

BLACK RESET

Written by

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INT. NOXARO CORP - LAB - DAY

An insectoid robot buzzes like a bumblebee in a white void and scans around with red eyes. Scythe-like forelegs and articulate, gripping hind legs dangle from its body.

A swarm of identical robots cross this way and that. One of them knocks against a glass wall and keeps flitting along.

Their enclosure, a vial no larger than thumb, rests on a small, wheeled table cart in a sterile, white lab.

FINN, 30s, covered head-to-toe in scrubs, mouth covering, and safety goggles, peers into the vial.

The swarm of nanometric robots float, invisible at normal scale. Finn's two sets of blue, mechanical irises change in circumference to tune acuity and zoom.

Finn glances up at a big window overlooking the lab. In the observation lounge, CATHERINE, 40s, an imposing woman in sharp business-wear and a scarf, lords over proceedings.

Catherine's entourage of security stands around her--bulky men with high-fade haircuts. Varying cybernetic implants stick out from their suits or replace their eyes.

COREY (O.S.)

Finn.

COREY, 30s, another technician in scrubs, sits at a computer just outside the testing zone. Other techs also observe.

COREY (CONT'D)

Ready?

FINN

Yes. Ready. All nanomites online.

Corey punches a key. The software starts recording data and creating graphs. Another click, and a voice recorder starts.

FINN (CONT'D)

Nanomite neural interface test #132-
c: demonstration. In attendance is
Catherine Kellogg: vice President
in charge of Nanotech Development.

Finn slips on a glove jury-rigged with wires and sensors.

FINN (CONT'D)
Conducting the test is Finn Koston:
software and Dr. Corey Winnick:
robotic engineering. Commencing
deconstruction routine.

Finn screws the cap off the vial. A technician wheels in a microwave oven on a cart, starts it, and backs away. Finn holds out his gloved hand like a wizard.

Nothing happens for several seconds. Catherine squints. Finn makes a gun shape with his hand and pulls the "trigger." Electricity arcs inside the microwave oven, and it dies.

Catherine smiles.

FINN (CONT'D)
Deactivation successful. 356
nanites lost in arc event.
Commencing self-replication.

Finn gestures again. A thin whine emits while a fine powder snows behind the microwave viewing window.

FINN (CONT'D)
Nanites at 7,000 and climbing.

A hole blossoms on the oven like a bizarre, mechanical lesion and widens as components dissolve. Catherine claps, and her security joins her, though no sound reaches the lab.

FINN (CONT'D)
Self-replication success: 100%.
Terminating routine.

Finn makes a fist. The swollen swarm of nanites emerge from the oven like a puff of smoke and pack themselves back into the vial as a dense, silvery powder.

Finn tightens the cap on the vial, pulls his face covering down, and pushes back his hood. Fine, clean lines in Finn's skin show where cybernetics were implanted into his skull.

The other technicians cheer and converge on Finn. Catherine's entourage follows her out of the observation room. Corey catches Finn's hand for a shake.

COREY
Congratulations, Mr. Koston

FINN
Doctor Winnick, congratulations.
Your machines are a work of art.

COREY
Please. They'd be a throat irritant
if it weren't for you.

FINN
Time to reap our rewards?

COREY
First round's on me.

Catherine enters the lab and claps. Everyone joins. She homes
in on Finn.

CATHERINE
They say any sufficiently advanced
technology is indistinguishable
from magic. Watching you work, I
can see why.

Catherine shakes Finn's hand.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
A little birdy tells me I have you
to thank for cracking the software.

FINN
Well, Dr. Winnick is too kind.

CATHERINE
Oh, don't be so modest. You and
your team just changed the future
of systems maintenance. You deserve
a pat on the back.

One of Catherine's guards proffers a bottle of red wine.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
In fact, I organized a little
surprise for you all.

Catherine takes the bottle and gives it to Finn.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Here you go. Raise a glass for me,
to the future of nanotechnology.

The team claps. When Finn grabs the bottle, Catherine notices
the glove still on his hand.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Is this glove part of the system?

A hand emerges from the band of techs and takes the bottle.

COREY

Yes. Finn's idea was to reduce neural interpretation by pairing commands with a limited set of motion commands and targeting.

While they're talking, one of Catherine's entourage folds his hands behind his back, and a mechanical spider about the size of a human palm slips out of his sleeve.

The spider unfolds its legs, and the man lets it crawl down the back of his pant leg.

FINN

It's a little rudimentary. When the mites are able to build something other than more of themselves, then I'll feel like celebrating.

CATHERINE

Eyes on the next step. I love it.

Plastic cups appear on Winnick's desk, and one of the techs pours while everyone chatters.

The spider crawls across the floor and climbs up a chair sitting by the exit. On the chair rests a backpack. The spider hides behind it.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

Well, I've gotta go. The board will expect a report. You guys enjoy yourselves. Your team can head home as early as you want, with pay.

She walks away.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

I'm expecting even bigger things from you in the future, Mr. Koston.

She makes a "call me" gesture and disappears out the door.

COREY

Did she just?

Finn chuckles. Corey points to the back of his neck.

COREY (CONT'D)

Don't forget the, uh, the receiver.

FINN

Oh, right.

Finn tugs his collar down and reveals a cybernetic implant at the base of his neck. The implant houses a single, small slot with a device inserted.

Finn pinches the receiver and extracts a long, delicate chip out of his spine.

FINN (CONT'D)
To think, there used to be a time
when I couldn't stand having them
all buzzing in my head.

He takes the chip and vial to a small case with molded foam inserts and sets them inside. Corey hands him a cup of wine.

COREY
To changing the world?

FINN
Sure.

He taps his cup with Corey's.

EXT. NOXARO CORP - UNDERGROUND PARKING GARAGE - DAY

Finn emerges from the elevator in a business casual shirt and slacks. He slings the same backpack that the spider hid behind over his shoulder. Corey emerges right after.

COREY
See you later, bud. Donna's at
seven, right?

Finn flashes a thumb up over his shoulder as he crosses the spacious underground parking lot.

COREY (CONT'D)
And I don't want to hear any talk
about pinching pennies today. Live
a little, alright?

FINN
I'll try.

COREY
You'll do it.

FINN
I'll do it.

COREY
Alright. Be there.

Corey splits off. Finn squeezes between two sports cars and walks a couple lanes over to a vehicle with worn paint.

The car's driver-side door tries to open, but the motor grinds, and the door stalls. Finn pulls the door open and takes a seat. He throws his backpack in the backseat.

CAR VOICE

Please state a destination.

FINN

Home.

The car backs out and drives for the exit ramp.

EXT. CORPO DISTRICT - CONTINUOUS

Finn's car emerges onto a busy backstreet. Noxaro Tower, with "NOXARO" in big red letters on the side, stands as one of many skyscrapers in a metropolis surrounded by desert.

Holographic advertisements float between the buildings, and cyber-augmented pedestrians stroll the sidewalks.

CAR VOICE

There is a call from "Mom." Would you like to cast it to the vehicle?

FINN

Yes.

The display on the car's dashboard changes from a navigation graphic to the Noxaro logo.

AD NARRATOR

This call is sponsored by Noxaro:
Solutions are all that we sell.

The ad transitions to the streaming image of Finn's MOM, 60's, holding the camera.

MOM (V.O.)

Hola, guapo!

FINN

Hi, Mom. What's going on?

MOM (V.O.)

Oh, I'm just visiting Lucy.

Mom reaches with the camera to reveal a hospital room, namely, the reclining bed. Finn's sister, LUCY, 20's, rests on the bed's raised back support and waves.

Tubes connect Lucy to a dialysis machine, and an oxygen tube rests under her nose.

MOM (V.O.)
She wanted to bug you at work.

FINN
They actually let us go early. I'm on my way home.

LUCY (V.O.)
Can you drop by, then?

While Finn talks on the phone, the spider-bot emerges from under the backpack. It watches the conversation.

FINN (O.S.)
I kind of promised my team I 'd meet them for a drink later. They want to celebrate.

Finn's car stops at a light.

LUCY (V.O.)
Celebrate what?

A few cars behind Finn, a black SUV idles. Inside, five mercenaries in black tactical gear sit in grim silence.

The mercenary sitting in the middle of the back seat stares at nothing. His cybernetic eyes see through the red, fish-eyed lenses of the spider, and his hands work to control it.

FINN
Big breakthrough at work.

LUCY (V.O.)
Ohh, perfected the doomsday device?

MOM (V.O.)
Or maybe made a more affordable synthetic kidney?

LUCY (V.O.)
Mom.

MOM (V.O.)
I only tease. You've done so much, paying for your sister's treatment.

LUCY (V.O.)
Operation's tomorrow!

FINN

You'll be able to torment us non-stop once you're on your feet.

Mom giggles. Lucy blows raspberry.

MOM (V.O.)

Is there anything we can do for you? I hope all the money you've given isn't causing you problems.

FINN

No, Mom. I'm- I'm fine. Don't worry about me. Working for Noxaro gives me more than enough for everything.

MOM

Good. We're so proud of you. Well, we've bothered you enough. I'm sure you'd like to enjoy your day off, and Lucy should rest.

Lucy shrugs and nods.

MOM (CONT'D)

We love you! Bye bye!

The women wave. Finn waves back.

LUCY

Bye!

The call ends, and another Noxaro ad bookends the privilege. The spider crawls back under the backpack.

EXT. LITTLE KUROSAWA - DAY

Finn's car drives into a slum where identical brutalist apartment buildings fill every block, cyber-enhanced gangers open-carry, and neon signs provide the only color.

The car pulls into a multi-layer parking garage and parks in his reserved spot. Finn grabs his backpack and hops out.

EXT. FINN'S BLOC - DAY

A prostitute accosts Finn as he strolls down the exit ramp

PROSTITUTE

Hey, big boy. Fancy a roll?

FINN
No, thank you.

Prostitute crosses the street with him.

PROSTITUTE
Come on. You won't want any other
toy after you've had me.

FINN
I'm sure you're wonderful. I just
don't have the money. I'm sorry.

PROSTITUTE
I see you come through here every
day. You have money for those fancy
corpo shirts but not some pussy?

On the stairs leading up to the breezeway, Finn meets eyes
with SABLE, 30's, a statuesque and stone-faced woman,
tattooed, and with a visible plate in her skull. Metal
cybernetic hands hang from her jacket sleeves.

Sable stands in a group with INCOGNITO MAN, 40's, a stocky
man in sunglasses and a hat, and PATIENCE, 20s, a punky
tomboy leaning on the wide stairs that lead to the breezeway.

Patience's short, wavy, green hair contrasts with the fine
cyber-surgery lines in her skin. While Patience listens to
Incognito Man chatter, Sable gazes like a cat at a mouse.

PROSTITUTE (CONT'D)
...need someone special to help you
relax after a hard day at work.

FINN
Huh? Uh, sorry. Look, maybe another
time. Alright?

Finn maneuvers through the crowd in the breezeway.

PROSTITUTE
If you don't like my curves, I can
call my friend, Miguel. He's very
attentive, and he'll make you feel--

FINN
No! I- I'm not--

Finn reaches the open service lift.

FINN (CONT'D)
Look, I really just don't have the
money, okay? Maybe some other time.

He pushes the button for his floor. Prostitute shrugs and walks away. The lattice door closes, and Finn ascends.

INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - DAY

Finn enters and drops his bag by the door. He kicks a shirt on the floor and turns on his small T.V. The news chatters.

Finn tosses the remote and lumbers to his kitchenette. The mechanical spider slips from under Finn's backpack, scurries to a slim door next to the kitchenette, and squeezes under.

The spider crawls up a short water heater and finds a small, pressurized canister attached to the housing.

The spider crawls onto the canister and squats over the valve. A clamping mechanism extends from the spider's underside, clamps the valve, and twists it open.

As gas hisses out of the canister, the spider crawls to the top of the water heater and crushes its exhaust hose with another twist of the thoracic clamp.

The news changes topics while Finn microwaves a cup of Ramen. A video of a destroyed and over-flowing dam appears on screen

ANCHOR (V.O.)

Noxaro and the federal government are still trying to contain the devastation caused by the bombing of a dam on the Mississippi Delta just four days ago.

B-roll of a river flowing through a broken dam. Vehicles with the Noxaro logo and workers in hard hats mill about.

ANCHOR (V.O.)

The new dam, which would have provided much-needed power to the region, was destroyed when an explosive detonated near its base.

Footage changes to a flooded town.

ANCHOR (V.O.)

The uncontrolled water flooded townships downstream, which has resulted in the displacement of thousands of residents.

The footage changes to grainy video of masked people with guns running about in an urban environment. One throws a molotov cocktail off screen.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
Eco-terrorist organization, One
Earth, has claimed responsibility
for the attack.

Finn's face tightens, and he blinks like he's looking into a too-bright light. He squeezes his septum with his fingers.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
Only the latest in a string of
terrorist attacks and sabotage on
industrial infrastructure
perpetrated by the once-peaceful
non-profit organization.

The footage changes to a mugshot of MORT ESCOFF, 40's, a stocky and fatherly-looking blue-collar man. Finn marches to the bathroom and pops some ibuprofen.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
In response, Noxaro Corporation has
increased their reward for the
death or capture of leader Mort
Escoff to two-million dollars.

The microwave beeps. Finn takes the ramen out. He struggles to roll a bit of ramen on his fork.

ANCHOR (V.O.)
He's described as medium build,
with dark, thinning hair and--

Anchor's words distort into soft, indistinct chatter. Finn takes a step, but his leg gives out, and he falls.

Sprawled, Finn spots the spider-bot on his linoleum floor. Finn's eyes flutter, and he nears unconsciousness.

Incognito Man kicks the door in. He wears a gas mask and brandishes an assault rifle.

INCOGNITO MAN
Got him, here.

The spider-bot scurries away.

INCOGNITO MAN (CONT'D)
Spider! It's on the move!

He chases the spider bot and tries to stomp on it. It scurries under the couch.

Sable enters. The bot scurries from the other end of the couch, and she shoots a leg off from across the room. The bot crunches under Incognito Man's boot.

EXT. FINN'S BLOC - ALLEY - CONTINUOUS

The mercenaries in the black SUV sit parked in an alley. The merc controlling the bot blinks and shakes his head to clear it as he loses connection.

Without a word, the mercenaries grab their advanced assault weaponry and don masks. A few puff on blue inhalers.

EXT. FINN'S BLOC - CONTINUOUS

The five masked mercenaries emerge from the alley and double-time up the stairs to the breezeway. Prostitute presses herself against the railing to let them pass.

All the pedestrians outside the bloc shrink away as the death squad splits into two. Three enter the service lift. The other two kick open a door and run up the stairs.

INT. FINN'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Patience enters the apartment and checks Finn's pulse.

PATIENCE

He's already unconscious. We need
to move him, now.

Incognito Man drags Finn outside. Patience opens the closet, closes the valve on the canister and drops it in her satchel.

A neighbor opens her door. She meets eyes with Sable, retreats back into her apartment, and locks it.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

Further. Toward the elevators. He
needs fresher air.

Incognito Man drags Finn along. Sable takes point.

The service lift stands in a lobby between two wings of the bloc. The group stops at the end of the hall, and Incognito Man drops Finn. Patience and Sable take off their masks.

INCOGNITO MAN

Elevator's coming up. Be ready.

Patience taps Finn on the cheek.

PATIENCE

Finn Koston. Finn Koston, can you hear me? Wake up.

Finn stirs.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

You must wake. Our escape will be much easier if you ambulate.

The service lift arrives loaded with three mercenaries.

SABLE

Too late.

Sable fires her gun through the latticed elevator gate and backs into the hallway. Finn snaps into consciousness. Incognito Man fires his rifle as he drags Finn behind cover.

The mercs fire back, and the walls bloom with bullet holes.

SABLE (CONT'D)

Head for the stairs!

Incognito Man drops Finn and advances down the hallway. Patience tries to pull Finn to his feet.

PATIENCE

You have to get up.

Finn tries to stand like a newborn foal.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

Move!

Patience pulls at Finn. Finn takes two lurching steps and falls. The elevator mercs exit the lift and retreat down the opposite hall.

Sable fires and hits one. The merc staggers but continues to cover. Sable presses herself against the wall.

SABLE

Bloody pain blockers.

Patience pulls Finn along. Incognito Man yanks open the door to the stairs and peeks down the stairwell. Mercs a couple floors below fire up at him.

Incognito Man fires back, but the stairs work as cover from both directions. He backs into the hallway.

INCOGNITO MAN

Stairs are covered!

SABLE

Shit.

Sable fires a couple covering shots at the mercs, turns, and bounds up the hallway with the speed and grace of a leopard. She grabs the neighbor's door jamb to stop.

SABLE (CONT'D)

In here!

Sable kicks the door in. The neighbor screams.

SABLE (CONT'D)

Hide under the bed. Go!

The neighbor crawls across the floor and into the bedroom. The apartment layout is identical to Finn's except that a single, long window looks out at the building adjacent.

Incognito Man and Patience run up the hall, Finn in tow. Mercs pop out from the other end, and Incognito Man sprays bullets at them. The mercs return fire.

The group keeps pushing. Incognito Man trades shots, and Patience drags Finn. Incognito Man shoots a merc in the chest. A round grazes his shoulder.

They reach the door, and Patience shoves Finn inside. Incognito Man follows and holds the broken door shut.

INCOGNITO MAN

Sable, flank 'em. Use the window.

Sable tosses Incognito Man her pistol, and Incognito Man tosses his rifle to her. Sable shoots out the apartment's window and kicks a hole open for herself.

INCOGNITO MAN (CONT'D)

Patience, try to breach them, and be careful. I'll cover you. Mr. Koston, try not to get shot.

FINN

Who are you people?

Sable crawls onto the window ledge recessed into the building's brutalist exterior. The hard pavement frowns at her from a dozen floors below.

Incognito Man fires at the two mercs that advance from the stairs. One stumbles as he's struck but pushes forward.

Sable leaps to the next window over and catches the ledge with her metal hand. Her body swings under her. One jerk, and she crouches on the ledge like a cat.

Incognito Man blind-fires up the hallway.

INCOGNITO MAN

Try it.

Patience kneels and peeks around the door jamb. Small blue pinpricks of light grow in her pupils, and she focuses on one of the mercs, but she twitches in pain and retreats.

PATIENCE

Ugh. Corpo-grade encryption on their nets. Can't break it.

Incognito Man fires potshots out the door. All mercs advance.

INCOGNITO MAN

Can't you do anything?

PATIENCE

I'll try their comms subsystem.
Might not be as strong.

Patience peeks out, and Incognito Man covers her. Her eyes light up, and feedback shrieks from the mercs' comms. They recoil in pain.

The door of the apartment down the hall shatters as Sable crashes through it. She lands on one of the stairwell mercs and sinks a knife into his neck.

She spins, holds the body as cover, and guns down the other stairwell merc. Sable tugs the knife out and bounds down the hall at a speed impossible for a natural human body.

She throws her knife into the neck of one of the remaining mercs and shoots another in the face. The third shoots back. The bullets glance off metallic parts under Sable's clothes.

Sable shoots the merc in the shoulder. Her gun clicks. Without missing a step, she tackles the merc to the floor. The merc struggles, but she catches him in an armbar.

Sable breaks the man's arm, pulls his knife, and stabs him over and over. spurts of blood spray up on each thrust until the man lies limp.

Sable strides back into the neighbor's apartment, tired. Streaks of blood cover her jacket and face.

SABLE
We're all clear, for now.

Patience offers Sable a wet nap. Sable wipes her face.

INCOGNITO MAN
Search them for anything useful,
and let's move out.

Sable steps out, but Patience pokes at Incognito Man's wound.

INCOGNITO MAN (CONT'D)
I'm fine.

PATIENCE
I'll be the judge of that.

Patience pulls open the tear in Incognito Man's jacket and inspects the cut underneath. Her cyber-eyes adjust.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
Superficial wound to dermis.
Pressure and heat damage. Capillary
bleeding only. You're fine.

Patience leaves. Incognito Man offers to help Finn stand.

INCOGNITO MAN
Come on, son. Time to move.

FINN
I- I don't-- Who are you people?
What do you want with me?

INCOGNITO MAN
What do I want? Son, we just saved
you from an assassination attempt.
What's it look like?

FINN
Assassination?

Incognito Man sighs. He pulls off his mask and reveals himself to be Mort Escott. Finn's eyes widen.

QUICK FLASHBACK

Mort's mugshot on the TV.

BACK TO SCENE

FINN (CONT'D)
You're that terrorist.

MORT
According to some.

FINN
What are you doing here?

MORT
We came here to save you. We've
been watching you for some time,
waiting for Noxaro to strike.

FINN
Noxaro? No, I'm a Noxaro employee.

MORT
Their favorite targets. Don't
believe me? Come see for yourself.

Mort leaves. Finn emerges from the apartment after a moment.
Patience and Sable dig through the mercenaries' pockets.
Sable pulls out a blue inhaler, sniffs it, and pockets it.

SABLE
Bloody pain blockers.

MORT
Look at this: tactical gear, smart
rifles--trained killers. Who else
do you think this is? Patience, you
have that canister?

Patience walks over and digs the canister out of her satchel.

PATIENCE
This was in your apartment: a
canister of camotoxin.

MORT
It's odorless and tasteless, and
the police wouldn't suspect a thing
if you died from it.

PATIENCE
It looks too much like carbon
monoxide poisoning. Starts with a
headache, disorientation. You might
even confuse it with being sleepy.

MORT
Pretty soon, you make the mistake
of lying down for a nap.

PATIENCE
A last mistake.

Mort digs the spider out of his pocket.

MORT
They installed the canister weeks ago and activated it with this. It's an in--

FINN
Infiltration robot. Noxaro design.

MORT
That's right. It also broke your water heater's exhaust line to make it all look like an accident.

FINN
How did you know they did this?

MORT
Like I said, we've been watching you for weeks.

FINN
And you let them do it? You could have stopped them any time.

MORT
I could have, but I knew you'd have to see this to believe it.

Finn's eyes land on one of the mercenaries, and he strays forward. Patience and Mort step aside.

MORT (CONT'D)
Recognize him?

FINN
He's a security guard. He works for the vice president.

MORT
Catherine Kellogg?

Finn nods, numb.

MORT (CONT'D)
Finn, an insider tells us you were working on something big, something that eats machines?

Finn avoids their eyes.

MORT (CONT'D)
Now that you've finished the job,
Noxaro's cleaning house.

FINN
Cleaning house? Are they coming for
the whole team? Are you going to
protect them, too?

MORT
Son, I would if I could--

Finn steps away and presses his hand to his ear.

FINN
I have to warn them.

Mort grabs Finn by the shoulders and spins him around.

MORT
You can call whoever you want on
the road, but we have to move.

Sable stands from looting the mercenaries and stomps over.

SABLE
We don't have time for this.

Sable pushes past Patience and punches Finn between the eyes
with her alloyed fist. Finn folds up on the floor. His
cochlear phone implant chimes as it tries to connect.

MORT
Dammit, Sable!

RING.

SABLE
We can't wait for your coddling.
Police'll be here.

RING.

PATIENCE
About a half-hour after the Noxaro
clean-up crew.

Finn's vision darkens. The voices fade away. RING.

AUTOMATED VOICE
Your call is being answered by an
automatic voice messaging system.
"Corey Winnick" is not available.

INT. HIDEOUT - DAY

Finn lays on his side on a rough table in a filthy backroom while Patience bends over Finn's partially disassembled neural adapter with two delicate instruments in hand.

A single, bright overhead light illuminates the scene and leaves the rest of the room dark. The neural adapter slides out the back of Finn's neck like a drawer.

PATIENCE

Clever install. Didn't replace his hardware so much as co-opted it.

She peers deeper into the housing in Finn's neck.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

Is input lag not a factor here?

Patience uses an instrument and presses a button the size of a pinhead on a small compartment in the side of the housing. The compartment pops out a fraction of an inch.

Finn's eyes flutter and open. Patience fishes out the compartment and discovers a compartment plate covered in dozens of fine, black pins.

She holds the device to her eye, and her brown irises do a quarter rotation.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

Hello, beautiful.

FINN

What are you doing to me?

PATIENCE

I'd wondered why you'd consent to the installation of a prototype during its development. Now I see.

She holds up the plate with its stiff hairs.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

Graphite nanoplatelets. Your rig is a work of art.

Finn's fingers find the empty housing.

FINN

Give me that back!

Finn reaches for the plate, but Patience yanks it away.

PATIENCE

Watch it, dumbass. You'll break it.
Gonna put it back yourself?

FINN

Better than you handling it. I'm
not gonna just let you take--

Sable stomps out of the dark, pushes Finn back onto the table, and holds him down. Finn struggles in vain.

COREY (O.S.)

Okay, that's enough.

Sable eases up, and Corey emerges from the dark.

COREY (CONT'D)

You'll have to forgive Patience.
She needed to see the new adapter.

FINN

Corey. They grabbed you, too?

COREY

I hardly needed grabbing. Just
relax. I think Patience has had
enough fun for today. She'll put
you back together, and we can talk.

Finn takes a deep breath and rolls over. Sable steps back.

COREY (CONT'D)

Mort and the gang only knew it was
time to pull you out because of the
information I provided.

FINN

You're their informant? You
betrayed Noxaro?

COREY

You can hardly call it a betrayal.
I was part of One Earth before I
was ever a corpo stooge.

FINN

These people blew a dam just last
week. Know that? Flooded towns.

COREY

Don't you know you can't believe
everything you see on the news?

Patience works the delicate contact plate back into place.

COREY (CONT'D)
No towns were flooded, and even if
they were, the dam already made the
area uninhabitable.

FINN
But I saw the footage.

COREY
On the news, yeah. That was flood
footage alright--from a flooded
town a hundred years ago.

Patience slides the neural adapter back onto its track.

COREY (CONT'D)
Imagine if I showed you a picture
of Alexandria burning and told you
we lost the Library of Congress.
Would you know the difference?

Corey bends down to Finn and points at his own head.

COREY (CONT'D)
It's that ignorance they count on.
Whoever controls the media controls
the mind, and Noxaro controls
everything, Finn.

Patience pushes the adapter back into its housing and grabs
the retention screws.

COREY (CONT'D)
Noxaro built the dam so they could
take the water. Mort just gave it
back, and he saved the watershed.

FINN
You make Noxaro sound like a
cartoon villain.

MORT (O.S.)
A criticism I hear often.

Mort walks into the light.

FINN
Any other people sitting out there
who want to make an entrance?

MORT
Come with me.

Mort opens the exit and breezes out into the rest of the warehouse. Finn glances at Corey and follows behind. Sable, Corey, and Patience follow.

MORT (CONT'D)
In the old days, when corpos first
gained power, they formed trusts to
consolidate that power.

Shoddy lighting illuminates an abandoned factory space where defunct manufacturing implements still sit. Soldiers sit on cots between and check their weapons or clean their gear.

Twilight trending toward the orange-purple of night glowers through cloudy and broken windows.

MORT (CONT'D)
Those trusts allowed the corpos to
do whatever without fear of
competition. Anti-employee and anti-
consumer policies abounded.

Mort crosses to wide bay doors open to the night.

MORT (CONT'D)
When the public saw those trusts
dismantled, the people enjoyed
higher wages, the economy
prospered, and even companies
themselves saw higher profit.

Mort stops just inside. Finn gazes across the landscape.

MORT (CONT'D)
So, why manipulate the government
to allow the practice again?

Outside the abandoned factory, a swath of dusty desert stretches to the horizon, where a shining metropolis stands winking in the gloom.

In the expanse between, a sea of trash covers nearly every glimpse of sand. Disused objects of all types transform the landscape into rolling hills and valleys of garbage.

MORT (CONT'D)
Why lose money? Why create this
world if it doesn't do anyone any
good? Cartoon villainy, indeed.

Mort wanders into the sea of trash, and everyone follows.

MORT (CONT'D)
Look around you. Our way of life
has become a monster that we keep
feeding even as it grows too big
for us to live.

Mort ascends a small slope and stops.

MORT (CONT'D)
Who benefits from this? From making
our world uninhabitable?

FINN
What do you want from me?

MORT
In short, your head and everything
in it. You're smart. You know about
Noxaro and these nanomites--the way
they think and operate.

Mort taps his head.

MORT (CONT'D)
Patience tells me your corpo drive
could bypass any defense Noxaro has
with the right software.

FINN
That it? You could have just taken
it while I was out, then.

PATIENCE
Sure could.

MORT
I'm not Noxaro. I'll never exploit
you, I'll never lie to you, and I
want to stand on equal ground.

COREY
If we want anything but living the
rest of our lives on Noxaro's hit-
list, we need to fight back, cuz.

SABLE
Whether you like it or not, you're
in the same shit as us.

COREY
I only knew that Noxaro was going
to kill us when I found a trojan in
my car that would have locked the
doors and drove me in the ocean.

FINN

You're nuts if you think I'm just going to believe that Noxaro planted poison when you could have just as easily.

MORT

I wouldn't expect you to believe anything you haven't seen. Want proof that Noxaro tried to kill you? Where do we start?

FINN

Cate Kellogg. I can contact her, arrange a meet. She'll help me.

SABLE

And what will you do if you go to this meeting and a corpo death squad shows up instead?

MORT

How about a surprise meeting?

FINN

What do you mean?

MORT

We could get you into her apartment. When she comes home, you'll meet.

COREY

I want to talk with her, too.

PATIENCE

Place'll have top-of-the-line security. No way we'd be able to breach it, but your rig just needs the right darkware to get started.

FINN

I don't want any of your black market malware inside my head.

COREY

Finn, you have to trust somebody. You know me. I wouldn't let any bad schisms in your dome.

FINN

That's a real unwise thing to say after today, Corey.

MORT

What will it take, Finn? You on security, Corey tagging along, and Sable watching your backs?

FINN

There is one thing I need.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Lucy sleeps. Her door opens. A silhouetted man in a thick jacket lumbers into the room and looms over her. He gives her shoulder a gentle shake.

LUCY

What? Who?

Finn turns on her bedside lamp and sits down. He wears a dirty old coat hanging open over his business casual shirt.

FINN

Hey, monster.

LUCY

Finn, hey!

Lucy reaches for Finn as invitation for a hug. Finn obliges. When Finn tries to stand up, Lucy holds him fast.

LUCY (CONT'D)

No.

Finn chuckles and squeezes his sister.

FINN

Okay. Okay, come on.

Lucy releases Finn, and he sits back down.

LUCY

It's late. What are you doing here?

FINN

I just wanted to check up on you. I-
I needed to see you.

Lucy looks over to see Mort, Sable, and two One Earth soldiers in the hall.

LUCY

Who are they?

FINN
They're friends of mine.

A veteran NURSE ambles up the hall toward the group.

NURSE
Excuse me. Visiting hours are over.
Do you have business here?

Sable, with her tattoos, scars, and cybernetics, turns and aims a scowl at the woman. Nurse continues down the hall.

LUCY
Is everything alright?

FINN
Don't freak out, but they're gonna hang around and watch over you.

LUCY
What? Why? What's going on?

FINN
I'm trying to figure that out.

LUCY
Finn, you're scaring me.

FINN
I wish I could tell you. I just don't know what to say.

Finn takes Lucy's hand.

FINN (CONT'D)
I think I lost my job. I promise, I'll- I'll figure something out to pay for your implants. I just have to sort some stuff out, first.

LUCY
Okay.

FINN
It won't take long. I--

LUCY
Finn, it's okay.

Lucy puts a hand on Finn's cheek and lowers her voice.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I trust you. You've only ever done
right by me. Are you in trouble
with those people?

FINN
I don't know. Probably not.

LUCY
Probably?

FINN
My whole world's turned upside-down
today, Lucy.

LUCY
How can I help?

FINN
You don't have to worry about me.

LUCY
But I do.

Lucy glances at the group outside.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Is it money?

FINN
No. I'm fine. I told you.

LUCY
I know what you said. I also know
that you drive around in a beat-up
old can and live in a slum.

FINN
You do.

LUCY
Mom and I aren't blind, Finn. You
would need more than your job to
cover my operation.

She glances at the One Earth crew again.

LUCY (CONT'D)
It's not worth your life.

FINN
You need to focus on getting
better. Don't worry about me.

LUCY
Can't. You fight, okay? With
everything you have. You come back.

FINN
I will.

INT. HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Finn reclines into a dental chair outfitted with robotic surgery implements. Arm and leg implant apparatuses hang from the bottom, ready to swing up for delicate surgery.

Over Finn's head, an advanced, brutal Swiss-army knife of surgical tools looms on a giant swing arm that can be positioned over the body of the patient as needed.

On a cart nearby, a pharmacy's worth of medicines for pain, inflammation, and rejection sit in a chaotic order.

Mort observes as Patience lugs a bulky laptop over and hefts it onto the cart alongside the pills.

Sable sits on one of the defunct machines and touches a tool to the wires in her cybernetic arm to stimulate the gimbals.

PATIENCE
Just the breach daemon for you
today? I've got lots of fun little
hacks that could cook any system in
a rig like yours.

FINN
Just the breacher.

PATIENCE
You sure? You could have a ton of
fun. I got schizos, zappers,
overheats, blinders--

FINN
Just what I need to get into
Kellogg's apartment.

Patience shrugs. She opens the computer and types, plugs one end of a USB cable into the computer, and plugs the other end into the outlet on Finn's neck.

PATIENCE
This'll just take a second. How
about an implant? New legs?

Mort shakes his head.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

I could upgrade your cock. I've got
a second-hand Fuck Tornado 3000 in
the back. Might change your life.

Sable smirks.

MORT

Patience.

PATIENCE

Got it. Meat and potatoes. You just
keep it in mind, okay?

Patience clicks her tongue and winks. Finn shrinks. Sable
shakes with quiet giggles.

EXT. CORPO DISTRICT - NIGHT

In the night, neon and holograms, both ads and decoration,
light the buildings and sky while car headlights flow down
the street like stars.

Finn sits in the backseat of a car and stares out the window
while Corey sits in the passenger seat and Sable drives.

COREY

Okay back there, big guy?

FINN

The city: it looks different, just
dark alleys and neon signs.

SABLE

It was always like that.

FINN

I didn't notice it when I had a job
and a normal life.

COREY

It's not as bad as it seems.

FINN

Easy to say when Noxaro was more of
a jacket for you than a home.

COREY

Finn, listen to yourself. You think
a corpo is a home? A family?

Corey shakes his head.

COREY (CONT'D)
None of that's real, man. It's just
a picture they paint in their ads:
a plastic dream.

Finn hangs his head. Sable peers up at the skyscrapers.

SABLE
Game faces, people.

INT. CAR PARK - NIGHT

Sable opens the car's trunk and lifts open a second compartment. Rather than a spare tire, the second compartment contains guns and tools in a pile.

Sable selects a handgun, checks the chamber, and offers it to Finn without a backward glance.

FINN
What are you trying to give me that
for? You do realize we're not here
to kill anyone, right?

SABLE
Yes, that's how I approach every
mission--until the killing starts.

FINN
I don't want a gun.

Sable sighs.

SABLE
Another one.

She grabs a black baton and offers it to Finn.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Here. Stun baton.

FINN
I don't like--

SABLE
Didn't ask if you like it. Take it.

COREY
Not worth fighting her, dude.

Sable hands Corey a stun baton, grabs a pistol, chambers a round, and stuffs it in her belt.

Finn presses the trigger on the stun baton, and the crackle of electricity across the contacts makes him jump.

EXT. HIGH-RISE - NIGHT

Sable and the boys march across the street.

SABLE

Follow my lead and stay exactly as cool as I do. Security should only be locked doors and cameras, but if someone give us trouble--

She looks back at the two men.

SABLE (CONT'D)

I don't know. Hide. Poke 'em with your sticks if they get close.

Sable leads them down the alley next to the high-rise. A maintenance door stands at the far end, and a camera watches the entrance from above.

Sable stops part-way down the alley and motions a halt.

SABLE (CONT'D)

Camera.

Finn steps up.

SABLE (CONT'D)

Remember: don't think about anything happening out here. Focus on the code.

FINN

Got it.

Lights ignite in Finn's eyes, and the camera stops panning.

SABLE

Nice. How come you don't have any of that high-speed corpo gear?

Corey knocks on his head.

COREY

Robotics is lucky to have the basic kit. Besides, Finn was the one who volunteered for the implant.

Finn shakes the feed away. Sable claps him on the back.

SABLE
Nice work. That was fast.

FINN
Fast? Felt like an hour.

SABLE
Yep, that's what that feels like.
Come on, before it reboots.

The team jogs up the alley, and Sable points to a card reader next to the maintenance entry.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Nerd, open.

Finn gives Sable a withering look but lights his eyes. The card reader beeps and turns green. The lock on the door clicks, and Sable yanks it open.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Ha! This rocks.

INT. HIGH-RISE - HALLS - NIGHT

A door in the hall opens, and Sable pokes her head out.

SABLE
Alright, be real cool.

Sable leads into the clean, quiet hallway. Finn takes off the rough coat and wraps it around his shock baton. Corey stuffs his shock baton into his belt.

A camera at the end of the hall catches Finn's attention.

FINN
Another camera.

Finn's eyes light up, but Sable slaps her hand over his eyes.

SABLE
No! We need to stay low-profile.
Might draw attention if we start
knocking out all the cameras one
after another.

Finn knocks Sable's hand away.

FINN
Okay, I get it.

He rubs his face.

FINN (CONT'D)
You know your hand is metal?

SABLE
No, I never noticed.

They pass several apartments, reach the elevator, and Sable presses the button.

As the elevator descends, a RESIDENT, a squat woman of middle age in a fur coat, emerges from down the hall and approaches. The group make a point of ignoring her.

Resident stands behind Finn. They exchange quick smiles as the display above the elevator ticks down the floors.

RESIDENT
Tall building, huh?

FINN
Yeah.

The elevator opens. Sable enters first and puts her back against the wall.

COREY
Floor?

RESIDENT
17, please.

Corey hits 17 and 19.

COREY
Miss?

SABLE
35.

Corey presses the button.

RESIDENT
35! Prestigious floor.

She eyes Sable in all the woman's rough, mercenary glory.

RESIDENT (CONT'D)
Are you new in the building?

Sable tries to smile and manages only a parody.

SABLE
Yes, I was very lucky to find a
place expensive enough for me.
(MORE)

SABLE (CONT'D)
I would just die if I had to live
among the "rustics."

Resident frowns.

FINN
Sorry about her. No filters, this
one. You know how rockstars can be.

RESIDENT
Oh, you're in a band?

FINN
The Slaying Sables. Heard of us?

RESIDENT
I don't think so. What kind of
music do you play?

SABLE
Gunmetal thrash. You should come
check us out, sometime. I bet it's
right up your alley.

The elevator dings, and the doors open on the 17th floor.

RESIDENT
Sure. Good luck with your music!

Resident hurries out.

FINN
Wow, you really think they're all
lizards, don't you?

SABLE
See that coat? Do you have any idea
how many real animals are left?

The doors open on the 19th floor.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Why'd you press this floor?

COREY
I just didn't want it to look like
we were together.

Finn smirks. The elevator opens on the 35th floor. Sable
leads them to a room.

SABLE
This one.

FINN
How do you know?

SABLE
We dug through her trash until we
found a bill addressed to her.
Trust me, we know.

Finn breaches the key reader, and the door unlocks.

INT. HIGH-RISE - KELLOGG'S APARTMENT - DAY

Sable opens the door. A single, soft lamp illuminates the room. An alarm system beeps on the wall.

SABLE
An alarm. Nerd, quick.

FINN
Stop calling me that.

Finn eyes the code pad, but he blinks, and the light in his eyes disappears.

FINN (CONT'D)
I can't. It's like it's not there.

The beep increases in frequency.

SABLE
Hardwired. Shit.

Sable rips the code pad out and snaps it in half. She pulls a retractable USB out of her wrist, bites the head off the cable, and touches her wire to a wire hanging from the wall.

The two wires spark upon meeting, and all the lights flicker. Everyone stands frozen.

FINN
Did that actually work?

SABLES
Dunno.

Sable turns her attention to the rest of the apartment: a large space with a sparsely decorated living room and kitchen. Halls lead to deeper rooms.

A desk with a laptop sits in the corner.

SABLE
Catherine Kellogg?

No response. Finn puts a hand on her shoulder.

FINN
Ms. Kellogg? It's Finn, Finn
Koston? Are you here?

Corey flicks on the lights, and they sweep the rooms.

SABLE
She's usually here at this time.

FINN
Maybe she had a date.

SABLE
No, we would have known.

Sable points to the laptop.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Let's breach that.

FINN
What for?

SABLE
It might have correspondence on it.
It's called hard evidence?

Finn sighs and sits at the desk. The computer opens to a lock screen. Finn's eyes light up. Seconds pass. Finn blinks fast like he's trying to send a secret message in morse code.

His breathing quickens. A box appears on the lock screen. Code races across. Finn sighs like he just had a nail pulled out of his arm, and the light in his eyes goes out.

The lock screen slides away and reveals an open mail inbox.

FINN
Thing's more encrypted than
anything else in this building.
Firewall wanted to come down like
the wrath of God.

Corey claps him on the shoulder.

COREY
You got it, though. You got it.

Finn tries to blink the exhaustion away and clicks on an email. After a second of reading, his brow furrows.

COREY (CONT'D)

What?

FINN

It looks like Ms. Kellogg told the board our last test was a failure.

COREY

What? Let me see.

Corey turns the computer and has a read.

COREY (CONT'D)

This is dated today.

He clicks and reads. Then clicks and reads.

COREY (CONT'D)

She's been under-reporting our progress this entire time. What--

The card reader for the apartment beeps. Sable darts over and stands meters from the door to be the first person seen.

Catherine enters wearing a peacoat and her scarf. She carries a large purse and turns to the alarm panel without looking anywhere else. When she sees it stripped out, she stiffens.

She turns and sees Sable. Catherine reaches into her purse. Sable points her gun at Catherine before the next breath.

SABLE

I wouldn't make any sudden moves.

Corey emerges from around the corner, Finn just behind.

CATHERINE

Dr. Winnick, Mr. Koston, what is this? What are you doing here?

COREY

We need to talk to you. We want some answers.

CATHERINE

About what?

COREY

Let's start with why Noxaro sent death squads to our homes.

CATHERINE

I don't know anything about that.

SABLE

Finn here recognized one of them as a member of your personal guard.

CATHERINE

That's concerning. Where is he now? I'd like to talk to him.

SABLE

Sure, sit tight. I'll get you a Ouija board.

Sable's gun arm twitches. Everyone glances at it, especially Sable, but it steadies.

FINN

Why have you been lying about the project's progress?

CATHERINE

What?

FINN

The project's progress. You've been telling the board that we barely have the robots moving.

CATHERINE

Look, sometimes you have to manage expectations. It makes us look good when we succeed.

FINN

You lied today. We have a working prototype, and you lied today.

Sable's shoulders twitch. Her spine twists for an instant.

COREY

What's going on?

SABLE

I don't know.

Sable's gun arm goes limp and hangs by her side. The hand still grips the pistol.

COREY

Sable?

Sable's neck twitches. She holds her good hand to her face.

SABLE

My eye just went out!

Corey steps over to Sable.

COREY
Alright, don't panic. You're going
to be alright.

Sable's spine seizes, something pops, and she freezes, bent
backward, eyes staring.

COREY (CONT'D)
Sable!

Corey catches her and lowers her to the floor.

COREY (CONT'D)
Sable? What's going on? Sable?

A sound like the giggles of a mischievous child echo off the
walls. Catherine purses her lips to stifle her laughter.

CATHERINE
Okay, maybe I bent the truth a
little. In the biz, we call it
"information strategy."

Catherine removes her hand from her purse to reveal that she
wears the nanomachine control glove and holds an open vial.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Here's another corporate term for
you: "asset liquidation."

Catherine drops the vial and closes her hand into a fist.
Corey snorts like a floating cat hair just touched his
nostril. He shakes his head and wipes at it.

COREY
No, no!

The right side of Corey's face scrunches up, and the rest of
his body seizes similar to a palsy episode. He collapses and
twitches. Finn backs away. Catherine stalks toward Finn.

CATHERINE
I lied to the board about your
progress because they didn't see
the project's real potential.

She tugs off her scarf and reveals a neural adapter just like
Finn's nestled in the back of her neck.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
It could make them a ton of money,
sure, but I see power.

Corey writhes on the floor. Blood runs from his nose.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
No one can even see it coming. Now,
I don't need the board. No more
scraping. No more currying favor.

Finn bumps into the desk. The high buzz of thousands of nanomachines chewing through Corey's cochlear and neural implants rises in the room.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
It could be your power, too.
Instead of saving and denying
yourself to barely afford a simple
operation, we could rule.

Catherine closes the distance and leans into Finn's ear.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
You could keep improving on the
nanomites' intelligence, make them
smarter and faster, remove their
safety protocols.

Finn's eyes lock onto Corey twitching on the floor. Corey's rapid breaths grow quiet and weak.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
I've already taken the first steps.
No one could stop the nanomites. No
one would even know it was us.

She nibbles on Finn's earlobe and brushes it with her lip.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
We'd never have to deny ourselves
anything ever again. Doesn't that
sound amazing? Isn't it a dream?

Catherine pulls away to see Finn's face. His eyes glisten with tears and fear. Catherine frowns.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Oh, maybe not. Disappointing.

Catherine waves her gloved hand and walks away. A wispy cloud of nanomachines, numbers swollen from gorging on metal, streams out of Corey's ears and nose.

Finn squeezes his eyes shut, pinches his nose, and tries to cover both ears at the same time, but the nanomachines enter his skull all the same.

Finn screams and shakes his head. He slaps his temple. In his mania, his hand touches his coat on the desk. Finn throws it open and takes the shock baton.

Finn sticks the baton into the side of his head and presses the trigger. He screams, trembles, and falls to the floor. He crawls to Corey and takes his shock baton.

He presses the batons to his temple and chin and fires both. He shocks himself again until the batons reach their maximum time. They leave patches of sizzled skin.

Catherine backs toward the exit. Finn waits. Nothing happens. Catherine bolts. Finn chases. When Finn enters the hallway, he sees Catherine. She looks back, and squeals.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
Help! Help me!

Finn glances back into the room, to Catherine, and gives up the chase. He runs to Corey and drops to his knees.

FINN
Corey. Corey. Corey, come on.

Finn shakes Corey. He tries to check Corey's pulse, sighs, and hangs his head. Sable stirs. Her good arm grasps at nothing in the air. Finn crawls over and takes her hand.

FINN (CONT'D)
Sable! Sable, I'm here.

SABLE
Ff- What happened? Where am I?

FINN
You're still in the apartment.

SABLE
I can't see anything. My whole right side's busted.

FINN
Catherine, she used the nanomites. They ate your cybernetics. I thought you were dead.

SABLE
Winnick?

FINN
Corey's-- I don't think--

SABLE
We have to go.

She reaches across her body.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Put my fucking gun in my hand and
help me out of here.

FINN
Are you sure you can--

SABLE
Now, nerd!

Finn puts the gun in her waiting hand. He scoops her off the floor and carries her to the open entryway.

INT. HIGH-RISE - HALLS - NIGHT

Finn shuffles out of the room and toward the elevator, but its doors open before he can approach. A SECURITY GUARD, 30's, medium build, emerges.

SECURITY GUARD
What happened? We got calls about
screaming on this floor.

Sable fires a few blind rounds at the noise. The bullets punch holes into the wall over the guard's shoulder. Security Guard stumbles backward into the elevator.

SABLE
Who was that?

FINN
A security guard.

SABLE
I get him?

FINN
No.

SABLE
Get me over there.

Finn shuffles to the elevator and stops the doors from closing. Security Guard cowers on the floor. Sable brandishes the gun in the guard's general direction.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Listen up, fat man! I'm fucking
blind, right now, so I wouldn't do
anything that might sound
threatening, *capiche*?

The guard nods.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Did you call the cops?

Security Guard shakes his head.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Is this dude nodding or something?

FINN
He's shaking his head.

SABLE
You lying to me?

Security Guard shakes his head.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Words, fatty!

SECURITY GUARD
I didn't call the cops. I didn't
even know what was going on.

SABLE
Hit the button for the lobby.

The guard obeys.

SABLE (CONT'D)
I believe you, so you live today.

Sable gestures with the gun while she talks, and Security
Guard leans this way and that to avoid the barrel.

SABLE (CONT'D)
We're gonna get out of here. You
stay right here until someone comes
to get you, understand?

Security Guard nods.

SABLE (CONT'D)
You're a good boy--and a dumbass,
so I'll assume you agree.

The elevator dings, and Finn carries Sable into the hall. Sable aims the gun vaguely backward.

SABLE (CONT'D)
Stay there. Don't move.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Finn drives the car along the empty road, flanked on either side by a sea of trash. Sable lays in the backseat and stares into the void with the gun in her hand.

She squeezes her eyes shut and sighs. Finn takes a hand off the steering wheel and watches it tremble.

EXT./INT. HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Two of Mort's soldiers, disguised as squatters, sit beside a campfire outside the warehouse. The roar of an engine and the grinding of dust see the men stand and peer into the night.

A set of headlights veers down the curving road between the trash heaps. The two guards draw sub-machine guns.

The car barrels down the last stretch and skids to a stop in the dirt. Finn hops out.

FINN
Help! Get help!

Finn scurries to the rear passenger door and pulls Sable out of the backseat by her armpits. The guards start.

FINN (CONT'D)
Hurry up! Help me carry her! Get
someone! Get a doctor!

One trundles off, into the hideout. The other rushes to Finn. The guard takes Sable and carries her inside, Finn in tow.

By the time they get inside, the place buzzes. Soldiers gather to see the ruckus. Some repeat the few discernible questions again and again: "What happened?" "Is she dead?"

PATIENCE
Out of the way. Out of the way!

Patience emerges from the crowd, holds open one of Sable's eyelids, and peeks inside. She checks Sable's pulse.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
Take her to the chair, right away.

The guard leaves with Sable, and Patience turns to Finn.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
What happened? Where's Winnick?

Finn doesn't answer. Sounds muffle, and a terrible ringing like tinnitus grows. The world blurs.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
Koston! Where's Dr. Winnick?

The ringing drowns all sound. Finn stands in a blurry world.

EXT. HIDEOUT - NIGHT

Finn stares into a campfire with a scratchy blanket around his shoulders. A grille stands over the fire for cooking. Mort enters the light carrying a tin cup.

MORT
How you holding up, son?

Finn just watches the flames, and Mort takes a seat.

MORT (CONT'D)
Sable says you're tougher than you look. That's quite the compliment, coming from her.

FINN
How is she?

MORT
She's fine, but it'll take Patience all day to replace her parts.

Finn nurses a headache and scratches his head.

MORT (CONT'D)
Maybe she should see you, first.

FINN
I'm fine.

MORT
Son, the only thing worse than a dumbass is proud dumbass. You have thousands of dead bots rattling around your head like silica sand.

FINN
It can wait.

MORT
Oh, I get it.

FINN
Get what?

MORT
That it's time to get tough, to
prove to yourself that you can
endure this, endure anything.
I've been there, son.

Mort stokes the fire.

MORT (CONT'D)
It's how I felt after Noxaro took
my daughter away from me.

FINN
Noxaro took your daughter away?

MORT
She was in One Earth before I ever
was. I was a garbage man back then.

Mort swallows hard.

MORT (CONT'D)
Life was tough after her mother
passed, but normal. I was just
trying to make ends meet, keep my
head down, and live.

Mort sets his tin cup over the fire.

MORT (CONT'D)
They shot her.

FINN
Why?

MORT
Wish I knew. From what I hear, the
protestors were blocking traffic
out of a factory. Noxaro security
came down in their jackboots, and
the rest is history.

FINN
I don't remember that. I don't
think I've ever even heard of that.

MORT
Nah, it wasn't in the news long.

FINN

Why not?

MORT

Why, anything? Maybe Noxaro paid for it to be silenced, maybe it just wasn't good for ratings.

The tightness in Mort's throat inhabits every word.

MORT (CONT'D)

That wasn't even the final twist of the knife. That came when the courts dropped all the charges.

FINN

Mort, this sounds completely insane. How in the hell could Noxaro get away with that?

MORT

Court ruled that Noxaro exercised appropriate authority to secure their factory because it was essential military infrastructure.

Mort's grim stare threatens to freeze the flames.

MORT (CONT'D)

It hadn't been that morning, but it was convenient to slap that label on, so they did. Problem solved. Everyone goes about their lives.

FINN

Except you.

MORT

Except me. I endured the pain for a while. Told myself I'd only survive if I could take the pain.

Mort's coffee steams.

MORT (CONT'D)

Then I realized the truth. I'd only survive if I did something. That's when I took up my Andrea's torch and joined One Earth.

FINN

That make the pain stop?

MORT

I just learned not to mind it. One nice thing about evil, son: it makes its own enemies.

Mort swipes and pokes at his smart watch.

MORT (CONT'D)

Now they've tried to kill you, killed your friend, and Kellogg's using the nanomites to murder.

A holographic image of a news article projects from Mort's watch. The headline reads: "Noxaro Executive Murdered," accompanied by a portrait of a businessman.

MORT (CONT'D)

We think this is why she had the nanomites and power glove in her purse when she came home. Know him?

FINN

I know who he is.

MORT

This story broke a couple hours ago. Dead in his office. Someone, somehow harvested his implants without cutting into his skin.

Mort looks at Finn.

MORT (CONT'D)

Guess who takes his position at the company if he dies.

FINN

Catherine said she'd already taken the first step.

MORT

Why would you even make robots that can kill people undetected?

FINN

They're only programmed to scavenge for material so they can build more of themselves. Catherine's exploiting their logic.

MORT

What if she ordered the nanobots to replicate indefinitely?

(MORE)

MORT (CONT'D)

What if she tells them to replicate, and she dies before she tells them to stop?

FINN

Well, if they weren't given a population limit or a definitive target, I guess they would just keep replicating.

Mort sighs.

FINN (CONT'D)

Oh, don't look at me like that. They're not a doomsday device.

MORT

If you say so.

FINN

They have no EM shielding. They weigh nothing. The slightest breeze pushes them around. A rainstorm would eradicate them.

MORT

Even when just one of these things can repopulate back to a million?

Finn purses his lips.

MORT (CONT'D)

The good news is that, if Kellogg was keeping it a secret, then we only need to get rid of her and the nanites, and this will be over.

FINN

Get rid of them?

MORT

Catherine ran back to Noxaro tower. We take the building, find Kellogg, and secure the tech. Once everyone's evacuated, we blow it.

FINN

Christ, you mean with a bomb?

MORT

Can't take any chances. No nanites, no power gloves, no schematics or code can survive.

FINN
You just love bombing things.

MORT
Sure, corpo shit. You on board? We could use you: your knowledge of the building and that rig of yours.

FINN
R&D is on the 42nd floor. That's a lot of floors to climb with Noxaro security. It would be better if we could go down from the roof.

MORT
We could use helicopters.

FINN
You have helicopters?

MORT
Son, in this city, you can get anything with the right name drop.

FINN
I also want some darkware.

MORT
You do?

FINN
I want to help. I'm no good with a gun, but I might be able to save some lives with some quick hacks.

MORT
Done. Patience'll like that. You want the fuck tornado, too?

The two share a chuckle. Mort claps Finn on the shoulder.

MORT (CONT'D)
You should get some rest, Finn.

Mort walks away.

FINN
Hey, your cup.

Mort pauses. He speaks over his shoulder.

MORT
I know. It's gone too long. Lost cause at this point.

The fire crackles in dark and the quiet.

MORT (CONT'D)
Sable won't be ready until
tomorrow, and I have to make some
calls. If you have any business to
take care of, don't put it off.

Mort sinks into the dark. The tin cup deforms and sags from the heat. The tin splits, and the leaking coffee makes the fire dance and sing.

INT. HOSPITAL - RECEPTION - DAY

The sun's bright rays turn brilliant orange as they filter through the veil of pollution that blankets the city.

The nurse who confronted the group sits at the reception desk and works on the computer while patients wait.

FINN
Hello, ma'am.

NURSE
Hello, sir. What can I do for you?

FINN
I'm here to see Lucy Koston.

NURSE
Are you a relative?

FINN
Yes, I'm Finn Koston: her brother.

NURSE
Just a moment.

The Nurse punches a furious concerto on the keys.

Finn glances around the room and meets eyes with one of the men Mort left to guard Lucy. He wears a janitor's uniform and squeezes some bleach into his rolling bucket.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Lucy Koston. I see. Are you aware
that she's still in a coma?

FINN
Coma? What are you talking about?

NURSE

After her operation, the doctors
weren't able to revive her, but--

FINN

Operation? What? How could she have
had her operation already?

NURSE

Another patient awaiting an
operation died. They offered to
move her up, and she accepted.

Finn runs his hand through his hair.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Her operation was a success, but
she's been unconscious ever since.
She's currently on an I.V.

FINN

Well, when will she come out of it?

NURSE

There's no way to know that, sir.
Do you still want to see her?

FINN

Yes! Yes, please!

NURSE

Okay. I'll need to see some I.D.

INT. HOSPITAL - LUCY'S ROOM - DAY

Finn opens Lucy's door to find her asleep. The ECG beeps at a steady pace, an I.V. extends from her arm, and a nasal oxygen tube sits under her nose.

Finn takes Lucy's hand and just holds it while he tries to compose himself. Eventually, he sits down.

FINN

Hey, monster.

He tries to smile, gives up.

FINN (CONT'D)

Sorry I didn't show sooner. I
wanted to see you- catch you before-

Finn wets his lips and swallows hard.

FINN (CONT'D)
I have to go take care of
something, fix a mistake I made.

He squeezes her hand.

FINN (CONT'D)
I've never been a fighter, like
you, but if there's a chance to be
here when you wake up, I'll use
every ounce of fight I have in me.

Finn's eyes glisten. He fights to keep his lip still.

FINN (CONT'D)
You don't worry about me, okay? You
just get better. You'll wake up. I
know you will.

He hangs his head and grits his teeth.

FINN (CONT'D)
I just wish I'd been here in time.
Just one last time.

He presses his forehead to the back of Lucy's hand.

FINN (CONT'D)
I'm coming back. I'm coming back.

PRE-LAP - Helicopter engines wind up.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

Two Huey helicopters sit in a rare bare patch between the highway and the sea of garbage. Their spinning blades kick up dust while a platoon of One Earth soldiers load gear.

Mort peers up the road. Patience runs up to him and shouts over the din.

PATIENCE
These old tubs don't have space for
everyone. We need to leave some
personnel behind.

MORT
We're taking them all, Patience. We
can't afford to hit Noxaro with
anything less.

PATIENCE
They were only made for eleven to
fourteen apiece!

MORT
That number's for soldiers in full
kit sitting safely. We're gonna
have to be more creative.

Mort grabs a roll of duct tape and pushes it into her hands.

MORT (CONT'D)
Here.

Patience chuckles and throws up her hands. Finn pulls up by
the side of the highway in a car.

MORT (CONT'D)
You get your equipment on board?

PATIENCE
Yeah, but really, Noxaro should
have everything I'd need.

MORT
Yeah, well, hope for the best--

PATIENCE
Yeah, yeah. I know.

Patience watches as Finn hops out of the car.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
I hope I don't have to use it.

Mort puts a hand on her shoulder.

MORT
I'll do everything I can.

Finn jogs up, and the two put on smiles.

MORT (CONT'D)
You made it. I was worried.

FINN
I'm not backing out.

PATIENCE
Zap anybody with the new darkware
while you were out?

Finn just levels a wry look at Patience.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
How about the headaches?

FINN
All gone, thanks. These helicopters
are fossils.

MORT
You think I was gonna magic up a
couple of horizon gliders?

FINN
And who picked this spot to land?

PATIENCE
You see anywhere else?

Finn frowns at the piles of garbage.

MORT
We're off soon. You should get
yourself situated.

Patience waggles the duct tape.

PATIENCE
Unless you want an economy seat.

Patience saunters off with Mort. Finn steps toward the helicopter, but a metal hand grabs his arm. Finn turns to find Sable, her jaw tight.

Sable wears a tank top over a pair of camo pants and combat boots. A shemagh hangs loose around her neck, and she wears a conservative shade of lipstick.

The chrome on Sable's clavicle and arms shine in the harsh sunlight. A cybernetic spine pokes out of her shirt.

SABLE
There's a traditional reward for
guys who save girls--

Finn cups a hand over his ear.

FINN
What? Sorry, the noise.

Sable works her jaw. She looks downright bashful.

SABLE
There's a traditional reward for
guys who save girls. I want--

FINN
Tradition? What? What are you
talking about?

SABLE
I want to give it to you. Don't
make it harder than it has to be.

FINN
Sable, what--

Sable grabs Finn by his shirt, pulls him close, and plants a big, soft kiss on Finn's cheek. She pushes past and strides toward the helicopters with haughty grace.

INT./EXT. HELICOPTER - DAY

The two Hueys zoom over the sea of trash. In the distance, the city stands like a proud monument in the haze.

Finn, Sable, and Patience stand crammed with a dozen other soldiers and cling to a cargo net bolted to the ceiling.

Sable meets eyes with Finn through the forest of arms and averts her eyes. Pain crosses her face, something like guilt.

Sable looks in another direction and finds Patience. Patience makes a motion over her lips.

PATIENCE (M.O.S.)
Lipstick?

Sable hangs her head. Mort's voice comes over the P.A.

MORT (O.S.)
We've entered the city's airspace.
If you're religious, say an extra
prayer for me.

Sable reaches out the open door and grabs a handhold on the hull. She swings her legs out, hangs, and braces one foot like an ape. Her free hand aims an assault rifle.

Two soldiers aim their guns out the door while others hold them by the belt. Finn takes a deep breath.

EXT. NOXARO ROOFTOP - DAY

Three armed guards clad in black tactical gear patrol Noxaro Tower's rooftop and helipad.

One stands near the ledge of the building and gazes between the other skyscrapers at the metropolis.

Another guard moseys over and holds up a cigarette. The two start to light up, and a guard tilts his head at a helicopter noise, but it fades away, so he takes a puff.

One of the helicopters tears from behind the adjacent skyscraper and swings around, revealing the hull full of soldiers and Sable hanging off the side.

Sable and the soldiers mow the guards down. A NOXARO GUARD on the other side of the rooftop finds cover behind the stairwell shelter. He presses his hand to his ear.

NOXARO GUARD
Security alert! Attack on the
rooftop! Send backup immediately!

The second Huey emerges from the concrete jungle and looms over NOXARO GUARD. Soldiers gun him down.

Sable drops from the helicopter, gun up, and scans left and right. She waves the helicopter down.

SABLE
Fast! Fast!

The chopper lands on the helipad, and soldiers pour out. Some carry a gun in one hand and a small, ruggedized case in the other. The last two carry a larger case between them.

FINN
Is that?

MORT
That's it. Don't piss it off until
we're clear.

FINN
You have that lying around?

MORT
Don't pretend like you didn't know
I could get my hands on a bomb.

Sable stands by the stairway door.

SABLE
We don't have time for chatter.
Finn, can you open this?

Finn jogs over. Patience and Mort share a look.

PATIENCE (M.O.S.)

Finn!

Mort smiles. Empty, the helicopter takes off right away to make room for the other.

Finn opens a small panel next to the door and reveals a crystalline scanning eye with a button underneath.

Finn presses the button, looks into the scanner, and smiles. The scanner scans his face and flashes a green light. A beep sounds, and the lock releases.

SABLE

Why'd you smile?

FINN

Only smiling employees are allowed to return to work.

PATIENCE

What kind of fascist--

Sable opens the door and descends the short staircase to the next door. She opens that and steps into the stairwell, which spirals down in a tight, u-shaped configuration.

The rest of the platoon thunders after her in single file.

SABLE

Okay, let's double-time it, people.
Finn, stay on my ass-- St-stay
right behind me. Get squad spacing.

Sable charges down the stairs. Finn and the rest file after.

INT. NOXARO CORP - EXECUTIVE SUITE - SAME

Catherine sits behind a wide oak desk in a spacious executive office and reads a scientific paper on her computer: "Factors of Electromagnetic Shielding at the Nano-Scale."

A phone rings, and Catherine presses a button recessed into the top of the desk.

CATHERINE

Kellogg.

ENGINEER GILDAN (V.O.)

Hi, Ms. Kellogg. This is Gildan in the lab. The team and I have been working the EM shielding problem, and we just can't fix it.

Catherine sighs.

ENGINEER GILDAN
Adding any significant amount of
aluminum to the design would
multiply their size, which would
require bigger wings.

CATHERINE
How big?

ENGINEER GILDAN
Can't really know without testing.

CATHERINE
How big?

ENGINEER GILDAN
At least as big as a gnat, ma'am,
but probably bigger.

CATHERINE
But they would fly?

ENGINEER GILDAN
With the proper wing configuration
and materials, yes. Of course this
program that lets them build more
would need to be rewritten.

CATHERINE
That's fine. Find the best
programmer you can and start.

A warning klaxon splits the air. Emergency lights flash, and
an automated voice speaks throughout the building.

INT. NOXARO CORP - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The dozen or more people in the lobby jump as metal blast
shields shunt down over the windows and exit door.

AUTOMATED VOICE
Emergency. Emergency. Lockdown is
in effect. For your safety, please
stay in your areas and cooperate
with security personnel.

INT. NOXARO CORP - EXECUTIVE SUITE - CONTINUOUS

Catherine punches a series of buttons on the desk.

SECURITY CHIEF
Chief of security.

CATHERINE
What's going on?

SECURITY CHIEF
Intruders have killed the rooftop guard and entered the building using an employee's credentials.

CATHERINE
Which employee?

SECURITY CHIEF
A Koston, Finn Koston.

CATHERINE
I'm going down to the lab. Send all the building's security there.

SECURITY CHIEF
Ma'am, there are several key areas--

CATHERINE
It's the lab they want. Did you forget who you're talking to?

SECURITY CHIEF
No, ma'am. The lab. Understood.

Catherine punches the end button and marches out of her office to the elevator. When she hits the button, an automated voice addresses her.

AUTOMATED VOICE
Authorization, please.

CATHERINE
Kellogg: sierra november 1621.

AUTOMATED VOICE
Accepted.

The elevator door opens, and Catherine steps inside.

INT. NOXARO CORP - STAIRWELL - SAME

Sable paces around each blind turn on the switchback stairs. The One Earth soldiers creep behind her in small groups

The noise of a crash bar and the clatter of booted feet sounds over the din. Sable motions for a halt.

She listens, looks back, points to her eyes, and makes a fist. The squad on the previous landing creeps down.

FINN
What's going--

Sable pushes Finn against the wall and motions for him to stay. Patience pulls Finn back as the soldiers group on Sable. Sable holds a finger to her lips and motions forward.

The squad advances down the stairs. Sable pries around the first corner and descends to the next landing.

She peeks around the blind corner, more cautious than ever. The shadowy landing stands empty. Sable advances, gun trained on each fraction of space.

The squad reaches the landing. Sable peeks past the wall just as a Noxaro guard does the same at the bottom. They pop off at each other, just a quick burst as they both retreat.

Finn flinches at the sudden noise.

NOXARO GUARD
Contact! Upper stairwell!

Sable, the soldiers, and the guards take turns popping out and firing quick bursts at one another. Finn covers his ears.

PATIENCE
It okay. We expected this. Halls
are too open. They'll try to hold
us here and wait for backup.

MORT
Which we can't afford. You're up.

PATIENCE
Noxaro guards are all connected.
Darkware you have'll spread, and
the fritz should buy Sable time to
punch a hole.

FINN
You want me to poke my head out?

PATIENCE
Don't worry, it's a buzz.

Mort accompanies Finn down the stairs. Sable shoots a Noxaro guard and steps back to reload.

MORT

We need to push forward. Finn's gonna make you an opening.

SABLE

You ready for that?

MORT

He's ready.

SABLE

Finn?

FINN

I came here to help. This is what I can do. I'm not gonna hide.

Sable takes his arm in hand and guides him to the corner.

SABLE

Okay. It'll be okay. We'll do what we always do. I shoot high, get their attention on my gun. You get as low as you can and make contact.

The soldiers back off, and Finn gets down. Sable exchanges fire with a guard down the stairs. Finn pokes his head around the corner, his eyes bright.

The guard leans out to fire, and he locks eyes with Finn. The guard's eyes widen. He flinches as if struck and recoils. He screams like his skull is splitting open.

The guard behind him reaches out to see to the matter, and then he flinches as well. He screams like something burrowed into his brain. He drops his gun.

SABLE (CONT'D)

Let's go! Push forward!

The squad pushes down the stairs. They all fire, and the recoiling guards drop as the virus spreads to the dozen more standing on the floors below. Screaming fills the stairwell.

INT. NOXARO CORP - LAB - SAME

Black clad Noxaro guards all face the stairwell door in the wide, white hallway outside the lab. They kneel and press themselves against the wall to make smaller targets.

The door on the opposite end of the hallway opens. Catherine strides in with what remains of her personal security, turns down the adjoining hall, and enters the lab.

The lab stands empty, just desks, computers, and tools spread about the neat, sterile, white space. Catherine scans around. Her eyes fall on the small case sitting atop a cart.

She marches to the case, opens it, and finds a vial of nanites, the control driver, and the glove nestled inside.

A timid head pokes up from behind one of the desks. ENGINEER GILDAN, 40's, a squat man in a lab coat and safety glasses, peeks at the goings-on.

ENGINEER GILDAN
Ms. Kellogg?

He hauls himself to his feet and waddles over. Other technicians pop up from their hiding places as well.

CATHERINE
Why aren't you working?

ENGINEER GILDAN
The lockdown; it sounds like we're under attack.

CATHERINE
Yes, they're coming for the lab.

ENGINEER GILDAN
What do we do? We have to evacuate.

CATHERINE
No, you have to stay here and—

Catherine's cochlear phone rings. She holds up a finger.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)
What?

SECURITY CHIEF
Ma'am, the attackers are advancing. Several units are offline. There was some kind of breach. Malware has spread among the troops.

Catherine disconnects the call.

ENGINEER GILDAN
Ma'am? What's going on?

CATHERINE
It seems that the attackers are going to reach this room.

The techs chatter. Catherine takes off her scarf.

ENGINEER GILDAN

What do we do?

CATHERINE

Noxaro property, secrets, and
leadership must be protected.

She slots the control driver into her neck, pulls on the
glove, and grabs the vial.

CATHERINE (CONT'D)

It'll need to be fast. This isn't
nearly enough. I'll need material.

Catherine pops the cap off the vial.

INT. NOXARO CORP - STAIRWELL - SAME

Bodies litter the stairwell: both guards and soldiers. Sable
jumps down the stairs, knocks a guard's gun away, and punches
the man in the throat.

A guard rounds the corner. He and a One Earth soldier shoot
each other and collapse onto the stairs.

Sable kicks her opponent down and shoots him dead. She spins
and shoots down the stairs at a guard on the next landing. A
floor above, Patience gives aid to a soldier bleeding out.

PATIENCE

Someone grab the hemostatic gauze!

Finn looks ready to faint. Mort grabs him by the collar.

MORT

Finn, wake up! Do something.

Mort jogs down the stairs to join another squad. Finn digs
gauze out of a box and hands it to Patience.

FINN

Is this it?

PATIENCE

Yeah.

Sable leaps over the last set of stairs and crushes a guard
against the wall with her knee.

She turns to shoot the last guard, but her gun clicks, empty.
Sable whips the empty rifle at the guard and grabs him.

She punches the him in the teeth with her metal fist once, twice, three times, but then pauses. In the stark quiet, the young man whimpers.

Sable releases the guard, and he tumbles down the stairs. A soldier aims at him. Sable pushes the gun down.

SABLE

Leave him. He doesn't matter.

She points at the door they just passed.

SABLE (CONT'D)

We're there.

Sable sits against a wall, covered in blood and soot. Mort and Finn descend the stairs alongside the remaining One Earth soldiers. Patience helps her patient limp along.

MORT

Almost there. It's cost us a lot, but this is the most important battle we've ever fought. We need to stay the course.

Finn offers Sable his hand.

FINN

You okay?

SABLE

Yeah.

She lets him pull her up.

MORT

Finn, let's breach this door.

Finn sighs.

MORT (CONT'D)

Can you do it?

FINN

Yeah, I- I'm just tired.

PATIENCE

Breaches are nasty. Against Noxaro firewalls, it's gotta be like coding all day, all at once.

MORT

Stay strong. You get past today,
and I promise you'll never have to
do anything like this ever again.

Sable shoots Mort a look.

SABLE

Gotta stay strong, Finn. You'll
want to be there, at the end.

Finn trudges to the panel and unlocks the door. He reaches
for the knob, but Sable catches his wrist.

SABLE (CONT'D)

Anyone in front of this door
catches a bullet.

She drags Finn away, reaches out, and pulls the door open,
careful not to stand in in the opening. A massive cloud of
nanites surges into the stairwell.

Sable pulls Finn back, and they both tumble down the stairs.
Catherine stands in the hall, surrounded by the limp bodies
of cannibalized Noxaro guards--including her own detail.

The cloud envelops everyone in the stairwell. The members of
One Earth scream, flail, and try to cover their faces.
Patience produces a stun baton and presses it into her body.

Catherine's grin settles into smug satisfaction. The
stairwell door opens, and Mort stumbles out of the cloud.
Catherine's smile vanishes.

Mort tackles Catherine to the floor and wrestles with her. He
sits his weight on her, pulls a hunting knife, and stabs.
Catherine catches his wrist and holds him off.

The nanomachines swarm into the lab hallway and reveals Sable
on top of Finn. She shields him with her body.

The swarm flows over Mort and converges on the knife. Mort
jerks his hand free to find the blade dull and whittled away.

He throws the knife aside and clutches Catherine's throat.
Catherine gestures with the glove like she's aiming a spell.
The nanomachines swarm Mort, but only his watch dissolves.

In the stairwell, the rest of One Earth recovers, but most of
them lie still. Sable and Finn open their eyes and share a
moment before Sable pushes herself to her knees.

Stipples create an irregular pattern in the metal of Sable's
hand. She flexes her fingers. A shadow passes over her face.

SABLE (CONT'D)

Finn.

PATIENCE (O.S.)

Sable, hurry! We have people down.

Sable stands, helps Finn up, and they rejoin the others.

Patience examines the soldier she helped down the stairs earlier. She tilts his head, and his skull dents like a doll's, with no support underneath.

Patience recoils. Besides Sable and Patience, only three One Earth soldiers stand. One of them checks a body's pulse and shakes his head. Patience sobs. Sable comforts her.

Finn opens the hallway door. The cloud of nanites swirls in the hallway, but Mort emerges with Catherine over his shoulder. Mort absorbs the scene.

MORT

What happened?

SABLE

Some got it worse than others.

MORT

Damn.

FINN

How are you untouched?

MORT

No target. Shame about my watch. It was a gift.

FINN

You don't have any cybernetics? Not even your eyes?

MORT

There's a medical wing in this building, right? Someplace they install cybernetics?

FINN

Uh, yeah. Yeah, it's only down a couple floors.

MORT

Good. Sable, Patience: find it and get started. Prep the bomb. I'll make the call after Finn and I are done up here.

A soldier takes Catherine. No one else moves. Patience weeps.

MORT (CONT'D)
Patience.

SABLE
I think she needs a minute.

MORT
The job's not done yet.

SABLE
Just a minute.

Mort raises Patience's chin to look at him.

MORT
What we do here is for the greater
good. Stay strong. We need you.

Patience wipes her tears and leads the group down the stairs.
Sable glances back at Finn and follows.

FINN
What are we going to do?

MORT
We're going to check out the lab.

Mort strides into the room with Finn in tow. He squats down
and examines a tech's body. Holes stand where the tech's
artificial eyes used to be.

MORT (CONT'D)
Harvested every refined metal
available to make that swarm.
How long can they stay like that?

FINN
As long as the lights are on. The
nanomites have photovoltaic cells.

MORT
Shit. Did you think for a second
that you were making a mistake?

FINN
It was a job. I needed money, and I
would have put more safeties in if
my boss hadn't turned out to be a
Machiavellian murderer.

Mort nods.

FINN (CONT'D)
What are we doing here, anyway?
Where did the rest go?

MORT
Well, we could have destroyed any
drives and records of the nanos.

Mort pushes over a computer tower, and the empty plastic
thuds on the floor.

MORT (CONT'D)
But it seems she took care of that,
so I'll cut right to the point.

He turns to Finn.

MORT (CONT'D)
The girls are taking Kellogg down
to medical so they can install her
neural housing into Sable.

FINN
You want to use the nanomites for
your fight against the corps.

MORT
Yes and no. With your nanomachines,
we can expand our fight to this
entire planet.

FINN
The planet?

MORT
We'll unleash them, make their
numbers infinite. They'll hunt down
every piece of technology on this
planet and destroy it.

Finn stops breathing.

MORT (CONT'D)
Join us.

FINN
You're not serious.

MORT
Finn, have you ever known me to not
be serious?

INT. NOXARO CORP - STAIRWELL/LAB - INTERCUT

The One Earth soldiers descend through the stairwell. Sable stares into the middle distance as she walks.

MORT (V.O.)
Without technology, humans will be
forced to live in harmony with
nature once again.

FINN
But we rely on technology. People
will die without it.

MORT
Yes. Billions, I suspect.

The group reaches the floor they need.

MORT (V.O.)
It's the only way. All our tech
solutions to stop the destruction
only delayed the inevitable.

Patience tries the door. It sticks fast. She motions for a soldier to go fetch something.

MORT (V.O.)
Renewable energy, synthetic
forests, artificial reefs: too
little, too late.

Sable leans against a wall, still musing. Patience eyes her.

MORT (V.O.)
We'll be fewer, but the species
will survive in a world finally
allowed to heal.

FINN
Mort, don't be an idiot. You think
everything will be okay if you just
flip a switch and send us back to
the stone age?

MORT
A long time ago, our world was
plagued by disease.

A soldier jogs down the stairs with black cases.

MORT (V.O.)
People hid inside their homes,
hoping for the sickness to die out.

The soldier, in a welding mask, ignites a blow torch.

MORT (V.O.)
Freed from constant abuse, the
Earth showed a remarkable capacity
to recover.

The soldier melts through the lock.

MORT (V.O.)
But, of course, we refuse to live
any other way than this.

Sable paces away from the light. The guilt and worry on her
face creases her features. Finn advances on Mort.

FINN
My sister's getting new kidneys.
You know that, Mort.

Finn shoves Mort.

FINN (CONT'D)
You know that, Mort!

MORT
I know that.

FINN
She'll die without them.

MORT
People die. It's the way of things.

Finn throws a punch at Mort. Mort dodges, twists his arm, and
pins him to a desk.

MORT (CONT'D)
Living in balance with nature means
being at it's mercy. We must accept
that to survive.

FINN
You lied to me.

MORT
Think about the future, Finn, about
grateful generations that will live
because of our sacrifice.

FINN
Fuck you. You don't have any
implants. The only one you're not
doing this to is yourself.

MORT
I'd hoped you'd see. It's alright.

Mort breaks Finn's arm. Finn screams and falls to the floor.

MORT (CONT'D)
There's no guarantee removing your
implants will kill you. You'll get
your chance to live, just like
everyone else.

He kneels and grabs Finn's leg.

MORT (CONT'D)
I just can't let you slow us down.

FINN
Mort, no! No no no no!

Mort twists Finn's ankle. Finn screams.

MORT
See you in the new world, Finn.

Mort leaves. Finn rolls over and puts his hand to his ear.
His implant rings.

EMERGENCY SYSTEM
You have reached the metropolitan
emergency services line. If you--

The implant short circuits. The audio feeds back, and Finn
stiffens like a board. His mouth gapes in a silent scream.

INT. NOXARO CORP - MED LEVEL - SAME

Patience waits for the soldier to cut through the last door.
A notification dings, and she pulls a tablet out of her bag.

PATIENCE
Finn just tried to call 9-1-1.
Malware fried his implant.

Sable closes her eyes. Patience puts a hand on her shoulder.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
He'll live.

SABLE
For now.

Sable bites her tongue.

PATIENCE
I get it. He's cute.

SABLE
I look like a school girl to you?

PATIENCE
How many times did you volunteer to
watch Finn these last few months?

The lock on the door melts, and the soldier pulls it open.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
Let's get this done.

The surgery room contains an implant chair with a clean and refined robotic surgery apparatus on a giant swing arm. Cabinets and standard medical paraphernalia fill the space.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
Set her on here, face down.

A soldier straddles Kellogg's corpse backwards atop the implant chair. Patience produces a pair of scissors and cuts Kellogg's hair to uncover the neural adapter housing.

Mort strides in and sets his gun on the counter.

MORT
How we doing?

PATIENCE
I was right. They have everything I
could have asked for in here.

MORT
How long?

Patience operates the chair's console and watches as the surgery apparatus responds.

PATIENCE
Well, dead donor, top kit, and
Sable already being pretty modular:
I'd say not long at all.

MORT
How about the bomb?

A soldier opens the case they've been carrying around to reveal a bomb inside.

MORT (CONT'D)
Perfect. Patience, those bots ate
my watch. I'll need your tablet.

Patience hands it over.

MORT (CONT'D)
It's been an honor to fight with
you all. Today we save the world.

A couple of the soldiers whoop and clap. Patience forces a smile. Sable stares, distracted.

Mort drags the bomb into the hall. He unlocks the tablet, takes a deep breath, and dials 9-1-1.

INT. NOXARO CORP - LAB - DAY

Finn convulses on the ground. His red eyes stare.

FLASHBACK MONTAGE - FINN REMEBERS WHAT HE FIGHTS FOR

--Finn and Lucy on a balcony, all smiles. Lucy nudges Finn.

--Mom carries a birthday cake into Lucy's hospital room. Lucy lays in bed. Finn starts to sing. Lucy covers her face.

--Finn tries to break the hug, but Lucy doesn't let him.

--Sable tries to hide her smile.

--Sable threatens the security guard in Kellogg's building.

--Sable pulls Finn close and kisses him on the cheek.

--Sable covers Finn with her body while the nanos swarm.

BACK TO SCENE

Finn's convulsions fade. He rolls over and uses the desk to help him up on his good leg. He hops across the room, leans against the wall, and opens the door.

In the hall, Finn hops between the bodies. He falls to his knees and grabs one of the guards' guns. He notices something in the dead guard's gear and pulls out a blue inhaler.

He hesitates, but he takes a big puff. His pupils dilate.

INT. NOXARO CORP - MED LEVEL - DAY

OPERATOR

Transferring your call now, sir.

The tablet display changes to a streaming video of INSPECTOR TODD, 40's, in a cheap suit and standing amongst a barricade of police cars outside.

INSPECTOR TODD

Hello? This is Inspector Todd.

MORT

You're in charge of the situation at Noxaro Tower, yes?

INSPECTOR TODD

I am.

MORT

Recognize me?

INSPECTOR TODD

You're Mort Escoff, eco-terrorist.

Mort aims the camera down at the bomb.

MORT

Good. This is a bomb. Any attempts by police or Noxaro to take back the building, and I set it off.

INSPECTOR TODD

What do you want?

In the operating room, a surgical laser cuts the neural adapter housing out of Catherine's neck.

MORT (V.O.)

Just time, inspector. My fight is not with you, but Noxaro.

The head of the swing arm rotates to a slim, robotic clamp that pulls the housing out of Catherine's neck. Patience takes the housing and sets the chip on the crash cart.

INSPECTOR TODD (V.O.)

What are you going to do?

MORT (V.O.)

Expose them.

The One Earth soldiers lift Catherine off the chair.

PATIENCE (M.O.S.)
We're ready, Sable.

MORT (V.O.)
You may be content to ignore their
crimes, but I will not.

PATIENCE (M.O.S.)
Sable?

Sable snaps out of it. Patience nods to the chair.

INT. NOXARO CORP - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Visitors in the lobby hide behind chairs and sofas. One woman
clutches her purse and weeps.

MORT (V.O.)
In this building are over 4000
employees on lockdown, and I'm sure
more importantly, billions in
Noxaro property.

INT. NOXARO CORP - MED LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

MORT
When we're done, they'll be freed.
I'll be in touch.

Mort hangs up and walks into the operating room.

MORT (CONT'D)
How are things?

PATIENCE
Done with the donor. Cutting Sable
now. Cover your ears.

The swing arm extends a circular saw and cuts into the metal
at the back of Sable's neck. A couple soldiers cover their
ears and retreat into the hall.

INT. NOXARO CORP - STAIRWELL - DAY

Finn navigates between the bodies as he hops down each step.
His good arm holds the handrail. The other grips the gun and
hangs limp at his side.

INT. NOXARO CORP - MED LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

Finn slumps against the Med Level doorway. One of the soldiers outside the operating room looks over, and Finn lights his eyes. The soldier spasms and collapses.

Mort slouches in a chair, hands steepled. He squints into the hall just as the other soldier falls. Mort stands. Patience stops the saw and lifts it.

PATIENCE

What?

Hop, hop. Finn hops into the open doorway and falls against the frame. His eyes dim, and he points the gun at them.

FINN

Back away.

Hope sparks in Sable's eyes. She turns to see.

MORT

Well! You're tougher than I thought, Finn. Should have twisted both your ankles.

The remaining soldier steps between Finn and Patience.

FINN

You're all going along with this? You've seen it. You know what will happen to you.

MORT

We also understand the value of sacrifice. We won't let our petty desires damn the world.

FINN

Easy to say when your family's already gone, and you won't have to feel the nanites eating you alive.

Mort's face darkens.

MORT

Alright, go ahead.

Mort steps to the side to expose Sable. Finn hesitates. He stares into Sable's strong, soft eyes.

MORT (CONT'D)
Shoot us all, Finn. This whole
decaying world you love so much
hangs in the balance.

Finn sighs and lowers the gun.

MORT (CONT'D)
You have to have strength to affect
change, Finn.

Mort snatches his gun off the counter. Finn squeezes his eyes
shut as bullets scream into the hallway wall.

Sable sits frozen with her hand on Mort's gun, having
deflected its aim. She looks at Mort like a child that just
made an oopsie.

MORT (CONT'D)
Sable?

SABLE
Mort, I think we should talk.

MORT
We can talk later.

SABLE
No, I--

Sable steps between Finn and the gun.

SABLE (CONT'D)
I don't want to do this anymore.

MORT
Sable, get ahold of yourself. This
is what we've been fighting for.

SABLE
We've been fighting to protect.
That's what you taught me to do.

MORT
Turning your back on me? For him?

SABLE
Never. I just want to hold on to
what I have. You, Patience: you're
my family.

MORT
You're the last person I would have
expected to find this weakness in.

Mort pulls the trigger. The bullets tear through Sable's abdomen. Patience gasps. Sable pushes the gun down. Mort's next shot bounces off her thigh. Sable punches Mort.

Finn breaches the remaining soldier and overloads his senses. Mort tackles Sable into Finn. They all spill into the hall. Sable catches Mort's arm and locks in a triangle choke.

Mort draws Sable's own knife off her belt and tries to stab her. Sable catches his wrist. Mort picks her up, still caught in the choke, stands, and powerbombs her.

Mort pulls a hand free and strikes Sable's bullet wounds. He wriggles out of her grip and catches his breath. Finn collects his gun and aims at Mort.

Mort throws the knife at Finn's face. Finn blocks it with the broad side of the gun.

Mort lunges and grabs the gun. Sable catches one of his feet and pulls him back. Mort tears the gun out of Finn's one good hand. He tries to shoot Finn, but the gun clicks, empty.

Sable tries to catch Mort in a sleeper hold. Mort drops the gun, strikes her elbow to prevent it, and elbows her in the gut. Sable shoves him.

Mort's hands land on her knife. He takes it up. Mort and Sable stand and square off.

Sable closes in and bicycle kicks. Mort jumps back. Sable fakes a couple moves and drives Mort away from Finn. Mort abandons his fighting stance and purses his lips.

MORT (CONT'D)
Are you holding back?

Sable holds her gut.

SABLE
Of course I am. I don't want to
hurt you.

MORT
Then might as well quit. I won't
hold back, I taught you your moves,
and I know where the metal stops.

Mort attacks. The two exchange moves in a whirlwind of blade, bone, and metal. Sable presses. Mort backs away and parries strikes of fist and elbow, knee and foot.

A flashing strike with the knife here and there keeps Sable off her rhythm.

Finn watches the spectacle as it moves up the hall. He crawls for the operating room. When he reaches it, he finds Patience pointing a gun at him. She trembles.

Mort backs toward the open stairwell door. He clutches Sable's wrist, twists, and bullies her against the frame. Sable wrestles to keep the knife from her face.

Mort stabs from different angles, but Sable blocks, blocks, and blocks. They lock in a stalemate. Mort hip tosses Sable down the stairs. Sable clutches him, and they both fall.

Sable bounces all the way down to the next landing. Mort stops after a few steps. A new cut seeps on Sable's head. She tries to move her leg. It stutters, weak.

Mort stands and descends the stairs. He picks up the knife

MORT (CONT'D)
To think that you would betray me
over a boy.

SABLE
I love you, Morty. I do, but you
need to see what's right in front
of you. Your grief is poison.

MORT
Grief isn't poison. Poison is a
little girl in a gutter who never
learned loyalty.

Sable weeps.

SABLE
You're a father to me, Mort. Andrea
would want--

Mort stomps on Sable's face and knocks her unconscious. The lights flicker. Mort runs back to the operating room.

Patience weeps on the chair. Finn leans on the counter. Mort grabs Finn and presses Sable's blade to the man's throat.

MORT
I should kill you now.

FINN
Won't make any difference.

Mort sees the chip and glove missing from the crash cart. He throws Finn against the counter and pulls Finn's collar down. The chip stands in its slot.

The lights in the room flicker. The building creaks.

MORT
What is that? What are you doing?

FINN
Giving you a taste of the new
world. I let the nanites loose.

INT. NOXARO TOWER - CUBE CITY - CONTINUOUS

A Noxaro employee hides in her cubicle with the lights off. The buzz of the swarm nears. The employee peeks out. The swarm surges into the room. The employee takes cover.

The nightmare cloud swirls around the room. The employee screams and cries, but the swarm leaves. The employee peeks at the door. The door falls over without lock or hinges.

FINN (V.O.)
They started with the locks.

INT. NOXARO TOWER - MED LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

FINN
Computers and servers are next. The
beams come last.

Most twists Finn's arm.

MORT
Call them off. Call them off, now!

FINN
Break whatever you want, Mort.
You're alone. Your vision's dead.

Mort looks at Patience.

MORT
You let him. You let him?

Mort slumps against a wall and sits down.

MORT (CONT'D)
One day, and you turn my girls
against me. How'd you do it?

PATIENCE
You never even hesitated.

Patience lowers her hands. Tears cover a face hot with anger.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
You shot Sable.

MORT
She turned against us.

Patience lunges at Mort and threatens him with a scalpel.

PATIENCE
You shut up! Just shut up! Did you
ever care about any of us? What is
she to you? What am I?

Mort hesitates. Patience breaks down.

FINN
That's the nice thing about evil,
Mort. It makes its own enemies.

Patience presses the blade to Mort's neck.

PATIENCE
Where is she?

MORT
She's on the stairs.

PATIENCE
Alive?

MORT
I protect the two of with
everything I have.

PATIENCE
Until the time comes to sacrifice
us for your vision! Did you ever
care about us?

MORT
Of course I do.

PATIENCE
But you treat us like tools!

She falls back to sit and runs her hand through her hair.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
I knew your plan. You never lied.
You just let me lie to myself.

Mort fails to meet her eyes. She stands.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
It's over. We have to go.

MORT
Yes. Get Sable and get out of here,
quickly. Save who you can.

PATIENCE
You, too.

MORT
No. Time I reunited with my
daughter. I have explaining to do.

PATIENCE
I'm your daughter! Me and Sable.

MORT
I failed you, too.

PATIENCE
You can come with us.

MORT
No, I'm done. Beaten before the
first punch. Can't tell if it's the
world that's wrong, or just me.

Mort wipes his tears away and stands.

MORT (CONT'D)
I'll call for pickup. Get on the PA
and order an evacuation. Help who
you can, Patience.

FINN
He's right. There's no telling when
this place will drop.

MORT
Go, Patience. Hold on to what you
have, while you can.

Patience glares at Mort. She grits her teeth and helps Finn.

EXT. NOXARO TOWER - DAY

Inspector Todd covers his ear and shouts into his phone. A
crowd of pedestrians and reporters clamor behind the line.

INSPECTOR TODD

Yes, sir. No, sir, I haven't heard anything since. With any luck, all he'll try to do is find some dirt--

POLICEMAN (O.S.)

Inspector Todd!

The blast doors dissolve from the center. They melt away, and a huge swarm of nanomachines flies out of the lobby. The swarm soars up the length of the tower.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

Look!

Visitors and employees in Noxaro tower start to file out of the new holes opened in the lobby.

INSPECTOR TODD

Go! Go! Get them out of there.

He watches as the swarm reaches the top of the tower and disappears inside.

After a second, a menacing black nimbus of nanites ten or more times the size surges out of the tower's every orifice. It swirls around the upper floors like a maelstrom.

INT. NOXARO TOWER - STAIRWELL - DAY

Patience holds smelling salts under Sable's nose. Sable jerks awake and coughs. She holds her seeping wound.

PATIENCE

It's okay. It's okay. Don't move.

SABLE

What's going on?

PATIENCE

Just sit still.

She examines the cuts and bruises on Sable's head.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)

I'll have to treat you, later.
Right now, I need you on your feet.

Patience helps Sable up. The lights flicker.

SABLE

What happened? Where's Mort?

PATIENCE
Nanomachines are eating the
building. We have to go.

SABLE
You did it? You did it?

PATIENCE
No, sh sh sh. Only the building.
Finn did it.

Sable looks at Finn and smiles. One of the three remaining
One Earth soldiers supports him.

SABLE
Finn!

PATIENCE
Not like a schoolgirl at all.

SABLE
Where's Mort?

PATIENCE
He stayed behind.

SABLE
What? Why? Patience, why?

Patience fights her trembling lip. She shakes her head.

SABLE (CONT'D)
We can't leave him!

Patience grabs Sable's arm before she gets up two steps.

PATIENCE
He shot you.

SABLE
I've been shot before.

PATIENCE
Sable, stop! He shot you, and he
doesn't want to come.

SABLE
That's not his choice.

Sable limps up the stairs.

FINN
Sable.

She hesitates.

FINN (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

SABLE
He's the only dad I've ever had,
Finn. I hurt him. He's just hurt.

FINN
He hurt you. He doesn't deserve
your forgiveness.

Sable's eyes plead with Finn. Finn sighs and hands her the blue inhaler of pain blockers. Patience shakes her head. Sable grabs Finn and plants big kiss on him.

SABLE
I'll catch up.

She hits the inhaler and bounds up the stairs.

INT. NOXARO TOWER - MED LEVEL - CONTINUOUS

Sable hurries down the hall. The building sways, and she totters. She clutches her stomach wound.

Mort swipes through photos on Patience's tablet: selfies and candid photos of the good times. Sable stumbles in.

MORT
Sable.

Sable grabs Mort.

SABLE
Time to go. Come on.

MORT
No, Sable.

Sable drags Mort and shoves him against the wall.

SABLE
You don't have a choice.

MORT
You really want to do this again?

SABLE
Fine. Then I'm not leaving either.

She stomps to the operating chair eases into it.

SABLE (CONT'D)

Now what?

MORT

Still trying to save me? After everything? After I gave you that?

SABLE

I know something about loyalty.

MORT

Then you didn't learn it from me.

The building groans like a sad whale.

MORT (CONT'D)

Leave it to my girls to be right about everything. My grief is poison, all that cracks sinews and cakes the brain.

Mort shakes his head.

MORT (CONT'D)

I'm not a man my daughter would want to know.

Another groan, louder. The floor tilts a degree or two. A snap, and a crack streaks across the outer wall. The crash cart rolls into it.

MORT (CONT'D)

It's Andrea's judgement that awaits me on the other side, and this damned building will deliver me.

EXT. NOXARO ROOFTOP - DAY

Patience and the gang burst through the door. A helicopter hovering above the helipad lands. They pile inside.

PILOT

Go for dustoff?

PATIENCE

No. We're waiting on two more!

INT. NOXARO TOWER - MED LEVEL - DAY

The room tilts a degree more. A pan of surgical supplies slides off the counter. A crash sounds overhead.

The ceiling gives, and a slab of concrete falls through, half-supported by a load-bearing wall. Sable jumps and catches the other half before it crushes Mort. Mort doesn't flinch.

Sable screams through clenched teeth as she strains.

MORT

Stronger than me in every way.

Mort grabs Sable by the waist and yanks them both out of the way. The slab snaps in half and breaks on the floor.

Mort touches Sable's cheek. The floor shakes, and they fight to keep balance. Daylight shines through the crack in the outer wall as it widens.

EXT. NOXARO ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

PILOT

Woah, shit!

The pilot pulls up off the helipad as it tilts.

EXT. NOXARO TOWER - CONTINUOUS

A whole section of the building's wall crumbles and sloughs away like a breaking glacier. Thousands of tons of rubble fall to the ground.

INSPECTOR TODD

It's coming down! Everyone, move back! Evacuate!

INT. NOXARO TOWER - MED LEVEL - DAY

The wall in front of Sable and Mort falls away. Mort holds the chair to stay steady as the floor slopes.

They gaze out on a beautiful, clear day. The urban sprawl and the desert spread out before them. A stream of nanomachines flows down past them and out of sight.

MORT

There's still beauty in this world.
Babies are born. Life goes on.

Mort gazes into Sable's eyes.

MORT (CONT'D)

I just can't take the pain.

The helicopter swoops down in front of the opening. Nanomites passing by swirl in the vortex like fine dust and move on.

PATIENCE

We can get 'em! Is there a rope on board? Get closer.

PILOT

I can't. You'd never throw a rope that far with the blades going.

PATIENCE

We have to do something.

Finn stands and sets his weight on his good leg. His eyes glow bright blue, and he gestures like a wizard.

The maelstrom of nanomachines, literal tons of black dust, flows toward the chopper like a murmuration of starlings.

Patience gapes as they form into an undulating blanket of black sand and hover as one under the open wall.

SABLE

A magic carpet.

Mort holds Sable and gives her a warm, parental smile.

MORT

He's good man, Sable. Cherish every moment that you have together.

Mort tosses Sable onto the cushion of nanomachines.

SABLE

Mort, no! No!

She tries to stand on the nanomachines, but her feet sink into it like quicksand.

FINN

Sable, don't move!

The building groans. Debris falls from higher on the tower and slices through the nanomachines.

PILOT

We gotta go!

Patience sticks a gun to the pilot's head.

PATIENCE

Not until she's on board.

Finn gestures, and the nanomachines carry Sable to the chopper. Those on the fringes swirl in the air currents.

SABLE

No! No!

Sable reaches the chopper, and the soldiers lift her inside. She falls into Patience's arms and sobs.

Mort lingers a moment and gazes at Patience and Sable. Then he turns and walks away. The building bends and collapses. The open wall of the med level folds shut.

PILOT

Shit!

The pilot jerks the controls, and the helicopter strafes out of reach as the top half of the building swings down. The cloud of nanites bursts as the concrete crashes through.

The helicopter flies toward the horizon. Inside, Sable weeps as Patience holds her. Finn digs the chip out of his neck and snaps it before he throws the pieces out the door.

INT. HOSPITAL - LUCY'S ROOM - DAY

Lucy sleeps. The ECG beeps, steady. Finn opens the door. He wears casts on his arm and ankle as well as a hospital gown.

He hobbles in, crutch under his arm, sits next to Lucy in silence, and hangs his head. Lucy wakes.

LUCY

Hey, Finn.

FINN

You're awake!

LUCY

I know. Bummer, right?

FINN

They said you were in a coma.

LUCY

For a little while. Then I came screaming back to miserable consciousness. Who's the babe?

Sable stands in the doorway. She also wears a hospital gown.

FINN

Sable.

SABLE

I, uh, I came to see you, but you weren't in your room.

LUCY

I remember you. You were with Finn last week, right? When he went off on his big, mysterious mission.

SABLE

Yeah.

Sable waddles into the room.

LUCY

Is everything alright now?

FINN

Yeah. Yeah, I think so.

LUCY

Hope he wasn't too much trouble.

Sable shakes her head.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Oh, I see. Finn, you dog.

FINN

What?

LUCY

Don Juan. Lady slayer.

Sable fights her shy smile. Lucy holds her hand out to Sable. Sable approaches like a nervous child and takes it.

LUCY (CONT'D)

You seem tough. That's good. Finn needs a tough girl.

FINN

Lucy.

LUCY

Oh, but sad. Is everything okay?

Sable blinks through fresh tears.

LUCY (CONT'D)

Aww, it's okay.

Lucy gathers Sable to her bosom. Sable sniffles and sobs.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Yeah, tough girl. It's okay.

Lucy smiles a thin line at Finn. Finn smiles back.

LUCY (CONT'D)
It'll be okay.

INT. NOXARO GREEN - DAY

The phone rings. Lucy, in a blouse and smart pants, answers on her cochlear implant. She sits at a desk tucked between a cube city and a private office.

LUCY
Thank you for calling Noxaro Green.
I'm Lucy. How may I help you?

A logo that dominates the wall behind her reads: "NOXARO" in big, black letters and "GREEN" in green underneath. An italicized tagline reads "The incredible - sustainable."

LUCY (CONT'D)
Yes, ma'am, we sometimes do
partnerships like that. You can
fill out a form on our website.

Beat.

LUCY (CONT'D)
I understand. I can ask her if I
can find her. Can you hold?

Patience emerges from the office. She still wears her green hair, but swapped her street clothes for business wear.

PATIENCE
Lucy, have you seen Sable?

LUCY
Congresswoman Lumpkin is on the
line, she was hoping to speak to
you, personally.

PATIENCE
I need to kick Sable in the ass,
first. The nerd come out of his
cave at all, today?

LUCY
No, he's still in there.

Patience marches off.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Ma'am, are you still there? Thank
you. She'll be back in a moment.
Can I place you on a brief hold?

Patience opens a door to a dark room filled with computer
parts on and under shelves. Finn sits at the far end and
squints at a visual coding program on his computer.

PATIENCE
Finn, I'm looking for your much
better half. She hiding in here?

FINN
No.

PATIENCE
Dammit. The roof, then.

Finn nods.

PATIENCE (CONT'D)
Can you get her?

FINN
You should really make an effort to
talk to her yourself.

PATIENCE
I can't get three words out her
these days. "Okay," "Yes, ma'am,"
"Anything else?" Does she ever talk
to you about me?

FINN
Not really. Sorry.

PATIENCE
Fine. Tell her I said to get her
ass out to the landfill. Team's
having trouble with the locals.

Patience leaves.

EXT. ONE EARTH - DAY

Sable sits on the low parapet of the single-story building
Noxaro Green calls home and stares out over a suburban sprawl
lit orange by the haze and the setting sun.

She wears jeans and a jacket with the Noxaro logo on the
sleeve. The roof door opens, and Finn moseys over.

FINN
Thought I might find you here.
Patience was looking for you.

SABLE
What did she want?

FINN
She needs you to settle a dispute
at the landfill. Reclamation's
getting accosted again, probably.

SABLE
Okay. I'll get going in a minute.

FINN
She was also hoping you would talk
to her. Not a boss-employee talk
but more of a people-who-have-known-
each-other-their-whole-lives talk.

Sable stares out over the city.

FINN (CONT'D)
What's going on in your head? She's
not the only one wondering.

Sable keeps staring.

FINN (CONT'D)
Okay. See you at home, I guess.

Finn starts to walk away.

SABLE
Am I supposed to be happy, Finn?

Finn stays.

SABLE (CONT'D)
We saved the world. Now Patience
lets Noxaro wear us like a mask.
Local news shows us "reclaiming the
sea of trash" while, in reality,
Noxaro damages the world faster
than we could ever heal it. I don't
want you to hate me, but I can't
get rid of this feeling.

FINN
What feeling?

Sable's moist eyes turn on him and pull away.

SABLE
Sometimes I dream of having a baby.

FINN
You do?

SABLE
Yeah. Hell, two, three.

FINN
I- I don't know what to say. That's great. Me, too.

SABLE
Literally, I dream about it. I dream of holding them, but in the dream, all I have to hold them with are these metal arms.

She appraises her arms.

SABLE (CONT'D)
I wasn't thinking about children when I got them. I was only thinking about what I wanted right in front of me: good, strong arms.

FINN
They'll love being in your arms.

SABLE
Do you?

FINN
Of course.

SABLE
You seriously never wish they were any other way? That my hands could be natural and soft?

Finn hesitates.

SABLE (CONT'D)
I just wish I'd been thinking of them when the time came. What will they think of me when they realize things could have been different?

Finn's mouth works, but he manages no words and swallows hard. Sable hops off the parapet.

SABLE (CONT'D)

I better get back to work. Still
lots to fix.

She pecks Finn on the cheek and leaves. Finn bites his lip and looks out at the metropolis, the sea of trash, and the light filtered orange through a haze of smog.

THE END