letting him go – he replies in kind. Sakura sighs dreamily and runs her hand through her raven-coloured hair, smiling at her departing lover.

INT. SHOOTING GALLERY – EVENING

SUPER: "SOMEWHERE IN THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST"

A dozen or so of FSB trainees with ear protection are lined up, ready to await their orders as a muscular man, nearly 2 metres tall, with short black hair and dark skin observes the action from above – this is Afro-Russian ex-Spetsnaz officer NIKOLAI ROSTAVILI, identifiable by his bulky build and towering height complete with woolly hat.

NIKOLAI
 (In Russian)
 Pistols ready! Aim! FIRE!!
 (MORE)

NIKOLAI (cont'd)
 (In Russian again,
 after the recruits
 fire for several
 seconds)

Cease FIRE!!

The cadets obey as Nikolai leaves the safety of his viewing box and heads into the shooting gallery itself. He walks down the row of hopeful FSB officers, who try not to make eye contact with him and some even look and feel nervous in the Afro-Russian's presence, largely due to his near-2-metre-stature. He reaches the tail end of the line and inspects a random recruit's shots. He turns to face the cadet.

CADET
 (In Russian)
Tupolev Dimitri Ivanovich, sir.

NIKOLAI
Well, Mr Tupolev... it seems you have a natural talent for precision. Maybe there's a future for you yet.

CADET
Sir?

NIKOLAI
I can understand your particularities – you remind me of someone I used to work with: skilled in many areas that seemed apparently superfluous and yet showed a hidden depth when it came to push coming to shove. I hope you too can prove your potential one day.

CADET
Thank you, sir.

Nikolai nods once approvingly with a faint smile.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY – NIGHT

SUPER: "NAMBA ORIENTAL HOTEL – OSAKA, JAPAN"

A man with dark hair and a beard and moustache enters, wearing a black turtleneck sweater with blue jeans and clutching a printed and bound manuscript – this is ex-Gendarme DAISUKE KASAI. His eyes fall on a man with light brown hair and a thin build with spectacles – his manager. He approaches the man and they sit.

DAISUKE
 (In French)
Kept you waiting, didn't I?

MANAGER
 (In Japanese)
You never keep me waiting, Daisuke.
 (Noticing the
 manuscript)
May I...?

DAISUKE
Yes, of course.

He hands his manager the manuscript, who looks at it eagerly. The manager looks at the manuscript, which is written in French on the left-hand page and in Japanese on the right-hand one.

MANAGER
*So... what's the title and premise of
 this latest neo-pulp work of yours?*

DAISUKE
*"Bastard With a Helicopter" – it's
 about the adventures of a pilot who
 spends half his life rescuing damsels
 in distress.*

The manager looks at Daisuke curiously.

MANAGER
What about the other half?

DAISUKE
 (In French)
*Trying to play a hero when he really
 should know his place.*
 (In Japanese)
*I figured I'd go for a more humorous
 approach this time.*

The manager laughs at Daisuke's writing.

MANAGER
*OK, Daisuke... I think this could work.
 Who exactly is this pilot character
 based on?*

DAISUKE
*An old colleague of mine with an
 affinity for dangerous women.*

MANAGER

Is he aware of this?

DAISUKE

Oh, I think he'll find out soon enough. Besides, I don't think he's in any position to wrangle any Yen out of me.

He laughs – after a while, his manager joins in and raises his glass.

MANAGER

Happy birthday, Daisuke – the Big 4-0.

DAISUKE

Thanks... I'm officially middle-aged now.

They clink their glasses and proceed to drink a VERY expensive brand of champagne – possibly Moët et Chandon.

OPENING TITLE SEQUENCE

SUPER: "STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN"

INT. GYMNASIUM – AFTERNOON

A young woman with blonde hair enters the gym wearing a green training outfit and sets down her things calmly – ex-assassin LOVISA DRAKENBERG. She begins practicing her martial arts moves on thin air, culminating with an impressive backflip. She lands perfectly, pleased as punch.

LOVISA

All right, looks like I've still got it.

SOFIA (O.S.)

Still got what?

She turns around to see a young woman with dark hair in a black training outfit – SOFIA SOLANDER. Lovisa suddenly looks and feels slightly embarrassed in front of her friend.

LOVISA

(In Swedish)

Oh... nothing. Just a silly little thing you wouldn't be interested in.

Sofia laughs slightly, amused (and slightly aroused) by the sight of her friend.

SOFIA

Come on, Lovisa, don't be shy – it's me, Sofia Solander, your friend. I was under the impression you didn't study today?

LOVISA

I don't... but I had to get out of the house, and this is the only place that gives me comfort.

Sofia looks at Lovisa sympathetically as she approaches her friend.

SOFIA

Talk to me, Lovisa. What's wrong? You've been acting strangely for the past few months – you're not usually like this. You love the water, you love the gym.

LOVISA

I do, but... I just... can't help feeling this way.

SOFIA

What happened?

Lovisa looks at her for a moment as she thinks about whether or not to tell her the truth – in the end, she decides to do so.

LOVISA

I want you to keep this to yourself, Sofia. Can I trust you?

(He nods)

OK. More than 30 years ago, before you were even born, I was... captured... and brainwashed to be a killing machine when I was 16. I was turned into a deadly assassin and put through rigorous tests... they programmed me to kill my older brother.

The young student looks shocked at her friend confession – she looks at her in a combination of awe and disbelief.

SOFIA

Who did this to you?

LOVISA
(With restrained
anger)

*Someone who I hope is now burning in
the 10th Circle of Fucking Hell,
along with the bastard who ruined my
life and my family.*

SOFIA
I'm sorry... I shouldn't have asked.

LOVISA
(Calming down)
*It's OK, Sofia... I've only got two
friends... you're one.*

SOFIA
Who's the other?

LOVISA
My ex-partner.

Lovisa's flashbacks intensify as her memory gradually returns – she winces visibly from the pain.

SOFIA
*But... you don't look... you know... old.
You look like you're the same age as
me.*

LOVISA
*I was captured while trying to escape
and placed in cryogenic stasis until
they were ready to wake me up and use
me again. I broke free with some help
and... here I am. I've tried to put it
behind me but I can't.*

(Locking eyes with
him)
*Sofia, I don't want you telling
anyone about this. Do you understand?*

Sofia nods and replies in the affirmative in Swedish.

SOFIA
You have my word, Lovisa.

She embraces her – Sofia hesitates slightly before gradually returning the gesture as they begin practicing Jeet Kune Do together.

INT. SWIMMING POOL – EVENING – LATER

Lovisa enters, alone and wearing her blue swimsuit, her blonde hair down and out as she smiles, the Sun setting. She looks at the clear blue water for a moment and dives in, swimming confidently... and failing to notice a diver underwater, watching her. Lovisa stops for a moment.

LOVISA

Hello?

Silence is spoken. Lovisa continues swimming for a while – the diver strikes like a coiled viper as he grabs her foot! The Swedish-French-Canadian beauty struggles as she screams wordlessly before being pulled underwater!

Using the water to turn around, she struggles to fend off her assailant who chokes her. With a punch and a kick to the stomach, she is able to release herself from his grip, swimming back up to the surface. Lovisa screams in Swedish.

The diver pulls her back underwater and continues strangling her until a shot rings out, blood oozing from his head. Lovisa catches sight of a familiar logo, staring at it in fear before swimming up to the surface and to the pool's edge. She looks around her... and then climbs out, scared.

INT. SAKURA'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

A lone Sakura is present, the Asian beauty reading a bound script, written in Japanese on one side and in English on the other. She is interrupted by the sound of a phone ringing – she curses in Japanese as she approaches the sound source... it's her computer – a Skype call from Lovisa! She quickly sits down and brushes her hair aside, accepting the call.

SWITCH BETWEEN SAKURA AND LOVISA.

Lovisa appears, looking nervous – Sakura quickly picks up on this.

SAKURA

Lovisa, are you OK? What's wrong?
Talk to me.

LOVISA

They found out where I work... one of
their divers tried to drown me... he
had their logo on his outfit.

Sakura panics, her suspicions confirmed.

SAKURA

So that means...

Lovisa grits her teeth as she feels her anger rise along with her confidence.

LOVISA

...the bitch is back. They won't sleep until we're dead, Sakura. There are only three people who can help us.

She closes the connection, terminating the conversation quite abruptly.

INT. MOUNTAIN HOUSE – THE NEXT DAY

Vincenzo and Sakura sit before the former's PC awkwardly, awaiting a Zoom call. Eventually, it connects as two familiar faces appear on the screen – one is that of Nikolai, while the other belongs to Daisuke. Vincenzo smiles.

VINCENZO

It's been a while, gentlemen.

NIKOLAI

You can say that again.

DAISUKE

Sacre bleu, Vincenzo, is that you?

VINCENZO

You bet your Walloon rectum it is. Look, you know what's up – I'm assuming Nikolai told you?

DAISUKE

Yes, he did. It wouldn't surprise me if the Queen Jackal is back. I don't believe in happy endings.

NIKOLAI

She died, though. You finished her off, didn't you, Vincenzo? Kana's dead.

DAISUKE

No, only her ex-boss – Shang Si – is a confirmed kill.

(MORE)

DAISUKE (cont'd)

Don't be so sure, Nikolai — if she betrayed and killed her own boss and twisted a good man's philosophy for her own personal benefit for nearly a third of a century, then who knows what else she's capable of. The greatest trick the Devil ever performed was convincing the world that he... or in this case, she... didn't exist.

NIKOLAI

I don't know, Vincenzo. It just sounds like too much of a coincidence.

Vincenzo sighs and thinks for a moment.

VINCENZO

(To Nikolai)

I was under the impression you didn't believe in coincidences, Nikolai... after all, isn't that what you were taught back in the Motherland? Everything is connected somehow.

(To Daisuke)

And you, Daisuke... what happened to you? You used to be someone who took decisive action, who knew what he was doing — your little sabbatical as a civilian has rusted your gears, *mon ami*, and don't think I don't know about your literary exploits.

Sakura intercedes before the argument can degenerate into an altercation.

SAKURA

Look, it's clear that we need to meet and discuss this in the flesh. We won't be able to do anything in front of a computer screen.

DAISUKE

What are you saying, Noguchi-chan? We reform the Rhodium Golems and pick up where we left off?

SAKURA

Yes — that is exactly what I am suggesting, *Monsieur Kasai*.

NIKOLAI

I think she's got a point, Daisuke.
It might be worth looking into.

There is a silence for several seconds before Daisuke finally decides to speak up.

DAISUKE

OK. Nikolai and I will meet you two along with Lovisa at the airport in Prague. Be on the first plane tomorrow evening.

VINCENZO

(Smugly)

I don't need to, remember?

DAISUKE

(Slightly irritated)

Of course not... look, just be there, OK?

He terminates the connection, concluding the conversation. Vincenzo smirks at Sakura, who looks back with a nervous nod.

EXT. CITY SKYLINE — THE NEXT DAY

SUPER: "PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC"

The setting Sun shines in the Sky, turning the Horizon a reddish-pinkish-orange as Vincenzo's twin-engine helicopter flies through the air.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER — EVENING

Vincenzo and Sakura are present, the interracial couple exchanging brief glances as the Italian pilot grips the HOTAS controls tightly, trying to hide his combined anxiety and excitement as the whirlybird lands safely. He looks at Sakura.

VINCENZO

(In Japanese)

You OK?

SAKURA

I'm fine, thanks. You might want to think about putting your gun away, though.

He draws his trusted Yugo-Tokarev pistol and looks at it for a moment before releasing the magazine and racking the slide to empty the chamber, decocking it as he puts it in the glove compartment.

VINCENZO

It feels weird, not having a gun on my side.

Sakura laughs slightly at her boyfriend's slight discomfort.

SAKURA

In Japan, you wouldn't even be allowed one – you'd be arrested and given a life sentence. Come on.

They step out of the whirlybird and are greeted by the fading lights in the Sky, the Sun's descent almost complete as the Horizon grows darker with every passing second.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL – EVENING – LATER

Vincenzo and Sakura make it past the entrance gate and head for the main terminal for their rendezvous with Nikolai and Daisuke, the Italian pilot suspicious as ever while his Japanese girlfriend is relaxed, almost confident. To their surprise, they find the main terminal empty and lifeless as Vincenzo raises a solitary eyebrow in a Spock-like fashion.

VINCENZO

Something's wrong.

SAKURA

How do you mean?

VINCENZO

It's too bloody quiet.

SAKURA

Vincenzo, come on – surely you're just being paranoid.

Vincenzo turns to face Sakura calmly, trying to control his panic.

VINCENZO

I'm telling you, Sakura, something isn't right.

The sound of Sakura swearing in Japanese catches his attention as he turns around to face his girlfriend engaging in a brief martial arts fight with a guard. Vincenzo tries to run to her aid but he is struck from behind.

He yells loudly in Italian as the guard points his pistol at Sakura, ordering her to stop in a distorted vocoder-like language. She looks at her hostage boyfriend and gradually eases off her temperament, stepping away from the injured guard as Vincenzo gets to his feet.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM – EVENING

This room is white, almost Spartan, in appearance. A door opens as Vincenzo and Sakura are escorted by the guards, who close the door behind them. Vincenzo glares at them – he is really pissed off.

VINCENZO
What the FUCK is this!?

SAKURA
Vincenzo, calm down.

He steps forward.

VINCENZO
(In Italian)
You tell us now!

SAKURA
(In Japanese, raising
her voice slightly)
Vincenzo, please!

After a moment's silence, the guards remove their disguises to reveal a familiar short-haired Afro-Russian and a Japanese man with a full head of hair – Nikolai and Daisuke. Vincenzo's face alternates between relief and disbelief, as if he is unsure how to react.

NIKOLAI
Hello, Vincenzo. It's been a long
time.

VINCENZO
Nikolai... what the fuck...?

DAISUKE
Still naive as ever, I see.

Vincenzo looks nonplussed for a moment.

VINCENZO

(Irritated)

Why the hell didn't you just meet us at the helipad instead of pulling a stunt like this!? You almost gave me a bloody heart attack!

DAISUKE

Secrecy is essential to success, Vincenzo – you should know that as well as we do.

Nikolai smiles at Sakura.

NIKOLAI

It's good to see you again, Sakura.

SAKURA

And you also, Nikolai. Where's Lovisa?

NIKOLAI

She's on her way – she'll meet us at the helipad.

VINCENZO

And you let her go alone and unprotected? Nikolai, you know what those bastards did to her!

DAISUKE

Relax, Vincenzo – I'm monitoring her vital signs.

He shows him a wrist computer displaying Lovisa's biometric characteristics – pulse, heart rate, etc. Vincenzo looks at Sakura, then Nikolai, then Daisuke.

VINCENZO

OK, let's go. Next time, tell me beforehand if you're going to pull a stunt like that.

They leave the interrogation room – Daisuke leads the way, followed by Nikolai, then Vincenzo, with Sakura leaving last as the door closes behind her.

EXT. HELIPAD – EVENING

The quartet exit the empty airport and head towards Vincenzo's pink and white helicopter, beside which is standing a familiar woman with blonde hair – Lovisa.

She looks at Sakura and recognises her, smiling as the two women approach and embrace each other tightly.

LOVISA
I've missed you, Sakura.

SAKURA
I've missed you too, Lovisa.

LOVISA
I'm sorry... I should have told you earlier.

SAKURA
It's OK – we're going to contact Erik and Helia... I know you don't want to get him involved, but he is your brother.

Lovisa's face falls slightly at the mention of her brother's name.

LOVISA
It's his fault I lost all those years.

SAKURA
Lovisa, look at me.
(Lovisa does so)
None of us could have foreseen that happening. I lost my family as well... but that wasn't defeat. I know they love me, wherever they are. Please, try to forgive yours.

Lovisa looks reticent for a moment but eventually nods in acquiescence, replying in the affirmative in Swedish as she looks at her best friend.

LOVISA
I love you, Sakura.

SAKURA
I love you too, Lovisa.

Sakura smiles and hugs Lovisa. Eventually, Nikolai coughs humorously.

NIKOLAI
I'm sorry to interrupt this little high school reunion of yours, but we need to get going.

They glare at Nikolai, the Afro-Siberian still retaining his infamous brutal honesty. After a while, everyone gets in the whirlybird except for Lovisa. Vincenzo stops and notices this.

VINCENZO

Are you OK?

Lovisa looks at him for a moment before nodding, trying to put on a brave face.

LOVISA

Yes, I'm fine, thank you.

She gets aboard – Vincenzo is the last one to get in as he closes the door.

EXT. GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – NIGHT – LATER

SUPER: "GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION, GEORGIAN-RUSSIAN BORDER"

Vincenzo's pink and white helicopter with red tail and blue landing skids soars through the Sky and towards the pitch-black Horizon, the Moon shining brightly as the Stars decorate the lifeless landscape.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Vincenzo is piloting the helicopter with ease as Sakura sits beside him, with Nikolai and Daisuke sitting opposite each other while Lovisa sits beside the Afro-Russian, the Swedish-Canadian woman feeling slightly intimidated by the Siberian's towering height. Vincenzo spots an improvised helipad as he begins to steer towards it, his hands gripping the HOTAS controls tightly as he lands the whirlybird.

VINCENZO

We've arrived – looks like this is the place according to the navigation computer.

NIKOLAI

You rely too much on that machine, Vincenzo.

VINCENZO

I suck at reading maps, Nikolai – you know that.

DAISUKE

I don't know what's worse – your lack of cartography skills or your proclivity for rescuing damsels in distress?

Vincenzo turns to face Daisuke with a cold stare.

VINCENZO

I'm going to pretend I didn't hear that last part and I don't want to hear it again.

DAISUKE

Shit, Vincenzo, I was only joking!

VINCENZO

You need to practice more, Daisuke. Besides, you and Nikolai wouldn't be here without me if you think about it – now, come on.

He kills the twin engines, the dual rotor blades whirring down into silence as he disembarks, with Sakura following him. Nikolai and Daisuke look at each other as Lovisa dismounts from the helicopter.

INT. ATRIUM OF THE GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – NIGHT

The quintet enter the mansion, where a familiar face – Helvetic valet RAINER ACKERMANN – is ready to greet them.

RAINER

Welcome to the family mansion, my friends. Come, we've been expecting you.

Vincenzo looks stunned at Rainer's forthcoming behaviour – he exchanges a silent look with Sakura before following the Swiss ex-commando. The mansion itself is an amalgamation of esoteric and minimalist, blending together the past, present and future.

INT. HELIA'S STUDY – NIGHT

HELIA SALIBI-DRAKENBERG, CEO of the 5 Elements, and her ex-rock star-turned-lawyer husband ERIK DRAKENBERG are present. He smokes a cigarette much to his wife's dismay, trying to control his nerves. BANG! BANG! BANG! Three short, sharp knocks are heard, prompting him to put it out.

HELIA

Come.

The door opens to reveal the Rhodium Golems and their female counterparts. Erik gets to his feet as he sees Lovisa amongst them, running up to hug her as he calls her name. The Drakenberg siblings embrace each other.

ERIK

I've missed you, Lovisa.

LOVISA

I wish I could say the same thing, Erik.

ERIK

Have you got Alejandro's light bee? I think we can finally restore his hard-light drive.

She reaches into her pocket and produces a silver rhombus-shaped device with a green light blinking on it.

LOVISA

Yes, I have.

ERIK

Come on – let's talk and leave our mercenary... or should I say, former mercenary friends to business.

She smiles at him and nods, replying in the affirmative in Swedish as they leave. Sakura looks at Vincenzo, who understands and nods, wagging his head at the departing siblings. She smiles and kisses him on the cheek before thanking him in Japanese, scurrying after Erik and Lovisa. Now the Rhodium Golems are alone with their unofficial allies.

HELIA

What's this I hear about Project Athena continuing unauthorised, Vincenzo?

VINCENZO

It's something that bothers me, Helia: a journalist tried to interview Sakura outside our own home and he brought it up. From what I understand, Lovisa nearly ended up sleeping with the fishes before a mysterious sniper saved her life.

HELIA
Sleeping with the fishes?

VINCENZO
She's given up the fighting – she teaches swimming and martial arts now.

Helia smiles slightly as Nikolai steps forwards.

NIKOLAI
(Impatiently)
Can you help us or not?

HELIA
Yes, I can, but you know the rules, Nikolai: I can't help you officially. If anything happens to you, then we'll have to disavow you.

DAISUKE
(Dismissively)
Look, don't waste our time with that bullshit.

RAINER
This isn't a joke, *Monsieur Kasai*. We've spent the best part of a quarter of a century trying to legitimise the 5 Elements. If our associates were to find out we had sunk back to our clandestine nature, then there would be serious repercussions for everyone, including you and your allies.

Nikolai and Daisuke look at each other warily, Rainer's warning having planted a seed of doubt into their usually dedicated and committed minds. Only Vincenzo remains confident. At that moment, the red telephone rings insistently. RING! RING! Helia sighs and curses sotto voce in Arabic as she picks it up.

HELIA
Hello?

INT. SIMPLE HOUSE – EVENING

SUPER: "UNKNOWN LOCATION"

A man with dark grey hair and a woman with black hair are present, the man currently occupied on the telephone – this is ROSH GOLDMAN, along with his devoted wife, NADIA GOLDMAN-SALIBI.

SWITCH BETWEEN ROSH/NADIA AND HELIA.

ROSH
Helia? It's me.

Helia smiles happily.

HELIA
Father? Hi! Are you OK?

ROSH
I'm fine, thanks. I did what you asked and got the information regarding Project Athena. Is the monitor off?

Helia nods at Rainer, who surreptitiously activates a speakerphone so Vincenzo, Nikolai and Daisuke can hear the conversation. He motions at the trio to remain silent.

HELIA
Yes, it's off. Don't worry. Why did you allow something this inhumane to interfere with your vision?

Rosh sighs deeply.

ROSH
OK. I'll tell you what happened.

He thinks back to his youth, which changed his life forever.

EXT. CITY STREET – DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: "CAIRO, EGYPT – 1964"

The Sun shines amidst the vivid city of Jerusalem as a 16-year-old youth walks home, wearing a T-shirt and jeans – a much younger Rosh.

INT/EXT. ROSH'S HOUSE – DAY – CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

As he approaches the door to his house, he can hear a familiar voice pleading in Hebrew, his native language. His face curls into a look of confusion and disbelief.

Hiding behind a dumpster, he can see a trio of extremists... holding his parents hostage! The leader, identifiable by his white headscarf as opposed to his subordinates' black ones, holds a menacing-looking Kalashnikov assault rifle, with an Uzi submachine gun on his back.

The man yells in Arabic at a man, who Rosh can now recognise as his father, ADAM GOLDMAN. The young Jew feels his teeth grit as he narrows his eyes, glaring at the piece of shit before him.

ADAM

(In Arabic)

*Please! Just take what you want! I
have done nothing to offend you!*

He looks briefly at his wife, SARAH GOLDMAN – Rosh's mother. Adam's face is marked with a black eye and a broken nose, his nostrils bleeding profusely.

LEAD EXTREMIST

(In Arabic)

*Nothing to offend me? Nothing...
NOTHING TO OFFEND ME!? You took our
land – land which was rightfully
ours! You also took one of our women,
and you used her to spawn a half-
caste INFIDEL!!*

He points his weapon at Adam, who weeps helplessly as he urinates himself out of sheer terror. Sarah is being held at gunpoint by one of the extremists, his accomplice holding a knife to her throat while pulling her hair back, exposing her neck. The leader goes to answer the knocks on the front door.

Rosh bursts in and takes out the lead extremist with a single punch, taking his gun – Sarah takes advantage of her son's distraction and hits one of them over the head, knocking them out, while Adam throws the last one out of the house.

Seeing them about to shoot his parents, Rosh quickly guns down the extremists, killing them. When the smoke clears and dust settles, Rosh looks at his parents, then at the gun in his hands... as he realises what he has done.

ROSH
 (In Hebrew)
 I'm sorry... forgive me.

Rosh breaks into a run, still holding the assault rifle used to kill the piece of shit responsible for turning his life upside down.

EXT. OUTPOST – DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: "SINAI PENINSULA, EGYPT – 1970"

The Sun is shining – Rosh, now a Sergeant in the Egyptian Army and wearing a military uniform, approaches his unit and produces a gold whistle from his pocket, blowing into it to get their attention.

ROSH
 (In Hebrew)
Gentlemen, we have new orders: As some of you may know, the Israeli forces have invaded and occupied the Sinai Peninsula. Our objective is to retake it in order to secure Palestinian victory.
 (Some men groan in disgust and he allows them to express themselves)
I know how you feel and I understand. We're fighting for a good cause.
 (Getting to his feet)
We leave in 20 minutes.

He slings his Uzi submachine gun over his back as he walks away, leaving the remainder of his unit to bicker and argue amongst themselves before eventually going to arm up for the conflict.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD – EVENING (FLASHBACK)

The Israeli forces arrive at the occupied peninsula, located deep within Arabian territory. Swapping his SMG for a Kalashnikov assault rifle, the first thing the young Sergeant is subjected to is a hail of bullets from Egyptian defenders.

ROSH
 (Yelling)
 Get down! Israeli walkers with large-calibre arms! Watch out for snipers and grenadiers!
 (MORE)

ROSH (cont'd)
 (Into his radio)
 Sergeant Rosh Goldman here – we're
 encountering heavy fire, mainly
 artillery and snipers! We need
 assistance, over!

The reply from his commanding officer is curt, barely polite.

COMMANDING OFFICER (V.O.)
 Negative, Sergeant. Unable to secure
 assistance at this time.

ROSH
 (More calmly)
 Say it again, Command. I repeat: Say
 it again.

COMMANDING OFFICER (V.O.)
 We cannot help you, Sergeant Goldman.
 We're in enemy territory – this could
 jeopardise our relationship with the
 US. The Israeli Government has put
 out a pre-emptive strike on the
 peninsula. I'm sorry but you're on
 your own, Sergeant. Out.

There is a burst of radio static, and Rosh just sighs in disbelief – he is close to going over the edge.

ROSH
 Perfect!

He looks up just in time to see an Egyptian soldier execute one of his men. Rosh, demonised, grabs a light machine gun and starts decimating the opposition, enraged and feeling betrayed by his country's Government as he heads for the capture point.

EXT. CLEARING – EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Rosh is shot in the back of the leg as he reaches the capture point. He falls to the floor and draws his trusted Beretta Model 1951 9mm pistol, screaming in Hebrew – a helicopter lands before him as special forces come to his rescue.

INT. COMMANDER'S OFFICE – NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Back at base, Rosh bursts into the Commander's office. Locking eyes with his superior, he is livid, feeling enraged, hurt, betrayed, as if his soul has been executed.

Silently and with restrained anger, Rosh unloads his sidearm and throws it onto the Commander's table. He hobbles out of the tent, ripping his badges and insignia off his uniform and throwing them to the floor.

BACK TO:

INT. HELIA'S STUDY – EVENING

SUPER: "GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – 2020"

Back in the present day, Helia is so shocked that it takes a while for the info to process. She slowly hangs up the receiver and looks stunned, having learned a piece of her father's sordid history. Rainer tries calling her name a few times, eventually bringing her back to reality.

RAINER

Miss Helia, are you OK?

HELIA

I'm... fine. Thank you, Rainer.

Her vocal intonation and body language betrays her.

RAINER

You sure? You don't look it.

HELIA

I'm just stunned, that's all.

Vincenzo, Nikolai and Daisuke look at each other, openly conferring amongst themselves.

VINCENZO

Any ideas?

NIKOLAI

It might be worth checking into Project Athena's history – which scientists other than the Iron Bitch were assigned and where are they now?

DAISUKE

Wouldn't surprise me if they've been given the Antarctica treatment – that's usually the case with criminal enterprises trying to go legitimate.

HELIA

You're right. I think I've got the records up here.

Staggering back to her computer, Helia regains her composure as she looks through the 5 Elements' history, Rainer watching her nervously.

RAINER

Are you sure you're OK, Miss Helia?

HELIA

I will be when I've got to the bottom of this, Rainer.

(The screen flashes green)

I've got it. Doctor Gonta Takahashi, remember him? You saved his life back in Germany.

NIKOLAI

Yes, I remember. He was a short dumpy bastard with a stupid haircut – is he OK?

HELIA

He's fine. Since his recovery, he's returned to Japan to continue his research alone.

DAISUKE

Any idea where?

HELIA

Hold on.

(Taps a few more keys)

Here it is: Kochi City, Shikoku Island.

DAISUKE

Then that's where we're going. Vincenzo?

VINCENZO

I'm on it, J.

Vincenzo leaves to set up the whirlybird – his voice is heard calling Sakura's name. Nikolai and Daisuke look at each other.

NIKOLAI

We're back in business, Daisuke.

DAISUKE

You can say that again, Nikolai – I just hope Vincenzo's got more sense this time.

(MORE)

DAISUKE (cont'd)
He didn't just play with his own life
back in Hong Kong, he was playing
with ours as well.

Nikolai tightens up his face in mild irritation as he knows Daisuke is right but feels obliged to defend Vincenzo's actions.

INT. GYM - EVENING

Lovisa and Sakura enter the mansion's gymnasium, both wearing exercise gear as they head for a boxing ring.

The Swedish beauty has hair down and spread out and is clad in her green gym outfit, while her Japanese counterpart is wearing black and yellow with matching compression shorts and wristbands. They enter the ring and smile at each other, solidifying their friendship.

LOVISA
Go easy on me, will you?

SAKURA
Trust me, you'll love this.

They spar, practicing their fighting abilities on each other - Lovisa's JKD skills are easily matched by Sakura's Judo prowess.

Sakura counters most of Lovisa's offensive blows with well-placed defence strategies and throws - the Swedish beauty soon regains the upper hand and is able to tackle her Japanese counterpart to the floor.

LOVISA
Nothing can beat Jeet Kune Do.

SAKURA
I'd like to try it sometime.

LOVISA
I think you just did.

They eventually stop sparring and lie down beside each other. After a while, they exchange smiles and hug each other tightly, reaffirming their friendship.

SAKURA
I love you, Lovisa... after all we've
been through, the fire, the ice and
the steel, you'll always be my best
friend.

LOVISA

I love you, too, Sakura. Vincenzo's a lucky guy.

Erik enters, looking at his sister hugging her best friend. He gives them a moment before approaching them.

ERIK

Lovisa, we need to talk. Can you come with me for a minute, please?

Lovisa looks at Sakura, then Erik, nodding as she replies in the affirmative in Swedish before breaking away from her best friend. She leaves with her brother, the Japanese beauty looking at them depart for a moment before deciding to follow suit.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

Erik and Lovisa are present, having a heart-to-heart conversation, the elder Drakenberg sibling wearing an expensive suit and necktie while his younger sister is clad in her green gym wear. The atmosphere is wistful and slightly tense.

ERIK

I know I haven't been the best brother in the world, Lovisa, and, given the choice, I probably wouldn't have chosen Alejandro as a friend.

LOVISA

(Coldly)

You don't need to worry about him anymore, Erik.

(Handing him the light bee)

If you can restore his hard-light drive, then maybe he'll stop being so clingy towards me.

ERIK

Lovisa, he's trying to protect you, as am I.

LOVISA

(Snapping)

I don't need your bloody protection, I need to be trusted! I need to be treated like a woman! It's been the same old story my whole fucking life.

(MORE)

LOVISA (cont'd)
 Lovisa the Princess, Lovisa the
 Heiress, Lovisa the One Who Must Be
 Shielded.

(Calming down
 slightly)
 You know, ever since I started going
 back to college, I actually made a
 friend... her name's Sofia... and I like
 her.

Erik looks at Lovisa, trying to find the correct facial
 expression – for once, he is at a loss for words.

ERIK
 What does she look like?

LOVISA
 Medium height, gorgeously beautiful,
 tan skin, dark hair – all traits most
 un-Swedish. I've actually felt my
 self-confidence grow, no thanks to
 you.

ERIK
 Then I hope you find some semblance
 of happiness with him, dear sister. I
 don't blame you for hating me... but I
 really was trying to help you,
 protect you... I guess it worked too
 well. Let me ask you this: would you
 have preferred to come on the road
 with me, or would you have liked to
 remain behind with our workaholic
 mother and father?

Lovisa calms down and looks pained at the memory as she
 realises Erik has a point.

LOVISA
 (Sadly)
 You're right, Erik, I'm sorry... I know
 I'll probably never recover from what
 they did to me... they've been in my
 head and changed it... changed ME.

She hugs him tightly – he softens up and holds her gently.

ERIK
 I'm trying, Lovisa... I'm doing my
 best.

(MORE)

ERIK (cont'd)

It's our parents I worry about – our mother in particular is asking me questions every day about you, wanting to know when she'll see you again... and our father's in therapy.

(Looking at the light
bee)

Let's hope I'm about to make the right choice for once in my life.

He examines the light bee critically and opens it up, taking out what appears to be a black, burned-out ball-bearing. He replaces it with a new, silver one and closes up the light bee, activating it.

The light bee flies into the air and hovers before them as a white humanoid outline appears before solidifying into a full-colour simulation of ALEJANDRO ROJAS, complete with a golden Ace of Spaces on his forehead. He looks at the hugging siblings, who eye him up in a combination of awe and disbelief.

ALEJANDRO

Well, now... you certainly took your time fixing me.

ERIK

There didn't seem to be any hurry. Anyway, I didn't think any of us wanted to see you for a good, long time, considering how you altered the course of our family from the 1980s onwards.

ALEJANDRO

I know, that's why I'll do what I can to help.

Lovisa looks at Alejandro icily.

LOVISA

If you want to help, then you're going to join the Rhodium Golems and do exactly as they tell you. Don't try to get back with me, Alejandro... what we had back in the day stays back in the day.

Alejandro replies in the affirmative in Spanish, knowing he is in no position to negotiate.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – NIGHT

The Rhodium Golems are present with Sakura, the Japanese beauty sitting beside Vincenzo while Nikolai and Daisuke pick up their signature weapons, the Afro-Russian caressing his beloved Kalashnikov (AK-74M) assault rifle dearly, fondling the attached grenade launcher.

NIKOLAI

(In Russian)

Yes... come to daddy. I've missed you so much.

He hugs the AK while Daisuke handles his FN P90 submachine gun/personal defence weapon.

DAISUKE

I don't trust Alejandro, even if he is dead. I'd have left him switched off permanently if I were Erik.

NIKOLAI

No shit. He got us into that fucking mess, we got out of it. He's working for us now.

Just then, Lovisa and Alejandro arrive as they board the helicopter, the former wearing civilian gear.

VINCENZO

Where's Erik?

LOVISA

He's not coming, Vincenzo.

VINCENZO

OK. Alejandro, close the door, please.

Alejandro does as he is told as he buckles up beside Daisuke, Lovisa sitting next to the towering Afro-Russian that is Nikolai. Vincenzo flips a few switches as the twin engines sparkle to life, the dual rotor blades, head and tail, spinning up with increasing intensity.

NIKOLAI

You got the coordinates, Vincenzo?

VINCENZO

Yes, I have, Nikolai – don't worry: 36 degrees North, 134 degrees East.

(In Spanish)

Let's go!

He engages the HOTAS controls and drives the dual throttles to maximum power as the helicopter takes off.

EXT. GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

The familiar pink and white Kazan Ansat helicopter, decorated with flashing green, white and red night lights, ascends into the inky black Sky and soars towards the Horizon, the Moon shining brightly amidst the Stars as the whirlybird disappears into the distance.

EXT. CITY SKYLINE – NIGHT

SUPER: "KOCHI CITY, JAPAN"

The helicopter soars through the dark Skyline, neon lights illuminating the city streets below.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Everyone is sleeping except for Vincenzo and Sakura, the Italian pilot slapping himself awake occasionally while his Japanese girlfriend remains fully alert. Vincenzo can see a helipad of sorts and begins to steer towards it.

VINCENZO

Heads up – we've arrived.

He steers the whirlybird towards the helipad as the others gradually wake up.

EXT. CITY AIRPORT – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

The pink and white chopper lands on a helipad at the Kochi Ryoma Airport, its engines whirring into silence as the rotor blades slow down and stop moving. The helicopter doors slide open and the crew disembark – Nikolai stops as he walks over to Vincenzo.

NIKOLAI

We need you, too, Vincenzo... and Sakura.

Vincenzo looks stunned as he tries to process Nikolai's words.

VINCENZO

What are you talking about, Nikolai?

NIKOLAI

We don't speak Japanese, but you and Sakura do. Come on.

Realising what Nikolai means, Vincenzo reaches for a weapon.

VINCENZO

Are we talking long distance or up close and personal?

NIKOLAI

I'd say get the submachine gun – we're going into a built-up area and we need to minimise potential casualties.

Vincenzo replies in the affirmative in Italian as he produces a CZ Scorpion Evo 3 A1 submachine gun and loads it with a 40-round 9*19mm Parabellum magazine, cocking it and extending the shoulder-stock as he disembarks with Sakura, who is holding her Steyr L9A2 MF (Modular Frame) handgun.

EXT. CITY STREET – NIGHT

The rebels are wandering through the streets of Kochi City.

VINCENZO

(Nervously)

Same as usual, right? In, get the info, out?

DAISUKE

Correct – I'll take point. Nikolai, you're with me. Lovisa, you and Alejandro can cover us. Vincenzo, you and Sakura take up the rear and keep us informed of any inherent dangers.

The hard-light hologram activates his holovision, alternating between thermal vision, night vision and normal vision.

ALEJANDRO

You got it.

Before Vincenzo can respond, Nikolai and Daisuke zip past and into the shadows. The remaining members silently walk through the city.

EXT. TOWER BLOCK – NIGHT

Reaching a high-rise edifice, Sakura finally speaks up as she turns to face the group of resistance representatives, marking the inception of the rebel alliance.

SAKURA

This is where he lives, if I'm right.

Knocking on the door, she can hear a deep voice from the intercom system, speaking Japanese. Sakura replies in her native language as the deep voice simply speaks a single word, which Vincenzo and the others take as a sign of permission to enter.

NIKOLAI (V.O.)

Vincenzo, you OK? We're at the destination. Where are you?

Vincenzo examines his whereabouts with his binoculars – looking up, he can see Nikolai and Daisuke in a corridor outside an apartment.

VINCENZO

I'm outside at ground level. I can see you – we're coming. Out.

He replaces his binoculars with his combat shotgun as the quartet enter.

INT. CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Nikolai and Daisuke stand outside the door to Gonta's residence. The door opens – calm and confident, Sakura flicks back her jet-black hair and enters the apartment.

INT. GONTA'S APARTMENT – NIGHT

The door closes behind the sextet as the bass voice's owner presents itself – GONTA TAKAHASHI stands before them. He is a man of medium height with dark hair and a slightly receding hairline.

GONTA

So... you have returned. Can I not live out my retirement years in peace? I have paid for my mistakes.

Vincenzo is visibly surprised by Gonta's perfect English – Sakura notices Gonta looking at Vincenzo and the others nervously.

SAKURA

Yes. I have a favour to ask you, Doctor. They are my friends. They are here to help you.

GONTA

I know who they are. What is it?

VINCENZO

Project Athena isn't over. We need your help.

SAKURA

We need to know everything – we're sure she's back.

GONTA

I don't know anymore... and even if I did, I'd think twice before disclosing such important, confidential details.

VINCENZO

Come on, don't be a fool – lives are at stake here.

GONTA

Whose lives – yours?

NIKOLAI

Everyone's lives – people like you are ruining them... bound by honour and hubris – you're just cowards in the end.

Sakura begins to lose her patience as she approaches Gonta coldly.

SAKURA

(In Japanese)

Tell us or we'll have to leave you behind, and you can face the music on your own.

Gonta winces imperceptibly as he grabs Sakura and slaps her sharply across the face. The instant his hand collides with her face, he drops her, a look of combined guilt and confusion crossing his usually straight face as Sakura falls to the floor, crying and sobbing.

Lovisa runs to help her friend as Vincenzo approaches Gonta and punches him, grabbing and throwing him across the room. Gonta tries to back away from the pissed-off Italian as his guilt escalates into fear and terror.

Vincenzo simply props him up and punches him in the face before holding his gun to the terrified informant's neck.

NIKOLAI

Vincenzo, stop!

DAISUKE

Vincenzo, it's OK! We've got this under control!

VINCENZO

(In Japanese, angrily)
10 seconds! What do you know about Project Athena?

(Pause, raising his voice)

WHAT DO YOU KNOW!?

Thinking quickly, the Afro-Russian ex-Spetsnaz officer and Belgian former Gendarme jump forward and push Vincenzo roughly, shoving him off the cowering Japanese defector, the enraged pilot accidentally firing off a single gunshot with a loud BANG! Vincenzo wheels around to face his friends and allies with his SMG ready.

NIKOLAI

(Calmly)

Vincenzo, you're letting this get personal – I know you love Sakura, but we need you with a fully screwed-on head. You're our ticket out of here – if anything happens to you, then nobody goes home. Clear?

Vincenzo looks at Nikolai in a combination of frustration and understanding. After a moment's thought, he nods and replies in the affirmative in Italian, the angry pilot lowering his submachine gun sharply.

DAISUKE

You always were the heroic type, Vincenzo.

Lovisa approaches Gonta calmly, her rational persona kicking in once again.

LOVISA

If you know something, then you must tell us... for your sake. We can protect you.

Gonta looks at the former test subject before nodding in acquiescence, coughing as he catches his breath.

GONTA

Rosh Goldman is a very powerful man, as you may know. If you escort me to safety, then I will tell you everything I know.

Daisuke can hear the faint noise of a police siren, the familiar blue light reflected onto his face as he looks out of a window. He curses in both French and Dutch.

DAISUKE

Bad news: we've been ratted out — we're going to have to get out of here *pronto*. Come on, we're falling back.

Nikolai has a look outside, scanning the scene with his binoculars. He can indeed see NPA officers *en route* to the scene. Cursing *sotto voce* in Russian, he turns back and exchanges a worried look with Vincenzo.

NIKOLAI

We won't make it on foot. I don't think they're going to escort us, either.

VINCENZO

Look, we're just going to have to hijack a car — commandeer it by force if we have to. I don't know about you, but I'm ready for some action after a whole year of lazing around.

The team set about escaping as they head into the city streets, eluding their pursuers for the time being.

EXT. CITY STREET — NIGHT

The air is thick with tension as the Sun begins to rise in the Sky. Vincenzo can hear the police yelling orders in Japanese, their footsteps alternating between hard, firm stamps and soft, quiet slips.

The group darts on foot through the streets of Kochi City, sprinting in an attempt to outrun the military police on their heel.

LOVISA

(Tersely)

We need transportation to the heliport — we can't make it on foot.

Nikolai looks through his binoculars and spots a police car not far away from their location.

NIKOLAI

There's a cop car about 100 metres away – we can use that if we can make it.

The group emerge from their hiding spot, forced to use stealth for a change. After a few close calls, they make it to the vehicle in question. Nikolai motions to Daisuke to go to the other side, with the girls getting in the back of the automobile while Vincenzo climbs into the boot/trunk.

DAISUKE

OK – on me. 3... 2... 1... 0!

The two men emerge from their hiding spots and quickly and quietly slip into the front of the police car, with the Belgian ex-Gendarme taking the wheel as he puts it in motion.

INT./EXT. POLICE CAR – DAY

Daisuke guns the engine, speeding away from the city. He swears in both French and Dutch while gritting his teeth, driving over the obstacles in his way with a calm, almost deranged, look in his eyes.

BANG! A single gunshot is heard from an unknown direction as something collides with the vehicle, causing it to swerve out of control. Nikolai looks through the windshield of the police car and turns to his friends.

NIKOLAI

Hang on – this is going to hurt.

The cop car topples and rotates several times before landing some distance away from the entrance to the heliport.

EXT. CITY OUTSKIRTS – DAY

Looking out of a window, Nikolai spots advancing Japanese MPs as Daisuke punches the shattered windshield of the destroyed vehicle, evacuating his colleagues from the ex-police car as Vincenzo falls out of the boot/trunk in a humorous manner, dazed but unhurt as he props himself up.

DAISUKE

Come on!

The team head into the heliport with their hostage.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL – DAY

The team enter the airport with their guns drawn – Vincenzo is holding Gonta hostage, the barrel of his pistol-calibre carbine jabbing into the man's spine.

VINCENZO
(Takahashi-san, help us or die. Get us to the heliport. Do it now, please.)

Gonta reluctantly leads the team to the helipad while avoiding detection in a suspenseful game of cat and mouse – after a full minute of evasion, they successfully elude the police.

EXT. HELIPAD – DAY

The team reach the safety of the helipad, spotting Vincenzo's familiar helicopter.

VINCENZO
(In Italian)
There it is!
(In English, to Nikolai and Daisuke)
Nikolai, Daisuke, cover me while I start her up!

The team sprint towards the vehicle as Vincenzo gets in, starting up the whirlybird while Nikolai and Daisuke provide cover fire against the incoming waves of Japanese police officers in a live-action horde game.

Alejandro and Lovisa help Gonta into the chopper while Vincenzo continues flipping switches, the dual rotor blades whirring to life as the horde grows larger.

NIKOLAI
Vincenzo, hurry!

Vincenzo engages the dual throttles at maximum power as the twin engines start whining and screaming into existence.

DAISUKE
Seriously, Vincenzo! We don't have much ammunition left!

Vincenzo inputs the coordinates to return to base and grips the HOTAS controls as he turns to face his allies.

VINCENZO
(Yelling above the
noise)
Get in - NOW!!

Daisuke does as he is told while Nikolai is a little bit slow on the uptake as the whirlybird begins to ascend. He turns around to see this.

NIKOLAI
(In Russian)
Don't even think about it!

He grabs onto the passenger door, the whirlybird leaving Asian airspace as it heads for the safety of Europe - Nikolai dangles above the air for a while as Daisuke helps him in into the helicopter, closing the door behind him.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER - DAY - CONTINUOUS

The crew are trying to relax after their first mission together in over a year - Gonta looks half-angry, half-upset as he glares at the Rhodium Golems.

GONTA
(Semi-sarcastically)
Congratulations. Your stunt has just granted you a permanent exile from Japan.

Sakura breathes a sigh of relief as she smiles at Vincenzo - he notices her gleeful expression.

VINCENZO
What is it?

SAKURA
You know what this means - I don't have to tell my family about us anymore.

Vincenzo's face falls slightly.

VINCENZO
Oh... I was looking forward to meeting them.

SAKURA
They'd never have accepted you, Vincenzo... but I do, and that's all that matters.

She kisses him on the cheek, prompting him to drive the whirlybird with more conviction. Vincenzo activates the helicopter's radio.

VINCENZO

Helia, this is Vincenzo. We've got Gonta safely. We're on our way back to base.

Helia's voice is heard on the other end of the line.

HELIA (V.O.)

Good. Call me back when you've got what you need.

VINCENZO

Understood. Out.

(To the crew)

Try to get some sleep, everyone... Nikolai? Try not to snore.

He engages the autopilot and lies back, removing and safely storing his spectacles as he inserts a pair of foamy earplugs into his ears, his eyes closing.

EXT. PLATEAU – DAY

The whirlybird flies across a vast plain extending towards the Horizon, the Sun shining brightly in the morning Sky, with only the bleak, white oblivion of the Godaisan Mountain for company.

INT. SUBAQUATIC OFFICE – DAY

A pair of high-tech double-doors slide open accompanied by a futuristic WHOOSH! – Two VIPs or rather, two ex-VIPs... enter what appears to be a disused-but-still-in-pristine-condition office – Rosh and Nadia. The double-doors slide closed behind them with a SHOOM! Rosh looks around the empty office wistfully until Nadia snaps him back to reality.

NADIA

(In Arabic)

Why are we here, Rosh?

ROSH

To put the past behind us, Nadia. She's not dead... I can feel it.

He activates a long-dormant computer complete with old-fashioned CRT monitor and begins accessing the records within its database, the monitor flashing an assorted array of colours to indicate his progress.

NADIA

Rosh, come on, you're being paranoid – Helia will take care of everything.

ROSH

She doesn't know the true extent of the organisation's corruption, Nadia... and, to be honest, I'd rather keep it that way. This is my tree; I have to sit in it.

The monitor flashes a bright green, catching the proud Jew's attention as he looks at it intently, the former heresiarch cursing loudly in Hebrew. Nadia goes beside him to see what he is looking at.

NADIA

What's that?

ROSH

(In English)

I knew it. She's alive.

Kana's image appears on the monitor.

NADIA

We need to tell Helia.

ROSH

What, and put her own life at risk? Think again.

NADIA

Rosh, she can handle herself – she's got Rainer to back her up, as well as her husband.

ROSH

(Disbelieving)

Erik? The man who got close to our daughter just to rescue his sister?

(Pause, lowers his voice)

I knew Rainer lied to me.

(Calms down)

It was a risk on his part, I admit... but we need to keep this to ourselves for now.

(MORE)

ROSH (cont'd)
As for our dear Doctor Defector... you
know what happens to traitors.

NADIA
You're serious, aren't you?

ROSH
You'd better believe it. Once he's
dealt with, I'll personally take out
the Iron Bitch myself.

Rosh looks back at the monitor as he grits his teeth. On the
M of "Myself", he slams his fist onto the desk as the
computer blips off.

INT. SIMPLE HOUSE - DAY

SUPER: "CAIRO, EGYPT - 1976"

Rosh sits in the kitchen with his wife, NADIA GOLDMAN, both
sporting dark hair. He is wearing a white T-shirt and pair
of blue jeans as he looks pensive, drinking a cup of tea.
Nadia looks at her husband worriedly.

NADIA
Are you OK?

ROSH
I'm fine. Just fine, thanks.

He smiles as he raises his head to face her, finishing his
cup of tea.

NADIA
It's been a long time since I've seen
you this happy, Rosh. I don't blame
you for feeling that anger and hatred
for what they did to your homeland...
and your parents.

Nadia is pleasantly surprised by her husband's
uncharacteristic elation. Rosh sighs and laughs slightly,
feeling content.

ROSH
I couldn't do it alone, Nadia...
besides, I've got a beautiful baby
girl to look after now. How is Helia?
Did she sleep well?

Nadia smiles at Rosh happily.

NADIA

Yes – she didn't complain or cry once. She's our angel, Rosh.

ROSH

Indeed, she is. I want to have a look at her before I go to work.

Rosh gets up to see her but Nadia stops him.

NADIA

She's still sleeping. Don't wake her up... please.

She looks at him lovingly. Rosh looks at Nadia for a moment before nodding in acquiescence – he smiles.

ROSH

OK. I'll see you this afternoon.

He kisses her cheek and gets his things .

NADIA

Have a good day, dear husband.

Rosh replies in the affirmative in Hebrew as he leaves.

EXT. CITY STREET – DAY

Rosh walks through the streets of Cairo, effortlessly dodging traffic and striding towards his workplace as the Sun's reflective light – and scalding heat – hits him right in the face. He covers his eyes for a moment to wipe the sweat from his forehead before walking towards a building with a sign showing a basket full of multi-coloured fruits – the local grocery store, his new workplace. He enters it, the bell ringing as the door opens and closes. DIN-DIN!

INT. GROCERY STORE – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Rosh enters the small store as the soothing, cooling feeling of an air conditioner hits him squarely in the face. He notices his boss, a middle-aged man, and greets him in Hebrew – the boss replied in kind. Rosh immediately gets behind the scenes and slips on a pink apron, ready to get to work.

ROSH

Have we had any customers yet?

BOSS

No, not yet. We had a group of youths in earlier, though – I caught them using the blackberries as finger paint and told them to sod off. Bloody kids these days.

ROSH

Come on, not every young person's bad – sometimes, you've just got to take a chance.

The boss reveals himself in response to Rosh's chirpy statement, the older man wearing a green and yellow apron as he adjusts his glasses.

BOSS

You'll learn soon enough, Rosh Adam Goldman. Children like those miscreants should be seen more than heard.

Rosh laughs slightly, the Egyptian Jew amused by his boss's ramblings.

ROSH

You're too cynical – nobody's that reprehensible.

As he finishes replacing the tainted fruit, a young man enter – this is a younger 20-something Rainer, sporting dark hair and a prominent jawline. Rosh turns to face him with a smile, greeting him in Hebrew.

RAINER

Good morning, gentlemen.

ROSH

Morning. How can I help you?

RAINER

I'm looking for some sweet, succulent fruit – I need some blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries, lemons, melons, oranges, peaches, pears, a lot of apples and a few bananas.

Rosh takes down Rainer's request on a notepad, chuckling nervously as the Helvetic man smirks.

ROSH

(Amused)

That's a pretty heavy request if I may say so – what's it for?

RAINER

A massively mixed fruit salad, of course.

Rainer laughs, and Rosh follows suit. As he reaches for the fruits in question, the door opens accompanied by the ringing bell. DIN-DIN! A group of youths enter – between the ages of 14 and 18 – looking very pissed off, their leader sporting a flag of rebellion. Their leader snaps at Rosh, insulting him in Hebrew. The boss steps out from behind a restricted area and approaches them, looking annoyed.

BOSS

(Authoritatively)

I told you not to come back. What are you doing here?

Their leader, a tall man about 21 or so years old, looked him up and down before head-butting the boss, sending him falling to the floor. The boss clutches his nose in pain as Rosh observes with a calm, tranquil fury. He locks eyes with the customer and nods at Rainer subtly, approaching the youth leader.

ROSH

Young man, look at me.

(Pause, raising his voice slightly)

LOOK at me!

(The gang leader does so)

I don't know what the hell you think you're doing coming in here and using fresh fruit as finger paint or even assaulting my superior, but I do know you're leaving this store NOW.

(Lowering his voice)

You and your cohorts – and if I see any of you, and I mean ANY of you, in here... then you'd better pray that the police get to you before I do.

The uncouth youth insults Rosh in Arabic before proceeding to draw a hidden switchblade. Rainer intercedes and disarms the man with a quick, smooth move from his commando days. This leads to a punch-up, forcing Rosh and Rainer to defend themselves against the young insurgents, who are no match for the ex-military men.

Rosh chases them out as his eyes sparkle with fury but Rainer stops him. Calming down, he looks at the mess before him and sighs, cursing in Hebrew.

RAINER

You OK?

ROSH

I'm fine... bloody hell, the boss is going to give me one hell of an earful when he wakes up.

The two men help his unconscious boss to safety and proceed to lie him down in an armchair behind the main section of the store.

RAINER

I'm impressed with the way you handled yourself there.

Rosh looks at Rainer with a slightly strained smile.

ROSH

Thank you – it seems that my national service was a blessing in disguise.

RAINER

What's your name?

Rainer holds out his hand.

ROSH

Goldman – Rosh Goldman.

RAINER

I'm Rainer Ackermann... nice to meet a fellow soldier.

They shake hands as Rosh removes his pink apron.

ROSH

What are you doing here? This country's in turmoil.

RAINER

I'm just like you – an ex-military man trying to fit in with civilian life.

Rosh thinks for a moment as an idea pops into his head.

ROSH

Why don't you come with me, Rainer?
With your skills, you could be a
bodyguard for my family.

RAINER

Really? Wow... I'm flattered. How will
you get the money?

ROSH

Let me worry about that – in the
meantime, let me introduce you to my
nearest and dearest.

He smiles at Rainer more genuinely.

INT. KITCHEN – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Rosh (now with visible bruises on his head) and Nadia look
at each other with a combination of worry and frustration.

NADIA

What happened, Rosh?

ROSH

Excuse me?

NADIA

Those marks on your head. What
happened?

Rosh looks at Nadia for a moment – he considers telling her
a wild story but ultimately decides to tell the truth.

ROSH

Some idiots broke into the store
twice and held us hostage.

His face changes from friendly to hostile in a flash of
light along with his voice.

NADIA

Oh, my God... I'm sorry.

ROSH

So am I. They got it into their sick
little heads that Egypt would fall
under Islam – they wanted to
nationalise Sharia...

(Pause, lowering his
voice)

...over my dead fucking body.

NADIA
You always were the noble type, Rosh...
stupid, but noble.

ROSH
Hey, at least I'm honest about
myself, Nadia.

NADIA
I know, and that's what worries me.
We can't stay here anymore. Who knows
what could happen if they find out
where we live?

Rosh sighs as he realises the gravity of the situation – he
curses in Hebrew before regaining his composure.

ROSH
Then we'll just have to move.

NADIA
Where?

ROSH
We could go to America.

NADIA
America? Come on, Rosh. The so-called
land of the free, where everyone has
a gun and you have to pay for what
should be a basic amenity of life?

ROSH
At least we'll be prepared.

NADIA
I don't know – it just seems... there's
something about it that I don't like.

ROSH
OK, we could go to Australia... or
maybe Canada.

Nadia's eyes light up at the mention of the latter. She
smiles enthusiastically.

NADIA
Yes! Yes, Canada.

Rosh locks eyes with his wife as he tries not to show his
concern for his young daughter.

ROSH
Then it's settled.

He smiles.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE – DAY

SUPER: "MONTRÉAL, QUEBEC, CANADA – 1979"

Rosh enters wearing a black turtleneck with blue jeans along with a brown trench coat and fedora hat. He hangs up his outerwear before heading into an office, looking and feeling determined. A slightly chubby man with grey hair is present – this is Rosh's boss, the editor.

EDITOR

Ah, *Monsieur* Goldman. I'm so glad you could make it.

ROSH

I came as soon as I could, sir. I hear you have a new assignment for me?

EDITOR

Indeed, I do. You'll like it.

He hands him a yellow folder – Rosh opens it and his face slowly falls as he panics slightly. He looks up to face his boss, the colour draining from his face.

ROSH

It's in Iran, sir.

EDITOR

It is – I figured a man of your background, an artist of your calibre, could provide a more objective view.

Rosh looks half-excited, half-concerned as memories of his less-than-stellar past return to haunt him, the ghosts of his formative years never leaving his soul.

ROSH

(Dejected)

I see.

The editor looks at him, concerned and sympathetic.

EDITOR

Are you OK, *Monsieur* Goldman?

Rosh locks eyes with his boss, trying to hide his discomfort.

ROSH

I'm fine. I'll take the gig. It's not going to be too long, is it? I don't want to spend too much time away from my family.

The editor nods reassuringly and smiles.

EDITOR

It's only two days - we'll come and pick you up at the end of the second day.

Rosh locks eyes with his boss, looking confident while trying to hide his own inner turmoil.

ROSH

OK, I'll do it.

EDITOR

Good... I'll make the necessary plans.

The boss smiles. Thanking him in French, Rosh gets up and leaves the office and he lets the mask slip off, revealing his inner panic and confusion.

EXT. METROPOLITAN CITY - DAY

SUPER: "TEHRAN, IRAN"

A yellow taxicab is driving through the crowded city streets, its driver looking barely fazed as he sighs, cursing to himself in Arabic.

INT. TAXICAB - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Rosh is with Rainer, the latter maintaining his composure while the former tries to control his anxiety, a pilgrim in an unholy land. He leans forward to speak to the driver.

ROSH

Is this kind of behaviour commonplace here? What the hell is going on?

DRIVER

It's going to be a lot more commonplace if those liberal imbeciles get their way.

ROSH

What imbeciles?

DRIVER
Fucking Ayatollah fanboys.

He sighs. Rosh looks at Rainer with mild concern, the Swiss bodyguard looking back almost apathetically.

RAINER
Religion is the bane of mankind if
you ask me.

ROSH
I know... I've lived it.

The taxicab continues driving through the streets of Tehran until it arrives at what appears to be a public *plaza*.

EXT. CITY PLAZA – DAY – LATER

The taxicab pulls up and Rosh and Rainer disembark, the former paying the driver, who exchanges one last word with him.

DRIVER
Don't waste your time reasoning with
these bastards – their beliefs are
absolute and they WILL kill you if
they think it'll keep them in power.
Negotiation isn't their strong point.

Rosh acknowledges the driver's warning, thanking him in Arabic as the taxicab drives away. Rainer looks at his boss for a moment and approaches him.

RAINER
Come on. Let's go.

Rosh looks at Rainer with a sad expression and nods imperceptibly as they walk into the city plaza, following the noise of a local mob.

They eventually reach an improvised pillory containing a woman, who is being jeered at and egged. Rosh's face turns from sadness to a tranquil fury, his facial expressions shifting subtly as he can do nothing except glare at the pieces of shit insulting the poor woman.

ROSH
What the fuck is this, Rainer?!

RAINER
Barbarism in the 20th Century, Rosh.
Some places just haven't changed
since the Dark Ages.

ROSH
Some places haven't gotten out of the
fucking Stone Age, never mind the
Medieval Years.

He moves to try to help the condemned woman but Rainer, the
more rational of the two men, stops him.

RAINER
Don't, Rosh. Remember the driver's
warning?

Rosh tries to hide his anguish.

ROSH
Rainer, there's an innocent woman's
life at stake here – it's like I'm
reliving my wife's rescue all over
again.

Rainer looks at his friend and employer sympathetically.

RAINER
I understand... but we are not
responsible to judge an enemy. We are
simply trying to bring the facts to
the world and show the people the
reality of their existence.

Rosh and Rainer look at each other for a moment before a
very strong male voice interrupts their brief altercation.
They look ahead to see a Caliph read from a scroll of
papyrus in Arabic. To their relief, the woman is led away
from the pillory and escorted out of the *plaza*.

ROSH
Find out where those venomous
reptiles are taking that poor woman
and then get back to me. I'm going to
do some detective work of my own.

Rainer replies in the affirmative in German but stops Rosh
as the Jewish journalist begins to move away.

RAINER
Keep it together, Rosh. We're
pilgrims in an unholy land.

Rosh sighs and tries to shake off his feelings as he leaves,
leaving Rainer looking preoccupied.

BEGIN MONTAGE

EXT. CITY PLAZA — DAY

As the day continues, the Caliph continues his sermon in the plaza with a crew of at least 1,000 people listening and cheering him on.

EXT. CITY STREET — DAY

Rosh is interviewing some youths, transcribing their words onto a notepad, writing in both Arabic and English. He looks pensive for a moment before asking a rather delicate question in Hebrew, earning him the youths' respect and admiration. They offer him some food and a drink, both of which he accepts gratefully.

INT. PUBLIC HOUSE — EVENING

Rainer is drinking some Iranian wine, which he does not seem to like and he makes no secret of his displeasure. The bartender approaches him and questions him in Arabic, his voice and hand movements animated to an almost comical degree. He finishes the wine and looks at the bartender smugly.

INT. OUTSIDE THE PUBLIC HOUSE — EVENING

The pub's window is shattered — CRASH — as the Swiss bodyguard is thrown through it, landing on the concrete below. Cursing in German, he gets up and brushes himself off only for Rosh to bump into him, who looks at him with mild amusement.

END MONTAGE

INT. HOTEL ROOM — NIGHT

Rosh and Rainer enter a plush-looking room, almost a suite, as they scan the scenery before them, the Moon shining brightly in the Sky as the Horizon is now a pitch-black shroud of oblivion, punctuated only by the occasional Star here and there. There is a deep, abiding silence for several seconds.

ROSH

Did you get it, Rainer?

RAINER
Get what, Rosh?

ROSH
The woman's location – did you get
where they were holding her?

RAINER
Wasn't too difficult. She was in the
cells... they're executing her tomorrow
when the Sun rises.

Rosh checks his rhodium wristwatch carefully.

ROSH
That gives us less than 6 hours. How
far is it to the police station from
here?

RAINER
About half an hour.

Rosh looks pensive as he formulates a plan in his mind –
after a moment's hesitation, he decides to go through with
it.

ROSH
Let's go.

He gets up and turns to leave the room.

RAINER
Are you OK?

ROSH
I'm fine. I'm fully aware of what I'm
doing if that's what you're worried
about – now, come on.

Rainer says nothing as he follows Rosh quickly.

EXT. CITY STREETS – NIGHT

Rosh and Rainer head into the streets of Tehran clad in
black, under cover of darkness. The peerless pair try to
walk through the city streets as inconspicuously as possible
as they head for the police station, their alien clothing
masking their inner fear. Eventually, they reach the police
station and wait for the crowds in the city to disperse.

EXT. ENTRANCE TO THE POLICE STATION – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Rosh draws a pair of binoculars and looks through a window – he can see the desk sergeant looking bored while watching a crappy soap opera on a portable television. Rosh can see the cells beyond the desk sergeant – he looks at Rainer.

ROSH

Rainer, is there anything else I should know before we carry this out?

RAINER

Yes, Rosh. The Caliph is on his way – he's going to escort her to the sacrificial location soon. We need to hurry up if we're going to save her life.

Rosh thinks it over and then comes to a personal executive decision as he lowers and holsters his binoculars.

ROSH

OK – I'll talk to the Caliph while you distract the cop. Money can buy many things, even power. If he tries to pull any funny shit, then we resort to our backup plan.

RAINER

Which is?

ROSH

We break her out of there, get her to safety and then fuck off back to the West. Come on.

They enter the police station calmly.

INT. POLICE STATION – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

The desk sergeant is bored out of his mind as he changes the channel on his portable television, looking for something entertaining.

He eventually settles on what appears to be a cheap-looking variety show, and his mood soon changes. Rainer looks at him with a slight smirk on his face as the cop invites the Swiss bodyguard to watch the show with him, while Rosh heads towards the cells.

INT. CELLS — NIGHT — CONTINUOUS

Sure enough, the Caliph is already present, arguing with the condemned woman in Arabic. Rosh looks at the pair for a moment before coughing quite loudly, getting their attention, his voice and facial expression flat and unflinching.

ROSH

(In Arabic)

Excuse me... are you the official responsible for her incarceration?

The Caliph looks at Rosh for a moment, stunned but quickly regaining his composure.

CALIPH

Yes, I am. You see, this young woman here has violated our laws.

Rosh tilts his head to the side slightly and raises a solitary eyebrow in a Spock-like fashion.

ROSH

What laws?

CALIPH

Haven't you heard? The Shah is no more. Sharia now governs this land, and this juvenile delinquent must be reeducated in the ways of our Prophet.

Rosh tightens his face slightly but imperceptibly.

ROSH

So why not educate her in a school or college? Why resort to this kind of shabby treatment? How would you feel if it were one of your own children in that cell?

CALIPH

I would say that that is no more than they would deserve. Allah's wishes must be followed — there can be no weakness for deviants and imperfects.

ROSH

I don't think you understand the implications behind your ideology.

(MORE)

ROSH (cont'd)

I was under the impression Islam was a religion of peace, but in the end it's really no different than Christianity during the Crusades.

The Caliph begins to feel agitated.

CALIPH

Do not speak of those times! They pillaged our homes, burned our villages, laughed at our losses, mocked at our gains, scorned our nation... just like the monarchy that dominated this region... and what was their reason?

Rosh and the Caliph glare at each other.

ROSH

You tell me – you're the expert. I'm going to give you one last chance to explain yourself, otherwise it would be wise if you let this woman go – she has done nothing to deserve this fate. You know and I know that faith in itself is not enough to change the world.

Rosh looks back at Rainer to see him enjoying the variety show with the desk sergeant. The Caliph looks at the distracted Jew, raising his hand to reveal a knife – the condemned woman yells a warning to Rosh in Arabic, snapping him back to reality.

Thinking quickly, the Israeli-Palestinian journalist draws his signature Beretta Model 1951 pistol and fires a single shot at the Caliph's right wrist, the bullet hitting the target. The Caliph drops the knife as he clutches his wounded hand while screaming in agony.

The desk sergeant hears the Caliph's yell of pain and jolts up but Rainer quickly restrains him, holding his own SIG P210 handgun to the back of the man's head.

RAINER

(In German)

No heroics – don't even think about saving the night or you won't live to see another one.

(In English)

Keys, please.

The desk sergeant panics slightly before doing as he is told – he gives Rainer the keys, the Swiss ex-commando thanking him in German before pistol-whipping him unconscious. Turning off the portable television, he approaches Rosh with the keys.

ROSH

You OK?

RAINER

I'm fine – thank God I don't have to sit through that crap that passes for entertainment anymore.

Rainer unlocks the cell and releases the condemned woman, who embraces him tightly. Rosh approaches her and hands her a bag full of money – Iranian rian – and a plane ticket.

ROSH

Take this money and ticket and leave this country tonight – pack your essentials and then head for the airport. You've got to look after yourself now.

The woman hugs Rosh and thanks him in Arabic before turning around, breaking into a run. Rosh turns around to the defeated Caliph and, summoning his inner rage, knocks him out with a single well-placed punch to the face, taking the knife with him.

Rosh and Rainer leave without another word as the Swiss bodyguard drops the keys onto the desk sergeant's portable television, the two men exiting the police station and disappearing into the night.

INT. DRIVE ROOM OF THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE – DAY

SUPER: "RHODIUM GOLEMS' HQ – 2020"

The drive room is completely enshrouded in darkness. A door opens, casting a white light into the room accompanied by a pair of unique silhouettes, one of whom flips a switch and turns on the lights.

Nikolai and Daisuke lead Gonta into the room followed by Lovisa and Alejandro, the quartet sitting around a large white round table.

NIKOLAI

Where's Vincenzo? I can't wait to blow this confidential legacy into the centre of the fucking Sun.

DAISUKE

He'll be here in a minute, Nikolai –
we can start the interrogation.

Nikolai and Daisuke sit before Gonta, with Lovisa and Alejandro as backup. Daisuke curses in French.

NIKOLAI

All right, let's stop playing games.
Doctor, what is Project Athena?

Gonta looks at Daisuke for a moment, considering bargaining with him for his safety but ultimately deciding to tell him the truth. Panic and guilt start to permeate his soul.

GONTA

Project Athena is a top-secret experiment to create the Ultimate Fighter – the technology has been in development since the 5 Elements were founded in 1980. Lovisa Drakenberg was the most acceptable subject, a process facilitated due to her truculent and ambitious temperament, which masks her true insecure and timid personality instigated by her wealthy but overprotective upbringing. Project Athena is divided into three stages. Stage 1 consists of observation, capture and preservation of prospective test subjects. Stage 2 consists of a training regime followed by a practical field test. Stage 3 consists of the subject's automation and possible augmentation into a plasma lifeform using nanotech upgrades and genetic manipulation.

He shows Nikolai and Daisuke a handful of crucial photographs: images taken during various stages of Lovisa and Sakura's "training":

Lovisa fighting the combat dummy/droid, Lovisa swimming through the flooded basement, Lovisa in her signature costume seated on the mind-wipe chair, Lovisa in the mind-wipe chair screaming while a familiar scientist – KANA MANESCU – takes notes.

Nikolai hands Lovisa the pictures, her killer instinct going into overdrive as she throws them down onto the table – cursing in Swedish, she storms out of the drive room, stunning Alejandro.

DAISUKE
Where did Sakura Noguchi come in?

GONTA
(Hesitating)
She was... the primary unit, the
original choice for Project Athena.

Nikolai looks disgusted but realises he needs to control himself as he looks at Gonta with barely restrained anger.

NIKOLAI
(Relenting)
OK, Doctor – you've bought yourself
some time... for now.

He sits back and curses under his breath in Russian.

DAISUKE
How did you get involved with the 5
Elements in the first place?

Gonta's face tightens up slightly.

GONTA
He saved me from a fate worse than
death. If I had known what he was
planning, then I'd have probably
preferred prison. You see, I was
contracted by the Japanese Government
to research into nanotechnology and
its practicality as a medical
application.

NIKOLAI
(Matter-of-factly)
In other words, they wanted to see if
nanobots could save the world.

GONTA
Right... I didn't count on them wanting
to weaponise them, though – it would
have been Unit 731 all over again,
and I didn't plan on following in
Shiro Ishii's footsteps.

He looks at Nikolai and Daisuke, who simply stare back impassively.

INT. LOVISA'S QUARTERS – NIGHT

Lovisa is lying on a bed, trying to sleep as she looks pensive, almost worried, her mind flashing back to her time as an assassin, the Swedish-Canadian beauty reliving her past as a killing machine. She cries softly to herself as she gets up, wearing just a white sleeveless T-shirt and underwear as she equips her smartphone.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

At the Goldman family mansion, Erik and Helia are getting ready to go to sleep when the former's smartphone rings. He curses to himself in Swedish as he picks it up, his eyes widening slightly in surprise to see it's Lovisa calling him. He answers the call.

SWITCH BETWEEN ERIK/HELIA AND LOVISA.

ERIK

(In Swedish)

Lovisa? What are you doing calling this late!?

Lovisa looks slightly pained as she sits on her bed.

LOVISA

I can't sleep, Erik. Too many nightmares.

ERIK

Nightmares about what?

LOVISA

Those... moments... when I was forced to do what I did... when I almost killed you... I can't get them out of my head.

She tries not to cry – Erik looks like he is about to shed some tears himself as he feels completely helpless.

ERIK

I'm sorry, Lovisa.

LOVISA

So am I, Erik... I shouldn't have turned down your help.

ERIK

No, you did the right thing: you stood up for yourself. I believed what our mother and father used to say... now I'm not so sure.

LOVISA
What did they say?

ERIK
That you needed to be protected and shielded from all harm, since you would inherit the family corporation if anything happened to me.

Lovisa looks pensive.

LOVISA
You don't think they..

ERIK
...what? Handed you over to them on a silver platter?

LOVISA
Well, why else would our mother insist on me taking swimming and martial arts lessons at a young age?

ERIK
Same reason our father put me on business courses. I admit, it came in handy when I first met Helia... but I soon grew to love her – the more I knew about her, the more I could see her for who she really was. She's just like you, trying to escape her family's shadow.

She thinks for a moment, smiling softly.

LOVISA
OK, Erik... I think I now know what I must do.

Her brother smiles.

ERIK
Good... good night, Lovisa.

LOVISA
Good night, Erik.

Click, dial tone. Erik looks at Helia as he approaches her.

HELIA
Everything OK?

ERIK
Oh, yes. Everything's fine.

They smile at each other warmly, reaffirming their love for each other.

INT. DRIVE ROOM OF THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE — THE NEXT DAY

The quartet are seated around the base's signature round white table, looking at images and documents detailing the 5 Elements and Kana's activities. The red telephone rings, prompting Nikolai to pick it up.

NIKOLAI
(In Russian)
Hello?

Helia's voice is heard on the other end of the line — under Nikolai's instructions, Vincenzo surreptitiously activates the speakerphone.

HELIA (V.O.)
I'll come straight to the point:
We've got word that Kana is looking
for new subjects to revive Project
Athena — go to the United States and
find out if it's true.

NIKOLAI
Where exactly?

HELIA (V.O.)
San Francisco, California. Out.

Click, dial tone — Nikolai and Vincenzo look at each other. There is a brief pause, as if savouring the calm before the storm.

INT. DRIVE ROOM OF THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE — DAY — LATER

A slide projector is set up in the drive room, and Gonta is now leading a presentation. Nikolai is smoking a cigarette.

DAISUKE
OK, Gonta — where do you think they
will be meeting their potential
recruits?

GONTA
They usually meet in very secluded or
very conspicuous areas, and they only
step out in person to recruit new
members into their ranks. All other
work is done via intermediary
agencies.

(MORE)

GONTA (cont'd)

They constantly rotate for security, too – we won't know for sure until we get there. They often travel in a convoy. They'll be meeting at the Ferry Building Market in a few hours, so we should get going now if we want to take them by surprise.

NIKOLAI

(Semi-suspiciously)

You seem to know a lot about the 5 Elements.

VINCENZO

What's the plan?

Lovisa steps forward, temporarily assuming command.

LOVISA

Nikolai and Daisuke will disguise themselves as vendors along with me, while Gonta will keep us posted from the Marriott Marquis. Alejandro, I want you and Sakura to occupy the metropolitan system and tail anyone who you think looks suspicious. Vincenzo, I want you to stay here and keep us posted.

(In Swedish)

Let's do this!

She smirks as the boys get up and gear up.

BEGIN LOCK-AND-LOAD MONTAGE

INT. ARMOURY OF THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE – DAY

Nikolai and Daisuke examine their available weapons, picking out only the necessary equipment in addition to their guns – binoculars, radios, recorders, etc.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Vincenzo is with Sakura, flipping switches as the helicopter's dual rotor blades whir into life, its twin engines whining into existence as Erik and Lovisa get aboard (sans Alejandro).

SWITCH BETWEEN NIKOLAI/DAISUKE AND VINCENZO/SAKURA.

Nikolai and Daisuke cock their signature weapons and make their way out of the armoury.

They proceed to get aboard Vincenzo's helicopter, exchanging knowing glances and nods as they take their seats.

EXT. SUMMIT – DAY – CONTINUOUS

The helicopter takes off and soars into the distance.

END MONTAGE

FADE TO:

EXT. CITY MARKETPLACE – DAY

SUPER: "SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA"

Nikolai, Daisuke and Lovisa are at the Ferry Building Market, the Afro-Russian brandishing his binoculars. The Sun blazes the buildings and citizens of the neo-metropolis with impunity. Daisuke activates his radio.

DAISUKE

Vincenzo, this is Daisuke. We're in position, over.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Well done. I just received confirmation that Alejandro and Sakura are at the subway and are now on a stakeout. With any luck, we can land a shot on this piece of shit and win this fucking conflict. I'm going to try and reach Gonta.

(Pause)

Gonta, this is Vincenzo – are you in position?

(Longer pause –
slightly louder)

Doctor Takahashi, do you copy?

NIKOLAI

He must have forgotten to switch it on – there's no time for that now, we've got to focus.

(Looking through his
binoculars)

Lovisa, I can see a convoy arriving. It looks like Kana is at the front.

(Lowering his voice
slightly)

What the hell's happening?

He watches a woman with dark hair, wearing a half mask of gold – fallen Kazakh-Moldovan scientist Kana – dismount, heading towards a pair of young women. Focusing his attention on the meeting, Daisuke spots two familiar people emerge from another car in the convoy and approach the scientist... Rosh and Nadia. His eyes widen slightly as panic deprives him of the power of speech.

Rosh puts his hand to his ear as if anticipating a telephone call, and Daisuke curses in both French and Dutch. Suddenly, he can hear Vincenzo's voice over the radio, the Italian pilot sounding uncharacteristically anxious and panicked.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

I've got Gonta's location and frequency – it doesn't sound good, though.

NIKOLAI

Let me speak to him.

Nikolai watches Daisuke lower his binoculars, the Belgian looking at him with an expression that equals the phrase "Get ready to run."

GONTA (V.O.)

...I'm sorry, Vincenzo. Stop Kana and look after Sakura for me, please...

A faint beeping sound is heard on the other end of the line as the former double agent utters a prayer in Japanese before his words are cut off by a LOUD explosion.

ROSH (V.O.)

Alejandro, my friend... I trusted you, and you do this to me? I know what you're up to, and now you must be punished.

Before anyone can respond, there is the sound of static on the airwaves followed by dead air – pure silence.

NIKOLAI

What the fuck is he talking about!?

The answer to Nikolai's question comes in the form of a beeping noise nearby, getting louder and faster with every passing second – Daisuke knows what this means.

DAISUKE

Get out, NOW!!

He gets Nikolai and Lovisa to safety, just as the stall explodes – BOOM!

An explosion from within sends the Belgian former cop flying, landing a few hectometres away as the floor below him is stained with his blood! Nikolai runs up to his friend and partner, yelling his name as he helps him up, firing his Kalashnikov assault rifle with one hand while carrying Daisuke with the other.

NIKOLAI

(Trying not to panic)

Look at me! You're going to be fine!

(Into his radio)

Vincenzo, get us out of here!

VINCENZO (V.O.)

I'm on my way! Where do you want me to come and get you? The airport's too far!

LOVISA

(Into her radio)

Kirby Cove Beach – I know the way.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Give me 5 minutes! Out.

The transmission ends as the group do their best to escape from the chaos – not only do they have the San Francisco Police after them, they also have the 5 Elements' PMC operatives themselves – the reformed PLUTONIUM PHOENIXES – on their tail! Lovisa draws her Armatix iPl smart gun and cocks it, leading the way.

INT./EXT. SUBWAY – DAY

Alejandro and Sakura are on their own – realising they have the upper hand, they head for a subway train heading for the beach, the Japanese-American beauty drawing her semiautomatic pistol while the Peruvian-Australian hard-light hologram scans the area with his holovision, cycling between infrared/thermal, ultraviolet, night and normal vision modes.

SAKURA

What shall we do?

ALEJANDRO

It's dangerous, but there's no other way – let's get aboard.

They do so.

INT. METRO TRAIN – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Alejandro and Sakura board the empty subway train... only to be ambushed by a squad of Plutonium Phoenixes, with their weapons aimed directly at THEM!

ALEJANDRO

Oh, shit! RUN!!

Alejandro and Sakura head into the next carriage, the Oriental beauty aiming her handgun at the pursuing aggressors as they advance, staring down the reflex sight... at the last minute, she pulls the trigger – BANG! A well-placed headshot kills the officer in charge, prompting the others to continue pursuit. Taking cover behind a pair of seats, Alejandro and Sakura observe the area as the pursuers enter their carriage, the hard-light hologram making full use of his holovision before turning back to Sakura.

SAKURA

If we can take out a few more, then we stand a better chance at survival.

Alejandro looks at Sakura in disbelief.

ALEJANDRO

Why didn't you act like this 30 years ago?

SAKURA

Because I'm nobody's puppet – in the end, no programming can overcome the human soul.

She aims carefully... and squeezes off another shot. BANG! Another soldier falls dead as she surreptitiously drags his body behind them. The two of them sneak out and head into the next carriage.

ALEJANDRO

How far till the next stop?

SAKURA

(Examining a
timetable and route
plan)

The next one's coming up – it'll get us close enough.

The pair hide to evade the 8 remaining troops as they find the dead body, speaking to each other in a distorted vocoder-like language – Sakura curses in Japanese while Alejandro scans the area with his holovision.

Realising the grim situation, he looks at the carriage behind him and has an idea.

ALEJANDRO
This way... come on.

He leads Sakura into the next carriage but stops in the external section in between.

INT./EXT. SUBWAY – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Standing in between carriages, Alejandro looks at the guards inside and crouches – Sakura watches carefully before quickly catching on as they look at each other.

ALEJANDRO
On 3, OK?

Sakura replies in the affirmative in Japanese as Alejandro counts up to 3 in Spanish – he decouples the carriages and jumps beside Sakura.

INT. METRO TRAIN – DAY – CONTINUOUS

The remaining troops realise they are slowing down and immediately rush to the end, to no avail. Seeing Alejandro and Sakura, they open fire on them in vain – three more are gunned down, leaving only 5 alive as the Peruvian-Australian hard-light hologram waves goodbye sarcastically.

BACK TO:

INT./EXT. SUBWAY – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Alejandro climbs up to the rooftop of the carriage with Sakura beside him as they wait for the approaching station that is their stop, gradually pulling into view.

ALEJANDRO
Ready, Sakura?

Sakura looks at Alejandro as she reloads her gun, cocking it.

SAKURA
(Slightly irritated)
I've got no choice, have I?

ALEJANDRO
Here it is – on 3 again.

He counts up to 3 in Spanish and jumps with the Japanese beauty beside him – they land on the safety of the platform below as the train speeds away.

SAKURA

Let's get to the surface – we should be near the beach.

Sakura leads the way with Alejandro behind her, looking slightly stunned at her authoritative temperament but remains silent.

EXT. BEACH – DAY – MOMENTS LATER

Nikolai gently lowers Daisuke onto the ground and returns fire. Daisuke, who is rapidly losing blood, does his best to help the others as he draws his FN Five-Seven pistol, picking off a few enemies here and there. He grits his teeth, cursing in both French and Dutch as he looks at the trail of blood before him. Alejandro and Sakura arrive, helping up the wounded Belgian.

NIKOLAI

(Into his radio)

Vincenzo! HURRY!!

VINCENZO (V.O.)

I'm right above you, Nikolai – I can't land, so you'll have to get in while I'm hovering!

True to his word, Vincenzo lowers the helicopter above the shoreline of Kirby Cove Beach – Alejandro and Sakura help Daisuke in first, who is rapidly losing blood, while Lovisa provides cover fire.

VINCENZO

(Yelling over the engine noise)

Nikolai, Lovisa, come on!

Lovisa jumps aboard while Nikolai reloads his weapon – Vincenzo yells his name again, prompting him to back up slowly into the whirlybird, continuing firing even as the chopper ascends into the air.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – DAY

Nikolai slams the door shut and runs to help Daisuke, who is starting to convulse from blood loss.

Vincenzo looks at Sakura for a moment before inputting a set of coordinates into the navigation computer, activating the autopilot before jumping out of his seat to help his friend.

DAISUKE
(Devoid of strength)
Vincenzo... listen to me...

VINCENZO
(Trying to remain
calm)
Not now, Daisuke! Rest.

Nikolai is applying pressure on the wound while Vincenzo produces a bandage and disinfectant – Daisuke screams loudly in agony before grabbing the Italian pilot by the front of his T-shirt.

DAISUKE
(Weakly)
You need to know... Rosh... set us up.
Seek out... Helia.

He passes out as Nikolai's mind screams.

NIKOLAI
No, no! NO!! DAISUKE!! NO!!!

VINCENZO
He'll be OK, Nikolai. I stabilised him. He's going to be all right as long as he doesn't overexert himself, which means his field days are well and truly finished.

He removes his rubber gloves, throwing them in the bin. Nikolai calms down as he looks at his friend with a cold expression.

NIKOLAI
(Lowering his voice)
So where do we go from here?

VINCENZO
We go back to the mansion and get the truth, that's where.

Lovisa sighs as she looks irritated, while Sakura looks saddened, almost scared.

EXT. OCEAN HORIZON — DAY

The helicopter flies across the Atlantic Ocean and soars through the Horizon, the shining Sun illuminating the deceptively bright Sky.

INT. SUBAQUATIC OFFICE — EVENING

In the safety of the subaquatic domed city, Rosh glares at Kana fiercely while Nadia is beside him, his voice a howl of anger and frustration.

ROSH

(Screaming)

That is enough, Doctor! You want to unleash Hell on Earth!? Fine! But this IS NOT what the 5 Elements represent, Kana! The icon of the defender represents structure, hierarchy, respect, liberty and peace... and to subvert this notion would risk unravelling the very fabric of order itself!

Rosh sighs deeply and lets out a profanity in Hebrew before relaxing in his chair, turning his back to the cyberneticist.

NADIA

How could you do this, Kana?

KANA

Doctor Takahashi had outlived his usefulness... in all fairness, so had *Señor Rojas*.

Nadia stares at Kana.

NADIA

(Coldly)

You don't care about anything other than yourself, do you?

KANA

You will thank me when our collaborative efforts have restored the world to its orderly state. Need I remind you that you failed to mention my presence to your daughter, the current CEO of your precious organisation which she is trying to legitimise?

Rosh glares at her.

ROSH
(With barely
restrained anger)
I'll burn in the fires of Hell before
letting you hurt Helia. You're not
even a tenth of the woman she is.

KANA
If I'm right... and I usually am... then
she's going to send Robin Hood and
His Merry Band of Pissed-Off Rebels
to kill us all... only then, will we
see what kind of woman your precious
daughter really is.

Rosh yells at her in Hebrew and moves to hit Kana but Nadia
stops him.

NADIA
Don't, Rosh... let them come – if they
do.

KANA
(Mockingly)
That's right, Nadia... defend this
weakling. You'll see who's right in
the end.

Kana narrows her eyes and leaves the office, secretly
drawing a USB flash drive from her pocket and smirking to
herself as she walks out. Rosh and Nadia look at each other,
knowing they have both screwed up big time.

EXT. GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – EVENING

The Sun is setting in the Sky, the Horizon growing darker
with every passing second as Vincenzo's pink and white Kazan
Ansat chopper lands on a helipad outside the mansion, the
engines and rotor blades whirring down into silence as its
red doors slide open.

INT. HELIA'S STUDY – EVENING

Helia and Erik are present with Rainer, awaiting the Rhodium
Golems' arrival – the atmosphere is peaceful yet sad. Sure
enough, three unique knocks – each one harder than the
last – are heard. A contemplative-looking Helia raises her
head.

HELIA

Come.

The double-doors open to reveal Vincenzo and Nikolai, polarising facial expressions on their faces – Vincenzo looks disbelieving, almost hurt, while Nikolai is angry and ready to explode over his friend's near-death experience. Rainer senses this is a bad time and leaves, closing the doors behind him.

NIKOLAI

(Trying to remain
calm)

You... bitch. You sent us on a fucking suicide mission... why didn't you tell us your parents were going to be there?

Helia locks eyes with the angry Siberian, trying to remain calm.

HELIA

I'm sorry, Nikolai. I didn't know it was going to end up like that – it was just meant to be another assignment.

NIKOLAI

Another assignment? Another... why didn't you... by withholding vital information from us, you've made this situation ten times worse!

(Calming down
slightly)

I can understand he's your father and you're trying to fill his shoes – I can also accept that you made a mistake. We're all human... most of us are human. However, not owning up to it and knowingly sending us to our deaths was an even bigger mistake.

Vincenzo looks at Nikolai, who nods at him. Smiling slightly, he approaches Helia.

VINCENZO

It's true – Kana's alive.

Erik raises an eyebrow at this.

ERIK

What... how...?

VINCENZO

I don't know, but what I do know is that we need to hit the Iron Bitch so fucking hard she'll shatter into a million pieces, not just corrode.

NIKOLAI

No more games, Helia – tell us the truth. The 5 Elements haven't been fully legitimised, have they?

Helia and Erik both look at the angry mercenaries – they know the game is up.

HELIA

There's a secret base my father used in the early days of the 5 Elements – he said it was a place I could never visit.

VINCENZO

Where is this place?

HELIA

It's off the coast of Norway. It's uncharted, so you're not going to find it on any atlas. It's a subaquatic domed city at the bottom of the Norwegian Sea, accessible via sea and air – it was my father's first base of operations before this mansion became our headquarters... it's called Star 1.

ERIK

I'll come with you this time – you're going to need a replacement for your fallen friend.

Vincenzo screws up his face in distaste as he looks at the elder Drakenberg sibling.

VINCENZO

(Shocked/annoyed)

He's not dead, Erik!

Erik nods, acknowledging his mistake.

ERIK

You're right, I'm sorry.

Vincenzo and Nikolai look at each other, silently conferring before coming to a joint final decision.

NIKOLAI

OK, Erik – we leave tomorrow. I suggest you brush up on your knowledge of gun safety.

With those words, the angry Afro-Russian leaves the office, leaving the Italian pilot to placate the couple.

VINCENZO

Don't blame yourself, Helia – we didn't expect your parents at the scene. Sometimes fate has a habit of playing the hardest cards on those who least suspect it. It's not your fault.

Helia clenches her own fist in anger and betrayal. Erik, sensing trouble, approaches his wife to try and soothe her, looking at the good-natured pilot sadly.

ERIK

(Softly)

Maybe you shouldn't be here. I think you should leave.

Vincenzo replies in the affirmative in Italian as he turns around slowly and walks away, leaving the room – once he's gone, Helia breaks down into tears.

INT. INFIRMARY – NIGHT

Daisuke is lying on a bed in the mansion's infirmary, unconscious but alive. Nikolai and the girls are present as Vincenzo arrives. Sakura hugs her boyfriend worriedly. He sighs and lets his girlfriend go as they approach Nikolai, who is standing before Daisuke's out cold body in a rare moment of human vulnerability.

NIKOLAI

(In Russian)

I swear to whichever God exists out there, that I'll make sure that your crippling wasn't in vain.

(In English, turning around to face

Vincenzo)

This has to be the last one, Vincenzo – I can't do this anymore, none of us can.

VINCENZO

You're right, Nikolai. We might have to destroy Star 1 – it's the only way to stop Project Athena for good. We'll proceed as planned and as soon as that bitch is dead, we shall disband the Rhodium Golems for good.

NIKOLAI

What about our mountain base?

VINCENZO

We'll shut it down and convert it into a holiday home.

Nikolai looks at Vincenzo with a sad smile.

NIKOLAI

You always were an idealist, Vincenzo. I wish I'd known you sooner.

Vincenzo smiles back and nods appreciatively.

VINCENZO

Thanks, Nikolai... you've had your head up your recharge socket for too long. Try to get some sleep, will you? It's getting quite late, so don't be a Polaroid-head, OK? We're all friends here.

He leaves with Sakura – now alone with Lovisa, Nikolai turns to face the Swedish-Canadian beauty.

NIKOLAI

I can't do this anymore, Lovisa. I don't want to do this anymore. I've been firing a gun for as long as I can remember. I'm going to retire from my job once this is over and live my life as a man instead of a hero.

Lovisa approaches the Afro-Russian sympathetically, hugging him, her small body wrapping around his large and bulky frame.

LOVISA

You're a good man, Nikolai – you risked your life to save us.

NIKOLAI

Am I? I don't know, I try to be. I just know that Vincenzo deserves better than this – he's got Sakura, they're happy together... he'd make a wonderful father.

She smiles.

LOVISA

We'll put a stop to this together, Nikolai – don't worry.

He looks at her, smiling back.

INT. ROSH'S HOUSE – DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: "JERUSALEM, STATE OF ISRAEL – 1980"

A middle-aged couple sit in a house overlooking the city centre as they wait anxiously for the one person they can trust and be safe with to arrive – Rosh's parents, Adam and Sarah. She looks at her husband of more than 30 years sadly with a slight smile, trying to reassure him as he examines his now-slightly-grey hair.

SARAH

(In Hebrew)

Adam, relax... he'll be here. He said he would.

ADAM

I know, Sarah... it's just that I haven't seen him face to face since he left us... I haven't been able to tell him the things I wanted to tell him. I never gave our son a proper Bar Mitzvah.

(Trying not to cry)

Why did it have to happen on his birthday?

SARAH

(Soothingly)

I'm sorry, Adam.

She puts a comforting hand on his shoulder. Adam and Sarah jump up to hear a familiar trio of hard, booming knocks on the door, each knock punctuated with a short and sharp pause. Adam approaches the door and looks through its peephole – on the other end stands Rosh, wearing an expensive suit.

He frantically opens the door and steps outside the war-torn streets of the Jewish capital to embrace his only son, helping him into the house as the younger Goldman closed the door behind him. Rosh looks around him sadly, the house strange and familiar to him simultaneously. He is barely aware of his father speaking to him in Hebrew.

ADAM

(In Hebrew)

Rosh? Are you all right, my son?

Adam taps Rosh's shoulder to bring him back to reality. He turns to face his father, the elder Goldman looking concerned for his son's wellbeing.

ROSH

Yes, Father... I'm fine.

(Smiling at his
mother)

It's good to see you again, Mother.

(Hugs her)

I think you know why I'm here.

ADAM

To see us again, right?

ROSH

Right. I came here because something happened 16 years ago, which impeded my journey into manhood... now I'm here to complete the voyage.

Adam, understanding, quickly produces a trio of wine glasses with a bottle of wine, pouring some into each glass.

ADAM

Mazel tov, Rosh.

SARAH

Mazel tov, my son.

Rosh smiles almost imperceptibly as he lets a tear or two fall down his cheek. He thanks his parents in Hebrew before clinking his glass with theirs, downing the wine with meaning and feeling. He embraces both his mother and father, who return the gesture happily before locking eyes with both his parents.

ROSH

Where I'm going... you cannot follow. I came here not only to reconcile but to administer some long overdue retribution.

(MORE)

ROSH (cont'd)
*I know the people who desecrated us
 that day are living here, and I know
 where to find them.*

Adam looks pained as Sarah sighs sadly, her suspicions confirmed.

SARAH
Why, Rosh?

ROSH
*Because I'm the only one who can.
 They went unpunished thanks to using
 their religion as a political tool...
 that doesn't change the fact that
 they hurt you, me... us... for something
 as infantile as the nonsensical
 ravings of a lunatic mind who praised
 a fictitious deity... who supposedly
 condones violence in His name, and
 this is the aftermath of their
 brutality, their stupidity and their
 hypocrisy.*

*(Gives them two ingot
 bars – one gold, the
 other silver)
 Take these and disappear for a while.
 I worked out how to synthesise
 precious metals. Tell nobody of this...
 because what I'm about to do is going
 to turn a lot of heads and I don't
 want either of you getting caught in
 the crossfire.*

He embraces his parents one more time and proceeds to take one last look at the house around him. Smiling sadly, Rosh bids them farewell in Hebrew as he opens the door and leaves, closing the door behind him, as his parents do nothing but watch their only son leave in a maelstrom of confusion and relief. Sarah eventually breaks into tears and starts crying in Adam's arms, who holds her while trying to restrain his own tears.

INT. GREEK RESTAURANT – DAY – LATER (FLASHBACK)

Entering the place, he takes a seat and waits patiently, having chosen his path in life. Some time later, a pair of men enter the place – one dressed in light grey, the other dressed in a fiery orange. They instinctively approach him and sit before him. He looks at the men calmly.

ROSH
 (In Arabic)
I'm glad you made it.

The PENITENT MAN, the more remorseful of the two in light grey, tries to put on a brave face.

PENITENT MAN
Hey, an offer of free food is never something I turn down.
 (He feels Rosh scan him, analysing him)
Look... about what happened...

Rosh smiles enigmatically to cut him off.

ROSH
...it's quite all right. I know you've paid for your sins. The question is: are you truly sorry for what you did?

The penitent man looks at Rosh with an expression of sincerity and defeat, guilt and remorse evident in his voice.

PENITENT MAN
Not one day goes by that I don't feel regret. I was a fool back then, a stupid, impressionable fool who committed that terrible crime. I left Israel in the aftermath of my trial, and I spent the past decade and a half in solitude, in the mountains of Tibet. When I heard of your return, I knew I had to atone for my sins. I'm truly sorry. If you hate me and want to spend the rest of your life hating me... I'll understand.

He weeps as Rosh simply sighs sadly – the man before him is a wreck, his crisis of faith having shaken his own foundation in life. He nods and gave him some money.

ROSH
Take this money and leave... start anew.
 (Notices the man's stunned expression)
I mean it... take the money and go. Leave this place and start your own life – be the man YOU want to be, not what society and its rigid rules think you should be.

The repentant former extremist gets up and thanks Rosh in Hebrew as he leaves with his newfound start in life. Now alone with the piece of shit who instigated the attack on his family and heritage, Rosh's mood quickly changes to one of vindictive retribution.

The orange-clad man – the UNREPENTANT MAN – looks back at him.

UNREPENTANT MAN

(In Arabic)

What about me?

ROSH

Are you sorry for what you did all those years ago?

UNREPENTANT MAN

(Coldly)

That was in the past. Why are you still obsessed with it?

Rosh's eyes widen slightly, the normally calm and collected polymath feeling his anger bubble to the surface.

ROSH

(Icily)

You and your former partner-in-crime who I took out on that day robbed me of my Bar Mitzvah and insulted my heritage... not just mine, but that of every person, every Jew, in this country.

Rosh's voice thickens as his face tightens into a demonic snarl.

UNREPENTANT MAN

You are a heretic because of your heritage and your refusal to obey God's word. I am the messenger from the Heavens. You do not deserve the Promised Land. Your parents are demons, and you are a demon. Demons cannot hurt those with faith and courage.

The angered polymath gets to his feet in the empty Greek restaurant before locking eyes with the venomous snake before him. He points a handgun at the man – a Beretta Model 1951 9mm semiautomatic pistol.

ROSH
 (Angrily)
Get up.
 (The other man does
 so as Rosh pulls
 back the hammer on
 his gun)
*I know what you and your kind did in
 London. Give your so-called "God" my
 regards.*

He fires three accurate shots into the man's body. BANG! BANG! BANG! The bullets tear through the scumbag's heart, throat and skull, ultimately killing him as his corpse crumples onto the table, the white tablecloth stained red with his blood. Rosh decocks and pockets his pistol calmly as he walks out of the Greek restaurant with cold, unflinching eyes, his descent into well-intentioned extremism complete.

EXT. HELIPAD – THE NEXT DAY

SUPER: "BODØ, NORDLAND, NORWAY"

Vincenzo's helicopter soars through the Horizon as it lands on an improvised helipad on the outskirts of a Norwegian town, the Sun setting as the Sky begins to darken.

INT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – EVENING

Inside the chopper, Vincenzo, Nikolai and the Drakenberg siblings exchange knowing looks as the rebels gather around a map and plan of the subaquatic domed fortress.

LOVISA
 OK, this is the plan. We make our way to the shoreline and find a way into Star 1 – the base is protected by an elaborate security system, so it's up to Vincenzo to hack into it.

Vincenzo locks eyes with Lovisa, his expression one of combined frustration and disbelief.

VINCENZO
 I can't, Lovisa – the encryption is too powerful, plus it's a nonstandard mechanism, using a private key-based cryptography.
 (MORE)

VINCENZO (cont'd)

It would require a unique identifier from authorised personnel unless you can find a back way into the installation, which would be less secure. Erik and Lovisa look at each other briefly as the Swedish resistance leader raises an eyebrow slightly out of curiosity, a plan forming in his head.

ERIK

We should split up into two groups – Nikolai, Alejandro and I will infiltrate the city and reach the shoreline that way.

Lovisa turns to face her brother with a combined look of surprise and restrained admiration.

LOVISA

Good idea, Erik – while you make your way to the town's harbour, I will head directly into the Norwegian Sea itself – I'll perform an underwater incursion and sneak into the installation that way. Vincenzo, you stay here and monitor our progress.

Without another word, the Rhodium Golems gear up and disembark. Nikolai's large hand goes to his beloved Kalashnikov assault rifle but he hesitates for a moment as he grips it, spotting Daisuke's FN M249 LMG beside it – he turns to face Vincenzo.

NIKOLAI

You going to be OK? You're not exactly well-equipped, are you?

VINCENZO

I'll be fine – I've got my Benelli and my Dragunov ready.

NIKOLAI

Equip the Dragunov – we're unlikely to need your help on the ground but we might need you to pick off some targets from above.

(Approaching Vincenzo)

Vincenzo, you've got to look after yourself now – if anything happens, then I'll get Erik and Lovisa to safety and you escape, OK? Don't be a bloody hero.

(MORE)

NIKOLAI (cont'd)

If you think Daisuke nearly dying is taking its toll on all of us, then I can't imagine how I'd feel if I lost you.

Vincenzo sighs and looks at his friend for a moment, replying in the affirmative in Italian with a nod.

VINCENZO

Same goes for you – try not to end up like Daisuke. Oh, and before I forget: Rainer gave me this.

He hands him a small red cylinder with a nuclear symbol on it. Nikolai eyes it up carefully.

NIKOLAI

What is it?

VINCENZO

It's an experimental nuclear fission detonator – you'll need it to shutdown the protection grid.

Nikolai pockets the detonator and thanks Vincenzo in Russian as he disembarks and joins the others as he closes the door behind him, the operatives disembarking from the safety of the whirlybird and into the shadows of darkness that greet them.

EXT. CITY STREETS – NIGHT – LATER

Nikolai, Erik and Alejandro enter the town of Bodø, the heretic, the lieutenant and the hologram observing their surroundings carefully as they try to look inconspicuous.

Nikolai looks at an electronic map on his wrist computer, the Siberian scanning the layout of the city before him, a cop car some distance away, guarded by a single lonely police officer. He turns to face Erik and Alejandro calmly and confidently.

NIKOLAI

I think we can reach Bodø Harbour in less than half an hour if we head into the city centre, but we'll need transportation if we're going to stand a chance. We're not too far away from the police station – there's a squad car parked over there – we can use that if we can make it, but we're going to have to get rid of the cop guarding it first.

Thinking for a moment, he decides to execute his improvised plan before his mind can stop his heart. Nikolai jumped out of his hiding spot and approaches the police officer. He hides for a several seconds as the cop spoke into his radio in Norwegian.

He then jumps out and a fight ensues between the cop and the heretic. The officer puts up a good fight but he is no match for the 2-metre-tall musclebound giant.

The Afro-Russian eventually prevails as he slaps the cop's ears and throws him into the police car, knocking him out. He searches the unconscious police officer's form, eventually spotting a set of car keys as the others emerge from their hiding spot.

ERIK

Holy shit – you got him!

Nikolai smirks.

NIKOLAI

Damn right I did.

(Shows them the car
keys)

We've just inherited a cherry top.

He gets in the driver's seat, with Erik beside him and Alejandro in the rear. Nikolai guns the engine as the police car heads into the streets of Bodø.

EXT. SHORELINE – NIGHT

A pair of ready-for-action women are present – Lovisa and Sakura – dressed in sapphire blue and ruby red Lycra racerback swimsuits respectively, with rucksacks sporting their national flags. Lovisa calmly affixes a pair of swimming fins to her feet while Sakura sets up oxygen tanks on the rucksacks.

Lovisa looks at the Moon for a while until she feels a hand on her shoulder, causing her to wheel around in panic – it's Sakura.

SAKURA

Hey... are you all right?

LOVISA

Yes... I'm fine.

Her voice is quiet and meek as Sakura pulls her friend into a hug, the two women embracing each other soothingly.

As their bodies part, they look into each other's eyes and smile softly.

SAKURA

Let's go – do this for your parents,
Lovisa – and your brother... make those
sons of bitches pay for what they've
done.

Lovisa lets out a confident affirmation in Swedish as they approach the water.

LOVISA

I'll take the point and I want you to
cover me... and be careful.

She jumps into the sea, the ocean waves gliding across her smooth, flawless skin as she swims briefly before diving under the surface, with Sakura following suit shortly afterwards.

EXT. NORWEGIAN SEA UNDERWATER – NIGHT

Lovisa swims deeper into the ocean, leading Sakura. As they approach the entrance to an underwater hangar, a compartment opens nearby and a torpedo is fired, exploding near Lovisa, knocking her out. She falls and hits her head on the ocean floor, her oxygen tank exploding. Sakura swims over to her rescue.

INT. STAR 1 OCEAN HANGAR BAY – NIGHT

The Japanese beauty thrusts her head above the surface, gasping for air as she removes her damaged oxygen tank, the canister sinking to the bosom of the ocean before detonating with a muffled BLOOP! Wasting no time, Sakura helps the out-cold Lovisa out of the pool and lays her on a flat surface, initiating mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

Sakura strikes down her closed fist – HARD – on Lovisa's chest. The Nordic beauty's eyes click open as she gets to her knees, coughing up seawater before getting her breath back. Exclaiming under her breath in Swedish, she looks up to see Sakura's face change from panic to relief.

SAKURA

I'm glad you made it.

They embrace each other.

LOVISA

So am I.

(MORE)

LOVISA (cont'd)
(Smiling slightly)
Let's do this.

BEGIN MONTAGE

The girls open their rucksacks and change into their signature outfits once again, their tight-fitting Spandex catsuits hugging their bodies as they adjust their ponytails. They load and cock their silenced pistols and holster them with their knives.

END MONTAGE

Now geared up for action, the girls are ready for the next part of the plan. Lovisa looks at a bright yellow miniature submarine and turns to face Sakura, who smirks and nods understandingly, as if the two *femme fatales* share a psychic link.

Hiding behind the minisub, the beautiful but deadly blonde inquisitress waits patiently with her knife and combat pistol drawn as a 5 Elements engineer walks towards her location. She grabs him and holds him at knifepoint, issuing him a warning in Swedish.

Fumbling around in his pockets, the engineer produces a pair of keys – one gold, the other silver – attached to a yellow keyring. Thanking the man in Swedish, Lovisa simply squeezes his neck and gently lets him fall to the floor unconscious, hiding the out-cold mechanic in a nearby locker.

Sakura emerges from her hiding spot, looking impressed as Lovisa unlocks the minisub, throwing her rucksack into the deep sea vehicle as her friend follows suit. Nikolai's voice comes from her radio.

NIKOLAI (V.O.)
We're near the base, so here's the deal: Erik, you investigate the base further and try to find a way to give Vincenzo access to the complex. Lovisa, you and Sakura dig up all the information you can find and be careful – the facility is full of all sorts of strange characters – guards, bio-technicians, even trained combat troops.

Sakura opens a door which leads into the base itself.

SAKURA
Let's lock and load.

They stride into the complex/facility with their guns drawn, looking and feeling determined.

EXT. HARBOUR – NIGHT

SUPER: "BODØ HARBOUR"

On the shoreline of this town with an ocean view, the sound of a police siren wailing in the distance can be heard, accompanied by the revving of an automobile engine. A Norwegian squad car enters Bodø Harbour, its siren suddenly falling silent as its red and blue lights dim into darkness.

INT./EXT. NORWEGIAN POLICE CAR – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Three figures – Erik the front passenger, Nikolai the driver and Alejandro the rear passenger – look at each other in the law enforcement vehicle, the trio exchanging serious looks as the atmosphere thickens with every passing second.

NIKOLAI

OK, Alejandro... this is your last chance. After this, there's no turning back – we're about to cross the Event Horizon. You still want to help?

ALEJANDRO

Yes, Nikolai. It's my fault that Lovisa was turned into a killing machine and that the rod of punitive evil threatens to keep the world in the dark ages. I will do my best to help you. You have my word on it.

Nikolai and Erik exchange looks, the mercenary and former rock star communicating without speaking for a moment, as if they understand each other for the first time in their lives.

NIKOLAI

OK... let's go.
(Lowering his voice)
This time, there will be no mistakes.

The trio exit the police car and head for the harbour.

EXT. SECRET OCEAN BASE HELIPAD – NIGHT

Nikolai, Erik and Alejandro approach a yachtsman, conversing in silence. He escorts the trio to the helipad.

Thanking the boat pilot, Nikolai pays the man in Norwegian Krone as the amphibious vehicle returns to the shoreline, the lights on the base's entrance their sole source of illumination. A Plutonium Phoenix officer approaches with a subordinate.

OFFICER

What are you three doing here? This is a restricted area! Leave at once!

Nikolai turns to face Erik and nods slowly and sharply, almost imperceptibly. Before either the officer or the soldier can react, both rebels deliver a punch to their opponents, knocking them out cold, their unconscious forms falling to the floor.

NIKOLAI

Take his uniform and search his body for any keys or access cards – the guns are biometrically locked, so if you've got an hour to spare hacking them, then by all means, be my guest. Erik, find your way to the computer room and monitor my progress. Alejandro, you're with me.

Erik does so, spotting a gold key on the unconscious officer. Nikolai takes a silver key and they enter the elevator, descending into Star 1 itself.

INT. STAR 1 ARCHIVES – NIGHT

Lovisa and Sakura are busy looking through the electronic documents as they uncover mass after mass of incriminating evidence against the 5 Elements.

LOVISA

Look at this, Sakura!

She shows her Japanese counterpart the evidence laid out before their very eyes.

SAKURA

I can't believe what I'm seeing.

The girls save all the data to a flash drive, pocketing it. Lovisa feels a sharp blow to the back of the head, knocking her out. She cries out wordlessly as her attractive model figure falls to the floor with a dull clunk. Sakura's hourglass body follows suit as Kana looms over them, a wicked smile spreading across the ruthless roboticist's face.

KANA
You know what you must do.

The Plutonium Phoenix troopers protecting her snap a military salute.

INT. SUBAQUATIC OFFICE – NIGHT

ZAP! A sharp surge of electricity rages into Lovisa's body, waking her up, the Swedish-Canadian beauty screaming in azure agony as she feels the volts course through her veins, burning her nerves and muscles.

LOVISA
(Screaming)
NO!! STOP!!

She struggles to free herself in vain, her wrists and ankles enclosed in metal restraints, her body lying on a flat, angular platform. The electricity suddenly switches off as Kana approaches Lovisa calmly, the roboticist and the former assassin looking at each other coldly.

KANA
(Mock-comforting)
Be a good girl and give me the flash drive, please.

Lovisa simply musters every gram of confidence and courage in her soul and spits as hard as she can in her face.

LOVISA
(Defiantly)
Fuck you.

She glares at Kana, who simply wipes away the spit with a tissue before turning to a Plutonium Phoenix officer, who nods wordlessly. A series of flashing strobe lights illuminate and blink rapidly before the two women, disorienting them.

The lights intensify as Sakura cries out in Japanese. Rosh winces at the display of pain and panic before him as Kana switches off the disorienting lights, approaching Lovisa calmly as she puts her hand on her shoulder in mock affection.

KANA
Come on, Miss Drakenberg.. give me what I want and I'll consider letting you and your friend go. I might take you back if you're lucky.

A soldier approaches Sakura calmly, placing her hand on a flat receiver-like pad before lowering a transmitter on the top. The Asian beauty screams in agony as she feels a painful burning sensation surge through her body, searing her skin as she curses in Japanese. Lovisa struggles to turn to the torturer.

LOVISA
 (Pleadingly)
 Stop it! Please! You'll kill her!
 (In Swedish, raising
 her voice)
God damn it, I said STOP IT!!

She swears at the soldier in Swedish. Rosh looks at the torture before him, then at Kana, then back at the captured reporters. He covertly flicks a switch underneath his desk, surreptitiously tweaking a rotary dial as if he is adjusting a radio. He then stands up.

ROSH
 (Raising his voice)
 Stop!
 (The troops do so and
 snap him a military
 salute)
 Leave us, please.

The officer and his subordinate do as they are told. Rosh and Kana glare at each other, their relationship reaching its breaking point.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – NIGHT

A lone Vincenzo is monitoring the team's progress when the sound of shrieking women suddenly blurts into his ears – he removes his headphones in pain and winces from the sudden burst of noise. Adjusting the volume, he puts on his headphones and realises what is wrong – he curses in Italian and turns back to face the radio.

INT. STAR 1 CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Nikolai strides through the corridors of Star 1 carrying a double-barrelled plasma rifle with a futuristic holographic sight – known to the 5 Elements as a Dual-Neutron Disruptor. Cursing in Russian, he takes cover as a group of Plutonium Phoenix troops march past him, their footsteps receding into silence.

VINCENZO (V.O.)
 (Trying not to panic)
 Nikolai, Erik, Alejandro, this is
 Vincenzo. Come in.
 (Long pause)
 Nikolai, Erik, Alejandro – respond!

NIKOLAI
 Yes, Vincenzo, what is it? I'm kind
 of the middle of something here.

Vincenzo breathes an inaudible sigh of relief.

VINCENZO (V.O.)
 Lovisa and Sakura have been
 captured – their screams of agony are
 filling up the chopper like a crappy
avant-garde album on steroids. You're
 going to have to proceed to Rosh's
 office and get them out of there.

Erik's voice is heard over the radio as he yells profanities
 in Swedish but Nikolai stops him.

NIKOLAI
 Erik, don't!

ERIK (V.O.)
 Nikolai, my sister's life is in
 danger!

NIKOLAI
 I understand, but we can't afford to
 make any more mistakes, otherwise
 we'll never be able to put this
 behind us. I need you to focus.

Erik replies in the affirmative in Swedish before doing as
 he is told.

ERIK (V.O.)
 What would you have me do, then?

NIKOLAI
 I need you to get to the base's
 central computer room and monitor my
 progress from there. I'll go after
 the Iron Bitch.

ERIK (V.O.)
 OK, I'm not far off. Just bring her
 back alive.

NIKOLAI
Count on it. Out.

He strides towards the source of the noise, keeping his double-barrelled plasma rifle armed and ready.

INT. STAR 1 MAINFRAME ENTRANCE – NIGHT

Reaching the entrance to his destination marked by a marble floor with a gold and silver door, Erik fires his new plasma weapon at a single guard, killing him. Searching the trooper's corpse, Erik locates a plasma energy cell and a gold access card, inserting the key into the electronic lock.

INT. STAR 1 CENTRAL COMPUTER ROOM – NIGHT

The double doors open with an ominous WHOOSH as the Swedish-Canadian rebel hides the soldier's body in a nearby locker before striding into the computer room, the double doors closing behind him with a resounding CLICK. He walks up to a computer monitor with a keyboard hanging on a nearby wall, activating it.

COMPUTER (V.O.)
Master Control Terminal activated –
access granted.

Erik hacks into the MCT, the monitor flashing an assortment of vivid and bright colours before him as he removes his disguise. The information presented on the screen shocks him. His mind exclaims jubilantly as he continues reading, drawing his radio.

ERIK
Nikolai, Erik here – I've found a way to close down Star 1's defence zone. There's a device called a Security Cube in a basement below sea level. You'll need a fission detonator to destroy it.

NIKOLAI (V.O.)
Yes, Erik, don't worry.

He curses in Russian while opening fire on an unseen assailant.

INT. STAR 1 CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Nikolai strides down a pristine-looking corridor with his plasma gun armed and ready, aiming down the weapon's holographic sight. Jumping out of a corner, he is knocked to the floor by a familiar figure, a boot impacting with his stomach as he keels over in pain, dropping his plasma gun.

ALEJANDRO

Get up and take me to Rosh...

(Removing Nikolai's
helmet)

Nikolai!?

(Helping him up)

I'm sorry... are you all right?

NIKOLAI

(Mildly irritated)

Yes, I'm perfectly all right, thank you. Erik and I had to steal some uniforms in order to break into this place. Looks like the act was too convincing.

(Pauses to think then
grabs Alejandro's
shoulders urgently)

Where are the girls being held!?

ALEJANDRO

(Slightly scared)

Rosh's office! It's this way! Come on!

Releasing the Peruvian-Australian hologram, he discards the rest of his disguise and cocks his plasma rifle, following her to the location of the main office, residence of the CEO of the 21st Century Bavarian Illuminati. Nikolai fires a dual-plasma grenade at the doors, blowing them wide open.

INT. SUBAQUATIC OFFICE – NIGHT

BLAM! The energy balls blow the doors to pieces as Nikolai and Alejandro walk into Rosh and Nadia's office.

NIKOLAI

FREEZE!!

(Aiming his gun at
the officer
torturing the girls)

Release them!

He fires a dual-plasma shot at the restraints holding the Swedish-Canadian woman and her Japanese counterpart before firing another shot at the cruel officer, killing him. The officer screams in pain as he falls to the floor, dead. Lovisa climbs off the flat platform and runs into Nikolai's arms, hugging him.

LOVISA
Nikolai! I knew you'd save me.

NIKOLAI
I couldn't do it on my own, Lovisa.

He hands Lovisa to Alejandro, who immediately stands beside her protectively. Sakura bows before Nikolai, thanking him in Japanese.

SAKURA
We've got more than enough evidence to shut down these bastards forever. Come on, let's get out of here.

KANA (O.S.)
Just one moment.

Nikolai looks towards the shadows, the Eurasian cyberneticist emerging from her hiding spot. Instinctively, Nikolai raises his plasma rifle and aims it squarely at Kana's head.

NIKOLAI
Give me one good reason why I shouldn't melt your precious brain.

KANA
Wouldn't you like to know the truth? Lovisa truly was perfect – go ahead: ask her. An impressionable young woman with an insecure personality thanks to her overprotective older brother, her demanding father and her passive mother, coupled with a desire to be heroic... sound familiar? You can talk to her if you don't believe me.

Nikolai shakes his head as he snaps out of his reverie. Unknown to him, however, he has one last ally helping him out. Rosh turns around in his chair, facing the schismatic iconoclast with a calm, almost sad look in his eyes. Salvatore aims his gun at Rosh coldly.

ROSH
Number 2...
(MORE)

ROSH (cont'd)
 (Kana turns to face
 him)

...I think I've just about had enough
 of your callous and ruthless
 attitude, and your blatant disregard
 for human rights.

(Kana's face shifts
 into an expression
 of panic)

I do not tolerate betrayal or
 deception. You are out of the 5
 Elements on pain of death – a prison
 team will be here shortly to take you
 away.

He stands up, locking eyes with his former subordinate.
 Kana's face curls into a snarl as Nikolai and Nadia are
 stunned. She shoots Rosh in the torso with a plasma pistol –
 her Slow-Fire Protector, burning a hole in his flesh and
 just narrowly avoiding his heart! Thinking quickly, Kana
 turns and bolts out of the open door as Nikolai helps Rosh,
 the fallen heresiarch cursing in Hebrew as Nadia runs to her
 husband's aid.

NIKOLAI

(Soothing)

Rosh, look at me – you're going to be
 all right. Where's the Security Cube?
 I need to know where it is so my
 pilot can land and evacuate any
 survivors.

Grunting with effort to prop himself up, Rosh looks at
 Nikolai calmly, feeling a wave of redemption and absolution
 crashing down onto his soul.

ROSH

It's in the basement, 1 kilometre
 below sea level. Use the fission
 detonator to destroy it.

He screams in azure agony as Nadia disinfects his wound
 before wrapping up the blast area with a bandage, helping
 him up. Nikolai and Alejandro exchange knowing looks of
 mutual respect and allegiance.

NIKOLAI

Alejandro, help them – get him to
 safety. I'm going to destroy the
 Security Cube and put a stop to this
 chaos.

Before parting, he gives Lovisa a small, almost imperceptible, smile followed by a nod to Sakura as he primes his plasma rifle and heads towards his destination.

INT. STAR 1 CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Running through the skull-white corridors of the artificial aquifer, Nikolai activates his radio and wrist computer, sprinting as fast as his legs will carry him.

NIKOLAI

Erik, your sister's safe – how do I get to the basement!? Upload the directions onto my wrist computer!

Erik's voice is heard on Nikolai's radio.

ERIK (V.O.)

(Relieved)

Thanks, Nikolai. Don't worry – I've marked the location on the map for you. I know you have a tendency to get lost without clear instructions, so you can thank me for that.

Nikolai smirks to himself and replies humorously in Russian. Reaching a darkened corridor with a marble floor, the Afro-Russian approaches a set of double doors made of gold and silver, with the 5 Elements' logo embossed on them. Opening the doors slowly, he enters the vertical transporter and the metal cage's doors slide closed before him, beginning its descent into the 10th Circle of Hell.

INT. STAR 1 BASEMENT LEVEL – NIGHT

The basement elevator's double doors slide open silently as Nikolai exits the glass and steel transporter, the bright and luminous skull-white architecture on the upper levels replaced by a dark and foreboding blood-red. Drawing his plasma rifle, he cocks it anxiously and strides into the darkness, activating his tactical light.

NIKOLAI

Erik, how close am I? I just want to blow up this cube and get out of here.

ERIK (V.O.)

You're not far now, Nikolai – just keep going.

(MORE)

ERIK (V.O.) (cont'd)
 I don't have to tell you that the fission detonator's blast radius is quite large, so you'd better run like an ostrich on amphetamines.

NIKOLAI
 (Mildly annoyed)
 Very fucking funny – you try carrying an experimental pocket-sized nuke.

He reaches an assuming metal door. He fires a dual-plasma grenade at the door. BA-BAM! The twin energy spheres collide with their target, destroying the metallic gate completely.

INT. SECURITY CUBE CHAMBER – NIGHT

Nikolai enters the room, his light illuminating the otherwise dark chamber. He lays eyes on a large, bright red cuboid shape inside an upright cylindrical cage – the SECURITY CUBE. He approaches it with his fission detonator ready but is struck from behind. Looking up, he can see a transparent outline accompanied by glowing red eyes – a cyber-resurrected Gonta.

He can feel his finger squeeze the trigger on his plasma gun.

GONTA
 (Distorted/modulated,
 pleading)
 Help me... I'm a prisoner of death...
 only you can liberate me.
 (Demonic)
 Please... set my soul free.

NIKOLAI
 No! Gonta, stop! What happened back
 in San Francisco!?

GONTA
 (Pained)
 Kana... Rosh... this is the next stage of
 Project Athena. Please... kill me!

The cyborg attacks the Afro-Russian iconoclast at near-light speed. The Siberian dodges out of the way of the mechanised revenant before him, saved only thanks to his quick reflexes.

NIKOLAI
 (Anxiously)
 Gonta, stop!

He opens fire on Gonta in a futile attempt to snap some sense into him. The dual energy projectiles collide with their target, causing Gonta to wince and groan from the pain. Gonta curses in Japanese before advancing towards Nikolai at a slightly faster pace.

GONTA
(Demonic, pleading)
Nikolai... please... kill me.

Nikolai yells at Gonta in Russian as he narrowly avoids a series of spin kicks and flurry punches, diving over a computer workstation and executing a diving somersault to avoid the blows, letting out a jet of incandescent green fire from his multipurpose rifle.

NIKOLAI
(Combined panic and
anger)
GONTA!! STOP!!

For a moment, Gonta's red eyes turn green as his adaptive camouflage slowly wanes away to reveal his visible form – that of a tortured, pained man in a state of perpetual agony, like a robotic life support machine.

GONTA
(Natural voice)
You have done well, Nikolai... better than I could have expected. You truly are worthy of your name. You have come this far, now you must take the last step and bring down the final curtain on this twisted conspiracy.
(His eyes alternate between blue and green)
Look after Lovisa and Sakura for me.

Nikolai and Gonta look into each other's eyes, exchanging a sad, almost sympathetic smile.

NIKOLAI
(In Russian, sadly)
...thank you. I will, Doctor.

Gonta's eyes turn bright red once again as he charges at Nikolai in slow motion. Nikolai raises the plasma gun and pulls the trigger, yelling wordlessly. The dual plasma bullets sear through Gonta's body... and he stops before Nikolai, his knees buckling as he holds onto him.

GONTA
(In Japanese)
Nikolai... thank you, and farewell.

He collapses and falls to the floor as his eyes gradually dim into a peaceful, empty black. Nikolai stands there for a moment, transfixed by the realisation of what he's done. He soon snaps out of it as he plants the fission detonator on the security cube and activates it before legging it, the LED on the fission detonator changing from green to yellow, then orange... and finally a dangerous red.

INT. STAR 1 BASEMENT ELEVATOR – NIGHT

Nikolai punches the pushbutton switch to take him back to the upper levels of the domed fortress as a muted roaring sound is heard, a fireball ascending from below, increasing in both heat and size as the doors open.

INT. STAR 1 CORRIDOR – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Nikolai dashes out of the metal cage as the fission detonator goes off, destroying the Security Cube and taking out most of Star 1's mainframe basement with it. Nikolai looks at the display before him for a brief moment as he activates his two-way radio.

NIKOLAI
Erik, good news. The Security Cube is down.

He permits a small laugh of victory to escape from his larynx.

ERIK (V.O.)
Well done, Nikolai – I've just contacted Vincenzo, and he's notified us that the base is now visible on the radar. Meet me in the central computer room.

Nikolai replies in the affirmative in Russian before getting to his feet, heading towards the predetermined rendezvous point.

INT. STAR 1 CENTRAL COMPUTER ROOM – NIGHT

The doors to the computer room opens as Nikolai enters. He walks up to a familiar figure working on a console-like terminal – Erik.

NIKOLAI

Let's get the hell out of here, Erik.

ERIK

Not yet, Nikolai. I'm alerting the authorities to our presence, which should give us about 10 minutes. Don't worry, I don't plan on blowing up the place.

BANG! A single plasma shot sails through the air, colliding with Nikolai's kneecap, crippling him. The Afro-Russian falls to the floor as he yells in pain, dropping his plasma rifle in the process.

Erik turns around with his own plasma gun drawn only to be greeted by a woman with dark hair in a white outfit, brandishing a plasma pistol – Kana.

KANA

(To Nikolai)

You should have struck when the iron was hot, Nikolai.

(To Erik)

Activate the self-destruct sequence, Erik.

ERIK

Kana, don't do this – please. If Star 1 goes, then the whole world goes with it – technology, economy, society, everything.

As Erik speaks, he surreptitiously reaches behind his back, activating his radio.

KANA

(Firmly)

Don't bother trying to reason with me, Erik – I'm not grotesquely impressionable like your little sister. Maybe your friend here can be of better use.

On the F of "Friend", Kana brings down her foot onto Nikolai's injured kneecap, causing him to yell in agony, pressing and digging into the burned flesh, a wicked smile crossing her lips.

ERIK

Stop! All right, I'll do it. Please... don't hurt him.

(MORE)

ERIK (cont'd)
 (To Nikolai)
 I'm sorry I didn't take you more
 seriously, Nikolai.

Nikolai turns to face Erik with a slightly amused expression.

NIKOLAI
 I'm sorry, too, Erik.

Erik finally cracks as he turns to face the master control terminal, appearing to type in the correct sequence. In actuality, he is furtively alerting Lovisa and Sakura to their location.

INT. STAR 1 CORRIDOR – NIGHT

Lovisa and Sakura are present, wearing their signature outfits as they walk through the underwater base, taking cover every now and then to avoid approaching guards. Nikolai's agonised screaming is heard over the radio, sending a shockwave of panic into the Swedish beauty's mind.

LOVISA
 (Into her radio)
 Nikolai! Are you OK?

His screaming is replaced with a deep, abiding silence for several seconds followed by Erik's voice with a cryptic message.

ERIK (V.O.)
 (In Swedish)
Follow the signal.

There is a burst of static followed by silence.

LOVISA
*What signal? I don't understand.
 Erik, talk to me!*
 (Pause)
Erik, are you there? ERIK!!

Her wrist computer bleeps suddenly, showing her an automap of the complex/facility in a manner reminiscent of a radar system – a white spot in the centre marks her present location with a yellow 5-pointed star marking her target. Lovisa leads the way, giving Sakura an order in Swedish.

SAKURA
 Where are we going?

LOVISA

To save my brother – he risked everything to save me, he gave up his own happiness to ensure mine, and I owe him the same. Now, come on.

Sakura looks stunned at Lovisa's confidence and authoritativeness before following her friend and partner.

INT. STAR 1 MAINFRAME ENTRANCE – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

On arrival, Lovisa and Sakura raise their plasma sidearms and shoot at the keypad simultaneously, destroying the circuitry as the door slides open. Both girls then throw a smoke grenade into the opening, watching it burst and obscure their vision.

INT. STAR 1 CENTRAL COMPUTER ROOM – NIGHT

Kana turns around to face a combination of smoke and dust, clearly confused as to what the hell is going on. Lovisa threatens Kana in Swedish, aiming her pistol at her head with her Japanese friend following suit.

LOVISA

(Tranquil fury)

I'm going to kill you, you sick bitch.

KANA

Congratulations, Lovisa Drakenberg – you're finally living up to your potential.

LOVISA

Shut the FUCK UP!!

On the F of "Fuck", Lovisa pistol-whips Kana while Sakura keeps her own handgun pointed squarely at the evil scientist's head. Kana falls to the floor, clutching her wound in pain as an injured but still alive Nikolai watches from behind a control panel, hidden from view.

KANA

Your emotions make you weak, Lovisa... do you not realise that?

LOVISA

All I realise is that you are the Devil Incarnate and I'm going to send you back to Hell.

(MORE)

LOVISA (cont'd)
 This time there will be no lucky
 escape, because I'll finish you off
 myself, like a wild dog.

Erik looks at Lovisa, sensing his sister's decline into her former assassin persona – he steps forwards in an attempt to pacify her.

ERIK
 (In Swedish)
*Don't do it, Lovisa... it's what she
 wants.*

She looks at her brother.

LOVISA
*She has to pay for what she's done,
 Erik.*

ERIK
*This isn't you... don't go back to
 being that cold-hearted killer.
 Listen to me, Lovisa: Let go of the
 past. Try to move on, at least... if
 you don't, then you'll be stuck in
 this cycle forever. Let her suffer...
 trust me. Some people need to feel
 the pain they cause.*

Lovisa's finger squeezes the trigger of her plasma pistol, the evil scientist showing noticeable fear, even terror. After several seconds of hesitation, the Nordic beauty lets go of the trigger and holsters her gun, propping up Kana.

LOVISA
 I'd rather see you burn for your
 crimes.

KANA
 How noble of you...
 (Performs a martial
 arts move on Lovisa,
 knocking her out)
 ...stupid, but noble.

Nikolai takes advantage of the occasion to play his one last card, jumping from his hiding spot with his plasma rifle drawn.

Nikolai and Erik open fire on Kana with a combination of plasma and flamethrower attacks, burning and scarring the Kazakh-Slavic scientist's face!

Screaming in agony, Kana clutches her damaged face in pain and hobbles away. Lovisa helps up a wounded Nikolai, who turns to face Erik with gritted teeth. Erik curses in Swedish as he is faced with a sadistic choice – to help his friend or let the evil bitch go.

NIKOLAI

Erik, go after her, damn it! Take her out!

(Erik hesitates)

Erik, stop fucking about and fucking chase the bitch! That's an order!

Erik locks eyes with Nikolai, having made his choice.

ERIK

Fuck her – I need to get you to safety first.

NIKOLAI

What!? What the fuck are you talking about?! She's getting away!

LOVISA

Let her! We can pursue her another day – we've got to get out of here. The Norwegian authorities will be here any minute!

(To Sakura)

Sakura, help Nikolai!

(To Erik)

Erik, come with me – we're getting out of here via the minisub!

The Oriental beauty helps the Afro-Russian out of the control room while her brother backs her up – they walk out of the computer room before breaking into a run.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – DAY

Vincenzo can see a pair of figures on the helipad entrance to Star 1. Scanning the area with his security cameras, the Euro-Mediterranean aviator lands on the helipad. Sakura helps Nikolai into the chopper and patches him up.

VINCENZO

Where are the others – Erik, Lovisa and Alejandro? Are they OK?

NIKOLAI

Don't worry, they're escaping via minisub.

VINCENZO

What about Rosh and Nadia?

NIKOLAI

Alejandro got them to safety –
they're getting medical treatment at
the city hospital. They'll be OK.
Vincenzo, go!

Vincenzo replies in the affirmative in Italian and engages the dual throttle at maximum power, Sakura slamming shut the passenger doors as she rejoins her partner in the front.

EXT. SECRET OCEAN BASE HELIPAD – DAY – CONTINUOUS

The whirlybird ascends into the air, flying away from the damned installation as a fleeing yellow submarine is barely visible beneath the surface of the water.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

What about Kana?

NIKOLAI (V.O.)

I'm afraid she got away. Don't worry,
Vincenzo... we're going to finish the
fight if it's the last thing we ever
do. Olympus Mons WILL fall, trust me.

The chopper and miniature submarine disappear into the distance as the Sun rises.

EXT. GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – DAY

Vincenzo's helicopter soars through the Sky as the Horizon shines a bright baby blue thanks to the high-at-its-peak Sun.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Vincenzo, Nikolai and Sakura are present, the Italian pilot manoeuvring the helicopter expertly towards an improvised helipad in the mansion courtyard.

VINCENZO

(Into his radio)

Helia, this is Vincenzo. We've got
good news and bad news.

INT. HELIA'S STUDY – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Helia and Rainer are present, the CEO seated in front of her computer.

SWITCH BETWEEN VINCENZO/NIKOLAI/SAKURA AND HELIA/RAINER.

HELIA

What's the bad news, Vincenzo?

VINCENZO

Kana got away... again. I'm sorry.

HELIA

It's OK – what's the good news?

VINCENZO

Your parents are going to be OK.

HELIA

(Cutting him off
sharply)

Wait, what? My parents!?

VINCENZO

I think they were trying to tie up
loose ends.

NIKOLAI

(Bluntly)

That wouldn't be too far from the
truth.

Helia's eyes narrow slightly as she looks through her documents, eventually fishing out a black-and-white photograph of Star 1 dated from 1985. In the photograph, her parents are present, as well as Kana! She swears in Arabic and slams her fist on the desk.

RAINER

What is it?

She takes a few seconds to regain her composure.

HELIA

Vincenzo, I need you over here NOW.
We need to talk.

Vincenzo lands the whirlybird and kills the engines, the rotor blades whirring into silence.

VINCENZO

I'm coming, I've just landed. I'll be
there in a minute.

HELIA

Good... and bring Nikolai with you.
Out.

Click, dial tone.

BACK TO:

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – DAY

Vincenzo sighs and looks pensive as he exchanges a glance with Sakura before turning to face Nikolai, the Afro-Russian examining his plasma burn wound critically.

NIKOLAI

(Not facing Vincenzo)

Let me guess: she wants to give us
another mission?

VINCENZO

Something like that. The trail of the
madman has run cold.

Nikolai turns to face Vincenzo, locking eyes with his friend with a slight smirk and a solitary raised eyebrow.

NIKOLAI

Don't you mean madwoman? I'm not
surprised, considering we fucked up.
Come on, let's go.

They leave the chopper, one by one – first Vincenzo, then Nikolai, and finally Sakura, who closes the door with a SLAM! The silence is deafening.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE CARD: "TO BE CONCLUDED..."

TEASER PREVIEW FOR PART 3 FOLLOWED BY CLOSING CREDITS.

THE END