

BEFORE I WAKE

Written by

Joe Crump & Rachel Noll

Joe Crump
11825 Sand Dollar Ct.
Indianapolis, IN 46256
joecrump2@gmail.com
317-598-1220

WGA Registration: 1760328
Copyright: 1-2074373851

EXT. LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY EUROPEAN CITY - NIGHT

Two girls stand on a dark city street. The landscape is a romantic version of a late nineteenth century Western European city, though the girls' dress is modern.

Pools of light from gas lamps give the merchant neighborhood a glowing, magical feel. The wet brick pavement glistens beneath their feet.

Both girls breath heavily as they look around them. They both look flushed, but invigorated.

Just then, a rumble shakes the ground beneath them.

SARAH, the elder at 13 years, holds out her hand to NANAKO, who tentatively takes it. Nanako is 8, unsure of herself, but clearly trusts and admires her older sister.

SARAH

Come on!

Holding hands, they bend their knees and jump into the air. They fly up from the street and land gently on a gabled rooftop. The entire glittering nighttime city spreads out before them.

They look down in time to see thick smoke billow between the buildings and spread out in a fog-like blanket over the streets.

The fog condenses slowly into a solid shape. Huge raven wings spread out from the center. The SMOKE RAVEN turns its head sharply, catching the girls in its sights.

Sarah and Nanako scream and take off, leaping from roof top to roof top as the smoke billows out below them.

Suddenly, Sarah throws out her hands and the world starts to change around them. Buildings become trees, streets turn to dirt.

EXT. VIBRANT GREEN JUNGLE - NIGHT

The girls are now running through a green vibrant jungle.

Nanako looks back over her shoulder. All is quiet.

NANAKO

We lost him!

SARAH

Wait...

Just then, a flash and the smoke billows between the trees after them.

The girls dodge between two trees and keep running, shrieking and giggling.

SARAH (CONT'D)
Did you see how I did it?

NANAKO
Yes.

SARAH
Now, you try.

Nanako looks at Sarah with alarm.

SARAH (CONT'D)
You can do this!

Large raven wings can be seen gaining ground on them, flitting between the trees. The girls run faster as Nanako squeezes her eyes shut. The trees shimmer and lose their clarity.

EXT. TUMBLING OCEAN - NIGHT

Suddenly, the mossy floor morphs into a tumbling ocean rocking beneath a stormy sky. Nanako and Sarah find themselves on a small sailboat, tipping with the waves. They hold the mast while rain and lightning dash around them.

Their eyes closed against the rain and wind, Sarah and Nanako laugh as their hair swirls around them.

SARAH
Good! Now, can you calm the ocean?

The ocean immediately goes still. The clouds disperse and the water lies placidly before them.

Nanako beams proudly at her sister. Sarah laughs. Then, her face suddenly goes white.

NANAKO
What is it?

Sarah's body shudders and the world around them starts to tremble.

SARAH
Oh, no.

The landscape melts around them as Sarah's body jerks. Nanako clings to the mast of the ship, her eyes wide with fright.

Sarah's eyes change from blue to a deep black-on-black. Suddenly her human body doesn't look right. Her movements feel calculated and awkward. Sarah's hands rise slowly in front of her and a white energy starts to build.

SARAH (CONT'D)

Nanako! Run.

Her voice is hoarse and strange. The power builds and suddenly explodes out of her, sending a shock wave across the water. Nanako shields her body from the blast.

NANAKO

Sarah!

Sarah's eyes are wide and vacant. Her face emotionless. Nanako pushes her way across the deck of the ship and manages to climb her way up Sarah's body, holding her firmly in her arms.

The power surge glitches slightly, and with a gasp, they fall entwined to the deck of the boat. Sarah's eyes change back to blue. She looks at Nanako with fear in her face, tears brimming at the corner of her eyes.

Then, Sarah vanishes. The ocean immediately calms. Nanako is left alone, wet and shaking.

Just then, the Smoke Raven appears beside Nanako in the boat.

NANAKO (CONT'D)

Where's Sarah?

SMOKE RAVEN

She's weak. It's time to return to the house.

The sea dissolves and Nanako finds herself standing alone in a long marble hallway. She looks around, frightened.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A severe looking middle-aged man sits at an antique wooden desk on what appears to be a floating platform high up in the sky.

Stars shine on all sides amidst ominous billowing clouds. Large planets circle overhead. The room has no walls. If God had an office, it would look like this.

A single lamp glows on the desk, illuminating him.

This is JEAN BAPTISTE, a severe man in his early forties wearing a well-fitted suit. His elbows rest on the desktop, fingers intertwined. He impassively watches Sarah who stands before his desk in the glow of the lamp. Her outlines still twitch and fragment from time to time.

SARAH

I'm sorry.

BAPTISTE

Do you know why you're here?

Sarah nods slowly.

Baptiste leans back. He opens a floating monitor in front of him. On it, a model of Sarah spins slowly. Without a flicker of expression, he scrolls to the bottom of the screen where a button is marked TERMINATE.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

I can't release you from this tower. It has compromised you.

Tears fill Sarah's eyes.

SARAH

I would never intentionally hurt Nanako.

BAPTISTE

And that's how I know it has become your master. I'm sorry, Sarah.

SARAH

I just need a little more time.

BAPTISTE

I've wasted too much time already.

He presses the button.

Sarah gasps. She looks up at him with shock, fear, and despair as the particles making up her body slowly start to disengage and drift apart. A blue light begins to glow around her.

SARAH

Father?

Baptiste stands. Sarah's body has entirely broken apart. Her face begins to lose its dimension until all that remains are her wide frightened eyes. A breath, and then they too disappear.

Baptiste sinks slowly back into the chair. His expression never changing, he pulls up another screen, this one with a model of Nanako on it. He studies it.

INT. RUINED INDUSTRIAL BUILDING #1 - DAY

HANNA TOLEN squats out of sight behind a pillar. The sounds of machine gun fire and exploding stone and brick fill the ruined building.

12 years old, Hanna has a wise mischievous face and two blond braids that fall down her back. She wears a school uniform with a plaid skirt and combat boots.

Next to her, a small scruffy dog sits. This is RAGS. His eyes dart around the room, his ears perking up at every sound.

RAGS

Your chances of being detected are high, Hanna.

HANNA

Shh. Go.

The dog vanishes.

Hanna shifts, and we see that she is just feet away from a red glowing line on the floor with the words DO NOT CROSS.

Across the way, and through a blown out window, another blasted building can be seen with six large windows and an entrance door in the middle. Indistinct movements can be seen inside.

Hanna turns as three figures drop down behind the wall nearest her. She ducks further into the dark to avoid detection.

CONRAD TOLEN, Hanna's father, a competent looking man in fatigues, laughs good naturedly as he hefts a huge automatic rifle in his hand, almost caressing his face with the barrel.

It is a futuristic weapon with attachments, a grenade launcher and a scope with laser sight. Smoke still rises from the barrel.

Conrad is bruised and bloodied. His fatigues stained dirty. Next to him, OKURIBI (Oku), a Japanese woman of about 30, sits propped against the same brick wall. Two colt 45's are strapped to her body. She turns to Conrad.

OKU

Come here.

Conrad checks over his shoulder and then moves closer to Oku. She places both hands on his chest and closes her eyes. Golden light seeps from her fingers and infuses Conrad. His injuries heal.

OKU (CONT'D)

Jimmy?

JIMMY SAWYER, a skinny southern boy with lamb-chop sideburns and a goatee, crouches on the other side of her. He shakes his head.

JIMMY

I'm fine.

He hoists a sniper rifle over his shoulder and aims it out the window.

OKU

You're bleeding.

JIMMY

Builds character.

She shakes her head and heals her own wounds instead. Jimmy peers over the sill of the window into the battleground below where the sound of gunfire and explosions send dust motes into the air.

Hanna turns into the dark beside her and, as quietly as she can, begins to load a bullet into a small gun.

CONRAD

On three. One, two...

Hanna loses her grip on the bullet and it falls noisily to the floor. Hanna moves toward it, accidentally sending it skittering across the red line.

An alarm sounds loudly and the room glows red.

Startled, Conrad swings his head and his rifle comes down into the firing position. Oku brings her double guns to bear on the unexpected intruder.

Hanna comes into the light, stepping over the line as a small, rotating, red VIOLATION emblem descends over her head. A melodic voice announces:

WOMAN'S VOICE
Illegal player detected.

CONRAD
Hanna!

An uncomfortable grin spreads across her face.

The perspective shifts, and we now see the game from a birds eye view. On the right side of the field, two screens can be seen. In each box, a COMMENTATOR. Below them, a chat room scroll swells with comments and emoticons.

COMMENTATOR 1
It appears an illegal player has entered the game. Hannabanana527!? why not call herself PrincessAndPonies382?

They both giggle. Hanna blushes red.

COMMENTATOR 2
The question now is what will the moderator do. If the team is disqualified, the game will be forfeit.

The chat box underneath the two commentators floods with comments.

HANNA
Don't be mad.

CONRAD
How did you get in here?

HANNA
Your password wasn't exactly hard to figure out.

CONRAD
Go home, Hanna.

HANNA
I was just going to watch. I didn't mean to step over the line.

Jimmy looks across the way at the other team. One of them points to the red violation tag above Hanna that can be seen through the blown out window.

JIMMY

We're in violation, Conrad. It's over.

CONRAD

Damn.

Just then, a glowing, golden figure descends from the sky, exuding power and strength. The golden light fades, and the figure standing before them can now be seen as the all-together unimpressive STAN. A small man with a buzz cut, a white shirt, and a pocket protector.

STAN

You know the rules, Conrad. Your team forfeits and you're banned for two weeks. Sam's team takes the win by default.

The bright golden light surrounds him again, and he ascends upwards until he vanishes into the sky.

COMMENTATOR 1

A surprising call by the games moderator.

COMMENTATOR 2

And the responses are already flooding in.

User icons flood the chat screen with angry responses. Bad call! Boo. Game on! And a series of obscenities and angry emoticons.

Jimmy moves to the window and looks down below at SAM, the team leader on the other side. Sam looks up expectantly. His TEAM behind him.

SAM

Well?

JIMMY

A casing was kicked over the line.

Sam spits in the dirt angrily and looks up into the sky.

SAM

That's all? It's a bad call, Stan!

The chat room continues to flood with responses.

JIMMY

Play on?

A mischievous smile crosses Sam's face.

SAM

Play on!

COMMENTATOR 1

This should be exciting. You can feel it in the air. People are sitting up and paying attention!

COMMENTATOR 2

This is what pirate servers were designed for. I, for one, am excited to see what the players have up their sleeves.

Jimmy sets his sniper rifle aside. He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small bottle of party bubbles. He moves to the window and delicately blows three large soap bubbles across the courtyard.

We follow them as they drift lazily toward the other building. Sam looks at them, confused.

The bubbles make contact with the building. And then:

A massive explosion blows out a section of the wall as a red VIOLATION emblem descends over Jimmy as well.

The online crowd cheers.

Hanna and Oku let out whoops as Jimmy laughs and sets the bottle of bubbles down.

The other team shouts as they scramble back into position.

CONRAD

Hanna? Back behind the line. Go.

HANNA

But, Dad!

CONRAD

GO!

OKU

Come on, Conrad. Let her stay. I'll stick close to her in case anything happens.

CONRAD

I don't...

HANNA

Please?

Conrad grumbles and reloads his weapon as Oku hands Hanna one of her 45s.

INT. RUINED INDUSTRIAL BUILDING #2

SAM, the other team's leader, shouts and reaches behind him where he quickly assembles a giant grenade launcher.

INT. RUINED INDUSTRIAL BUILDING #1

JIMMY

Here we go!

Jimmy ducks below the wall. All is deathly quiet for a moment.

And then, through the window, a canister bomb with an evil, grinning bunny logo on the side, hits the floor and rolls toward the team. It sprouts legs and a revolving eye that scans the room and locks on them.

A bright pulsing begins and a whine grows steadily louder.

Conrad dives for the bomb, grabs it, and manages to fling it out the window just as it explodes.

Hanna cocks the big revolver with two thumbs and holds it at the ready. Oku gives her an encouraging smile as she readies her weapons as well.

The commentators whoop and cheer, following along with the action.

COMMENTATOR 1

Oh man! I feel alive!

INT. INDUSTRIAL BUILDING #2- DAY

Sam shouts obscenities up at Conrad in the window, a red violation floating over his head now too.

Beside him, KALYN, a sniper girl, removes her scope and attaches a bright red scope to her rifle.

When it clicks into place, a glowing VIOLATION symbol settles over her head.

KALYN

Game over, sweetheart.

She aims the rifle at the building across the way, and somehow, the scope sees through the brick wall and into the room. Hanna's form, crouching below the window, comes into the cross-hairs.

INT. RUINED INDUSTRIAL BUILDING #1 - DAY

A single, high powered shot is fired. It rips through the brick wall and hits Hanna in the shoulder, knocking her back six feet against the far wall. She hits her head and is knocked unconscious.

Conrad spins around in fury toward the open window and vanishes in a fluttering of particles.

Oku and Jimmy rush to Hanna.

OKU

Hanna?

She puts her thumb on Hanna's wrist and a menu of stats pops up. Oku looks at a bar labeled "sensitivity".

OKU (CONT'D)

100%.

JIMMY

You're surprised?

OKU

I'm impressed.

Oku slides the sensitivity down to 20% and then places her hands over Hanna. Gold light infuses her chest, and then Hanna sits up with a cough and a flutter of eyelashes.

INT. INDUSTRIAL BUILDING #2 - DAY

Conrad walks through the brick wall, a red VIOLATION emblem over his head. He opens a portal in the floor below Kalyn. With a cry, she is pulled down into the endless black void beneath the 3D model of the building. Sam raises his gun, but Conrad disappears back through the wall.

SAM

Damnit.

Sam disappears after him.

INT. RUINED INDUSTRIAL BUILDING #1 - DAY

Conrad reappears with the rest of his team. Sam appears in the middle of the courtyard, producing a huge golden mini-gun.

Conrad, Jimmy, Hanna and Oku raise their weapons in response.

Sam grins and surrounds himself with a glowing golden aura.

Conrad and his team all fire at once, and though it makes a terrible din, the bullets bounce off the glowing blue shield. They all lower their weapons in annoyance.

Sam fires the mini-gun. A line of bullets rip into Conrad, another round hits Jimmy in the forehead snapping his head back. Oku ducks behind a brick wall. Both Conrad and Jimmy vanish.

Hanna fidgets, obviously dying to jump into the fray. Oku raises up for a shot but another volley from the mini-gun sends her sprawling back into the room. She vanishes as well.

HANNA

Enough!

With a yell, she dives out the window and forward rolls into the plaza between the buildings. As Oku reappears in the window, Hanna rises to her feet. She holds no weapon.

Like a sorceress summoning a fireball, Hanna whips her arms into the air. As she does, her school uniform turns into a black cape billowing out around her body. Her own personal cyclone.

Sam revs up his mini-gun, a confident smirk on his face.

Hanna lifts up into the air slowly, majestically as the sky darkens around her. Time seems to slow.

Sam's eyes widen in surprise.

The commentators eyes are wide as well. The chat room momentarily quiet.

Conrad reappears behind Hanna in a flurry of particles. He gasps as he looks up at his daughter in the air ready to be blasted by Sam's minigun.

For a moment, her image flickers and we see her mother, JEANNIE TOLEN in her place. She looks at Conrad with a slow smile.

Conrad shakes his head and we see Hanna again. Conrad's eyes are wide and fearful.

COMMENTATOR 2

Holy shit.

Hanna throws her upraised arms toward Sam and the building across the courtyard. Time revs up, and a wall of fire blasts forth and engulfs Sam and the entire two story enemy building.

The building turns to pixels and blows away in a gout of smoke and flame. Nothing is left except blackness and a blue horizontal grid that stretches off into infinity.

A pause... the smoke clears, and then we see the scrolling exclamations of a thrilled audience. The commentators are freaking out.

COMMENTATOR 1

Did you see that, Leroy? Holy shit on a stick. Did you see that?

COMMENTATOR 2

That was so friggin unbelievable. Best game I have ever witnessed bar none.

Hanna lowers her hands with a sigh and floats back to the ground.

Sam reappears before her, his mouth still agape. Kalyn and STEVE, the other team member, appear beside him. Kalyn looks back at the blasted grid behind her and then at Hanna's small figure before her.

Jimmy now stands next to Conrad as Oku climbs slowly down the rubble after them. They all share the same shocked expression.

Hanna turns to them, a bit surprised herself.

OKU

Hanna! That was... That was just...

JIMMY

Amazing. How did you...

Hanna turns to Conrad with a hesitant, hopeful smile. He doesn't return it. The smile fades from Hanna's face.

Sam, Steve and Kalyn approach. They are dirty and bloody but look invigorated. Sam reaches out his hand. Conrad takes it.

SAM

Good game.

He gives Hanna a wink and vanishes off the grid. His team follows suit, eyeing Hanna as they go.

CONRAD

Hanna. Let's go.

Conrad vanishes. Oku gives her a smile.

OKU

What a party pooper.

HANNA

Just around me.

Hanna vanishes leaving Oku and Jimmy alone. They eye each other. A small smile snakes across Jimmy's face.

JIMMY

You look like shit.

OKU

Go to hell.

They both vanish.

INT. HANNA AND CONRAD'S HOUSE - DAY

Hanna's eyes open slowly. She is lying on a couch in the living room of a small, comfortable looking home. Conrad stands over her.

Hanna sits up slowly and slides her feet off of the couch.

CONRAD

How long were you in?

HANNA

I don't know.

CONRAD

Go stretch out. Eat something.

He turns and starts to head up the stairs.

CONRAD (CONT'D)

I told your grandfather you would stop over and help him out today.

HANNA

Ugh. I don't want to.

CONRAD

Too bad.

Hanna kicks the couch angrily and moves off toward the kitchen as Conrad ascends the stairs slowly.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

HANNA

Rags?

The dog appears in a "Heads Up Display" or HUD, at the top right corner of Hanna's line of sight.

RAGS

Yes, Hanna?

HANNA

Do I need to do any of the exercises?

RAGS

No. Your muscles have been mobilized in the last 12 hours. You are hungry, however.

HANNA

Yeah. No kidding.

RAGS

Your father wasn't happy.

HANNA

What else is new.

Hanna grabs a container of milk and some cold cuts. She pours a glass and starts to make a sandwich.

HANNA (CONT'D)

I have to go visit Grandpa, but when I'm done, I want to go back in.

She lowers her voice as she spreads Mayo on the bread.

HANNA (CONT'D)

... I want to keep working on the castle.

RAGS
It's dangerous, Hanna.

HANNA
You say that every time. And you
always end up coming with me.

The sandwich is huge.

RAGS
Would you like me to accompany you?

HANNA
Yes.

She takes a giant bite.

INT. CONRAD'S ROOM - DAY

Conrad looks at his dresser where a picture of Jeannie sits. Her blonde hair cascades around her face, blown by an unseen wind, and we recognize her from Conrad's vision in the game.

He lifts the picture gently and then sets it back with a sigh and collapses onto the bed. He lifts the sleeve of his shirt and gently presses a glowing blue circle embedded under his skin. His eyes slowly close.

INT. BEDROOM - RECORDED MEMORY - DAY

Conrad opens his eyes. Soft sunlight washes through white billowing curtains. Jeannie sleeps peacefully beside him. He reaches over, lightly touching the soft skin of her shoulder.

Jeannie wears a silk nightie. She smiles at him. Her skin glows in the morning light, her eyes still heavy with sleep.

JEANNIE
Good morning.

Conrad strokes her face, touches her hair.

Conrad starts to kiss her neck. She giggles quietly and turns to the crib in the corner.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)
Shhh. Don't wake the baby.

A mobile spins above the crib with HANNA written amidst an orbit of rotating sea animals.

Jeannie turns back to Conrad and takes his face in her hands. She kisses him on the mouth. He traces his fingers along her collarbone and moves the strap of her nightie off her shoulder.

INT. CRECHE DRAWER- DAY

A hand reaches up in a dark compartment and presses a blue glowing button. Light floods the small chamber as a whirring sound fills the space, and then a large drawer slides out of the wall with a whoosh like a VCR tape being ejected.

Oku sits up slowly from the small coffin-like drawer wearing a tank top and pj pants. She swings her legs over the side. She stretches gently and climbs onto a landing.

She hits a button sending the drawer back into the wall.

INT. CRECHE FARM HALLWAY- DAY

A long marble hallway. What appear to be hundreds of mausoleums line both sides of the corridor stretching off into the distance. The 3'x 3' access doors are stacked four high with a metal walkway between the top two and bottom two rows.

This is a Creche Farm. Virtual Reality living quarters. Along the hall, a dozen of the Creche doors are open. People sit on the edge of their beds or stand slowly and re-acclimate to their bodies.

Large monitors hang every thirty feet down the corridor. A morning news show is airing.

Oku moves down the hallway. She jumps down the stairs to the row below and raps on a closed drawer.

OKU

Rise and shine, princess.

A grumble inside answers her. She raps again. The drawer slides open and a disgruntled Jimmy looks up at her.

JIMMY

What?

He wears PJ pants and a disheveled T-Shirt that says "Save a horse, ride a cowboy."

OKU

You're pretty.

Jimmy grumbles as he climbs out of the drawer and moves past her. He heads down the hall toward a door marked "SHOWERS"

Oku laughs and follows him. On the TV monitors, CLAUDE, a handsome roguish man, is being interviewed.

CLAUDE

These are just conspiracy theories,
Janet. VR has never been safer.

JANET

The Crash happened only eight years
ago. A lot of people remember. 3
million dead worldwide.

On the screen we see a desolate wasteland. Bodies strewn across a dark landscape. Empty patches of grid dot the landscape. An electrical storm fills the sky.

CLAUDE

Yes. A terrible tragedy that lead
to the birth of Baptiste's most
secure security system to date.
Today it is safer to live in VR
than it is to live in the "Real".

Oku and Jimmy exchange a glance at this remark.

The screen changes to show a brightly lit futuristic city filled with green grass and abundant trees. People mill around happily. A translucent golden "fire-wall" rises up into the sky and around the city like a dome.

Outside this fire-wall, we see nothing but a frightening, inky blackness.

Sam and Kalyn meet them at the elevators. Others from their floor also wait.

OKU

Hey guys.

Sam reaches out a hand and gives Oku's a shake. When his hand comes away, Oku holds a glowing token.

OKU (CONT'D)

What's this for?

SAM

It's half of the winnings. The
moderator made a bad call.

OKU

Wow. You're a bigger man than I thought!

SAM

That game was a fucking ball.

KALYN

I don't know who taught that little girl how to do that, but I wish she'd teach me.

OKU

You and me both.

Doors open and they all climb into the elevator. The doors slide shut.

EXT. CRECHE FARM CITY - DAY

The elevator and its passengers descend down the side of a skyscraper. The day is bright and sunny. The skyscraper sits between hundreds of other identical skyscrapers. A few flying transports move through the sunny day around them.

EXT. WIND TURBINE FIELD - DAY

A breeze blows through tall grasses as Hanna makes her way across a field of grain toward a small farmhouse that sits nestled at the edge of a huge wind farm. The sun is warm and she turns her face up to drink it in.

EXT. FRONT PORCH FARMHOUSE - MORNING

Hanna removes her shoes and opens the screen door.

HANNA

Grandpa?

The door swings shut behind her with a bang.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Hanna's grandfather, RANSOM, sits at the table with a book open in front of him and a steaming cup of black coffee.

On the wall above the table, a portrait of JEANNIE hangs.

Ransom looks up as his granddaughter walks into the room.

RANSOM
I wasn't expecting you today.

HANNA
Dad said you were.

They look at each other a minute.

RANSOM
Oh, that's right. I'd forgotten. My
memory isn't what it used to be.

Hanna doesn't buy it.

RANSOM (CONT'D)
You want some coffee? I just made a
fresh pot.

He gestures to a pot on the counter.

HANNA
Thanks.

Hanna pours half a cup of coffee into a large mug and fills the rest with milk. She wraps her hands around it. She starts to pace around the kitchen looking at everything.

RANSOM
Since you're here, I could use some
help with the turbines.

HANNA
I... erm...

RANSOM
Got something more important to do?
... In there?

Hanna sighs.

HANNA
No. I can stay.

She continues her pacing, opening and closing cabinets as she searches for something.

RANSOM
Where it always is. Over the sink.
I don't like you going in there,
Hanna. I don't like that your
father lets you... after what
happened.

Hanna opens the cabinet over the sink and pulls out the sugar bowl. She sets it on the counter and heaps three giant spoonfuls into her coffee.

HANNA

Yeah. I know, Grandpa.

RANSOM

It's not safe.

She sips at her coffee, wincing at the taste.

HANNA

Yes it is. The security systems work.

RANSOM

Maybe on the main server, but not in those tournaments your father plays.

HANNA

Nothing's going to happen.

RANSOM

They say, when you're inside VR, your heart can't tell the difference between what's real and what's not.

HANNA

So? What does that matter?

RANSOM

It matters!

Hanna starts to do random Kung-Fu moves... badly. She throws a wild turn kick and hits the counter, grabbing one of the chairs for balance as she starts to fall.

RANSOM (CONT'D)

Hanna! Will you sit down? You're making me crazy.

Hanna sighs and reluctantly plops down across from her grandfather. He studies her a moment, his face relaxing into a sad smile.

RANSOM (CONT'D)

You look so much like her. More and more every time I see you.

HANNA

Yeah. That's what everyone says.

RANSOM

She was a headstrong child too. You
take after her in more than looks.

Ransom takes another sip of his coffee. Hanna fidgets. Ransom
turns back to his book.

RANSOM (CONT'D)

We've got circuits out in 3121 and
22. Wanna take a crack at fixing
them up?

HANNA

I can fix them.

Ransom laughs.

RANSOM

I'll bet you can.

Hanna takes one more sip of her coffee, sets it down, and
heads toward the door. She stops in the doorway.

HANNA

You should come in with me
sometime, Grandpa. It's different
than it used to be.

RANSOM

It's a dream world.

He wraps on the table.

RANSOM (CONT'D)

This. This is what is real.

Hanna leaves the room.

EXT. GIANT SPACESHIP - DAY

A huge spaceship hangs in space. The top of the spaceship is
an open platform that we recognize as Baptiste's office.
Large planets, stars and suns wheel above, but below the
ship, nothing but darkness. We push in slowly towards the
platform.

Two figures come into focus.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - DAY

Nanako stands in the same spot Sarah stood, her shoulders are hunched, her legs fidget. Baptiste sits at his desk across from her.

BAPTISTE

Don't worry. You aren't in trouble.

As he says this, the Smoke Raven billows suddenly into existence behind Nanako and wraps it's wings around her from behind, enveloping her in a screen of smoke and soft black feathers.

She looks momentarily surprised and then the smoke vapors reach her nose and a dopey expression overtakes her face.

Nanako's eyes flutter and then shut. Her body rises gently off the ground and hovers in the air, held quietly in the embrace of the black wings.

Baptiste looks at his monitor where a status bar has begun to fill.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Upload 20% complete.

Nanako's body begins to glow with blue light. She twitches, but the Smoke Raven holds her still. In the background, a heart monitor starts to beep.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Upload 50% complete.

The blue halo brightens as the edges around Nanako start to glitch.

INT. SMALL ROOM - AMBIGUOUS

Nanako lies on a bed covered in pristine white sheets. She wears a white hospital gown. The blue circle on her wrist glows.

Above her head, a heart monitor beeps rapidly and a brain wave monitor can be seen with lines jumping erratically.

Nanako's breath comes in sharp gasps. Her eyes dart behind her eyelids. A NURSE in a crisp, white outfit watches the monitors.

The Nurse presses the plunger on a syringe that is connected to a tube that enters Nanako's arm.

More clear liquid enters her veins. The Nurse's face is cold and pinched, her eyes devoid of any emotion.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Upload 90% complete.

Nanako's body jerks and seizes and then with a final shudder, she goes still. The heart monitor flat-lines.

Her pale body lies on the bed looking suddenly very small. The Nurse reaches down and covers her body and face with the white sheet. The body is removed, leaving the bed empty.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - DAY

Nanako lies on the floor. The Smoke Raven pulls himself back toward the wall. Nanako's eyes suddenly fly open. For a moment they are dead black-on-black, and then slowly, the blue of her irises fill in. Nanako sits up. The curved posture is gone. She now sits straight and still.

INT. HANNA AND CONRAD'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Hanna comes into the house. She is sweaty and dirty and has a bandage on the back of her hand.

HANNA

Dad?!

She waits. No reply. She moves to the couch and sits down.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Rags? We're going in.

Rags appears in her HUD wagging his tail and jumping around like crazy.

Hanna laughs, lifts her wrist and presses the small blue circle. She closes her eyes.

EXT. BRIGHT TOWN - DAY

Hanna walks the streets of a brightly lit and very charming town square. She is miraculously clean and the bandage is gone. On every street sign the emblem KIDVERSE is displayed. Rags trots beside her.

Children walk past with all manner of fanciful items. Clowns and silly animals chaperone the little ones.

Impossible birds fly through the air, strange animals walk the streets, some being ridden and others on leashes.

A man lifts off in front of Hanna on a yellow and red rocket-ship. She watches him blast off into the blue sky.

HANNA

That might be fun.

RAGS

Parental controls won't allow it.

HANNA

Ugh. I have begged Dad over and over to lighten up on those. I'm not a baby anymore.

RAGS

Just three more years and you can enter the main server legally.

A goofy blue giraffe steps in front of Hanna on two hooves, and leans down to hand her a balloon with one of his front hooves.

GIRAFFE

It's a beeeautiful day, Hanna Banana527. Want a ride through the cotton candy forest?

Hanna glowers at it.

HANNA

I may die before then.

Hanna ducks into an ice cream store with a sign floating over the door that reads KIDVERSE PRESENTS: THE PARLOUR.

INT. KIDVERSE ICE CREAM STORE - DAY

A group of well dressed girls, COURTNEY 1, COURTNEY 2, and COURTNEY 3, all a year or two older than Hanna, and all dressed in matching outfits, stand at the counter. They fawn over a lanky BOY with tousled brown hair. This is MAX.

Max ignores them and tries to eat his ice cream cone.

The bell above the door dings as Hanna and Rags enter.

The girls all turn to eye Hanna and Rags. Max spots Hanna and a smile darts across his face. The scoop of ice cream drops off of his cone, onto his shirt and then onto the floor.

A humiliated blush fills his face as he sets down the ice cream cone and hurries to the bathroom. The other girls take this in with scorn.

COURTNEY 1

Look! It's Hanna and her ratty dog!

The other girls giggle.

Courtney 2 reaches up to gently stroke the fur of a very sleek black monkey that sits poised on her shoulder.

The other girls have sleek monkey assistants too. As Hanna watches, they make the "see no, hear no, speak no evil" gestures.

Hanna looks down at Rags with a flicker of shame.

The girls brush past her and out into the street. Hanna watches them with anger, and then turns back to the ice cream selections. Max watches her quietly from the rear of the store.

RAGS

Are you thinking about updating me?

INT. VR PLAYROOM - FLASHBACK

Jeannie and 4 YEAR OLD HANNA sit on the floor of a bright VR playroom. A litter of puppies run around them. Above each puppy, a floating green stats monitor follows them, listing their weight, age, and abilities.

Lagging behind, the RUNT of the litter limps to keep up with his brothers and sisters.

4 Year Old Hanna reaches out slowly and lifts this one. She looks at her mother with questioning eyes. Jeannie smiles and nods.

EXT. SUNFLOWER FIELD - DAY

Hanna and Rags sit in a big bright field of sunflowers. Hanna licks an ice cream cone. She holds one out for Rags to lick as well.

A cluster of bees fly by singing an alphabet song. A group of children run through the flowers shrieking with delight.

A small bluebird settles on the nearest sunflower and turns its attention to Hanna.

BLUEBIRD
 HannaBanana527, how about a
 spelling bee?

HANNA
 I really need to change my screen
 name.

Three little bees hovering nearby, turn to Hanna
 expectantly.

HANNA (CONT'D)
 No. Thanks.

The bees make a sad little sound and buzz off.

BLUEBIRD
 Fractions?

HANNA
 Nope.

BLUEBIRD
 Astronomy?

HANNA
 I'm good.

BLUEBIRD
 There is nothing more important to
 a growing mind than learning,
 learning, learning!

HANNA
 I'll remember that.

The bird flies off in a huff.

Hanna finishes off her ice cream cone and turns to Rags.

HANNA (CONT'D)
 Ready?

Rags barks. Hanna moves out into the field. Rags follows.

Hanna and Rags move to the far corner, at the edge of the
 Cotton Candy Forest.

When she reaches the right spot she turns to look behind her
 to make sure no one is watching.

RAGS
 Currently, there are no eyes or
 ears trained in this direction.

Hanna reaches into the air and pulls. It comes away in her hands like cloth. She twists it, revealing a small square of empty grid. The shimmering translucent "firewall" creates a golden barrier between Hanna and the empty grid beyond.

A melodic female voice speaks out:

FIREWALL

You are about to leave the protection of the Baptiste Corporation firewall. Are you sure you want to continue?

HANNA

Yes.

The golden firewall shimmers and vanishes.

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF THE SUNFLOWER FIELD - DAY

Max walks into the field licking a new ice cream cone. He sees Hanna opening the firewall and moves closer to investigate.

EXT. SUNFLOWER FIELD - DAY

Hanna pulls the gap wider, and then ducks inside. Rags follows. Hanna turns back and closes up the air behind them.

Max hurries up to the spot where Hanna disappeared and runs his hand through the air. He can't find any way in. He looks surprised and impressed. The ice cream drops off of his cone again.

EXT. PIRATE SERVER - DAY

Hanna runs a hand along the gap to make sure there are no holes.

RAGS

Make sure it's secure. We can't afford a breach detection, Hanna.

HANNA

It's secure.

They both turn to look at the endless expanse of empty grid before them. Blue lines crisscross off into infinity. At the center sits a giant grey castle. It is mostly completed, though the very top floors hang open and are oddly shaped.

HANNA (CONT'D)

I hope it's still haunted.

Hanna and Rags sprint toward the castle. Unbeknownst to them, a shadowy FIGURE is watching.

EXT. SAIL BOAT - DAY

Nanako stands on the deck of her sail boat. In front of her, a translucent hologram of her and Sarah stand, clinging to the mast. It's a memory of the night Sarah disappeared.

The ground starts to shake as Sarah's eyes turn black. Her body takes on that strange jerky quality.

Nanako watches Sarah carefully and then pauses the playback.

The images around her freeze. Nanako walks over to Sarah and looks deeply into her eyes, reaching out a hand to enlarge Sarah's pupils until one eye is the same size as Nanako's head. In the retina, she can see rows of code.

Suddenly, the air crackles with the sound of an intercom coming on. Nanako's eyes widen as though she's been caught, and she waves her hands across the scene. It shifts and changes until:

INT. NANAOKO'S ROOM - DAY

Back in her bedroom, Nanako quickly moves to the window sill and sits on it. She smooths back her hair and her dress. She looks up at the ceiling expectantly.

Out the window we can see the same 18th century town she explored with Sarah.

Her room is full of toys and plush bedding, a child's room, full of things to cuddle and give comfort.

But along with these more childish items, we also see a collection of miniature environments, alive with color and texture.

One of them we recognize as a miniaturized version of the sailboat she just left, complete with rocking waves and winds that blow the sails.

The crackling escalates and then Baptiste's voice booms through the room.

BAPTISTE (V.O.)
It's time for your next exercise.
Find your way to the locked door,
Nanako. When you reach it, you'll
know what to do.

The city-scape outside the window stretches and shifts until she is staring down a long marble hallway full of doors. As she watches, the hallway continuously shifts and changes before her eyes.

The doors on the walls jump in and out of existence.

NANAKO
What happened to Sarah?

BAPTISTE (V.O.)
(annoyed)
What?

NANAKO
What happened to her?

A pause on the other end.

BAPTISTE
She couldn't complete the tasks.
She wasn't strong enough. But you
are. I know it.

NANAKO
Where is she?

BAPTISTE
She went home.

NANAKO
What home? She had no home out
there.

Baptiste makes an exasperated sound.

BAPTISTE
These questions are of no
consequence, Nanako. She is gone,
and she is not coming back. Best to
put her out of your thoughts
entirely.

NANAKO
I'm frightened.

BAPTISTE
That's perfectly normal.

NANAKO

Why?

BAPTISTE

Because with Sarah gone, it's up to you now. The responsibility can feel like a burden, but it is also a tremendous privilege, and one that I would not have bestowed upon you if you weren't ready. I know you will make me proud. Now go!

The crackling again and then silence. Nanako is alone. She turns to the window.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - DAY

Baptiste stands in his sky office. The sky that surrounds him is now bright blue and full of drifting clouds. The platform itself seems to be contained within one of them.

Below the office, the spaceship hangs menacingly, almost concealed by the swirling condensation.

Where one wall ought to be, a full sized virtual screen fills the space. In one corner, a small window tracks Nanako's progress through the hallway.

In Nanako's monitor, the hallway shifts. Nanako looks confused for a beat and then immediately retraces her steps and finds her way back to the hall full of doors.

The rest of the larger virtual monitor is filled with a birds eye view of the VR server and all of the people currently conscious within it. Lines of computer code scroll up one side, user names dot the server.

Baptiste purposefully interacts with this screen. Checking stats, tracking the different users, examining the security software, and manipulating the code.

The screen monitoring Nanako dings and flashes. Baptiste widens it to watch Nanako standing in front of a sealed door marked DO NOT OPEN. Nanako hesitates, clearly conflicted.

She stares at the sign and then reaches her hand for the knob. Before she touches it, she pulls her hand back and steps away. Baptiste smiles.

Suddenly, a knock, and a door opens in the center of the screen. Claude, from the news broadcast, stands in the doorway in a suit. He bows slightly.

Behind him we can see rows and rows of monitors helmed by sharply dressed EMPLOYEES also interacting with the same screens.

BAPTISTE
What is it?

CLAUDE
The press is assembled in the ballroom for the conference.

Baptiste turns back to Nanako who has re-entered the hallway. She closes the door behind her and disappears, reappearing in her bedroom.

BAPTISTE
Very good, Nanako. Wait there for further instruction.

Nanako looks up toward the voice.

NANAKO
Father?

BAPTISTE
What is it?

NANAKO
Perhaps I could eat dinner with you tonight?

BAPTISTE
Perhaps.

Baptiste waves his hand and the monitor disappears.

Baptiste turns sharply to Claude who gives him a smile. Suddenly, Baptiste's image flickers.

CLAUDE
Sir?

The image flickers again as the slow steady sound of a heart monitor fills the room. Then the sound of a flat line. Baptiste gasps and his form freezes.

Claude moves to him with alarm.

CLAUDE (CONT'D)
Sir? Can you hear me?

Baptiste's form remains frozen. Blue light shimmers around him. Claude gasps and runs out of the room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

A flat-line hum fills the room. Heart paddles are placed against an aged body. The sound of the paddles charging up and then a shock jumps the body off of the table.

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Charge again.

The paddles rev up and then shock the body again. The flat-line becomes a slow, steady beep.

The camera pulls back to reveal Baptiste, now impossibly old, and hooked up to a startling array of tubes and devices. Monitors surround the bed tracking every brain wave, every heart beat.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - DAY

Baptiste's frozen form re-animates as the blue light vanishes and Baptiste's movements become more regular, though strange glitches still shake through him every few seconds. For a moment we see panic and fear etched in his face. He quickly masks it.

The door flies open and Claude runs in with two MEDICS.

BAPTISTE
Oh, for God's sake. I'm fine.

Baptiste stands and straightens himself. His arms still aren't quite moving properly. He ignores this and briskly walks toward the door.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
What are we waiting for? Lets go!

Claude gives a small nod and follows Baptiste out of the room. The Medics look on with concern.

INT. HANNA'S CASTLE - DAY

The beam of a flashlight dances over the stone floor. Hanna and Rags ascend a staircase that twists and turns like an Escher painting.

The intricacy of the design is breathtaking. A complex optical illusion of hallways and staircases flowing in and out of each other.

Rags suddenly finds himself on an inverted staircase walking the opposite direction along the ceiling as Hanna continues to descend.

RAGS

I think I made a wrong turn...

Hanna laughs and runs up the wall to join Rags on his staircase.

RAGS (CONT'D)

Shall I turn on the lights?

HANNA

Where's the fun in that?

They reach the landing and turn down a long hallway. Hanna stops suddenly and presses herself against the wall.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Look!

At the end of the hallway, a filmy figure drifts through the wall. It is a MAN. His feet don't move, but his body hovers down the hallway toward Hanna and Rags.

RAGS

Your heart rate is elevated. You're frightened.

HANNA

So?

RAGS

Let's go back.

HANNA

No!

Hanna steps out into the hallway directly across from the ghost.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Hey! Can you hear me? Who are you?

From deeper in the dark hallway, the shadowy figure watches this unfold.

The ghost stops and its eyes turn slowly to Hanna. He opens his mouth but no sounds come out.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Can you speak?

The ghost opens and closes its mouth several times and then vanishes.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Come on, Rags.

Rags scurries to catch up with her. Hanna's flashlight beam dances as they continue down the hallway.

INT. CASTLE KITCHENS - NIGHT

Hanna and Rags push open a heavy wooden door and find themselves in the kitchen. Several ghosts flit out of the way as the beam of light dances over the counter tops.

HANNA

I wonder how they all got in here.

RAGS

I don't know.

HANNA

What do you think they are?

SHADOWED FIGURE (O.S.)

They were people, once.

Hanna gasps and turns. The flashlight beam catches the shadowy figure in a fragmented spotlight.

SHADOWED FIGURE (CONT'D)

Don't be alarmed, Hanna. I won't hurt you.

HANNA

Rags, turn on the lights.

Suddenly, the room is illuminated. The figure steps into the light and we see a mischievous, enigmatic face belonging to MELIES. A cluster of ghosts hover around him.

MELIES

My name is Melies. I've been following your work and play with some interest these past several weeks. I was going to wait and approach you in a less obtrusive fashion, but some new information has come to my attention today that puts some urgency on my message.

HANNA

What message?

MELIES

I have a proposition for you. I need someone with your... particular assets and talents to assist me with something.

Hanna considers him.

HANNA

To assist you with what?

MELIES

I need access to a secure server. One that I cannot access on my own. Of all of the hackers and coders that I have followed, and I have followed many... none have exhibited your level of skill nor your thirst for adventure. And this job will require both.

HANNA

So you want to hire me? For a job?

MELIES

Yes. It may give you some answers you have long been seeking. And you will be paid handsomely for your efforts.

Hanna's excitement is evident, but she holds herself at bay.

HANNA

I don't know... I should check with my Dad.

MELIES

Of course.

HANNA

And he'll have a lot of questions.

MELIES

Parents usually do.

Hanna shakes her head.

MELIES (CONT'D)

What is it?

HANNA

If I ask him... he'll say no.

MELIES

You do run that risk. And you're certainly not a baby anymore. You're a grown woman capable of making your own decisions.

Hanna clearly agrees with him. Melies smiles an understanding smile and leans back casually against the wall.

MELIES (CONT'D)

I can't tell you what to do, Hanna. But your father doesn't always know what's best for you. You already know that... or you wouldn't have kept this castle a secret from him.

Hanna takes this in.

HANNA

Can I think about it?

MELIES

Of course.

HANNA

I won't take too long... just-

MELIES

I'll be here when you return.

Another ghost drifts through the room, brushing past Hanna and making her shiver.

HANNA

Who are they?

MELIES

Remnants of a terrible tragedy. Memories not easy to forget.

Hanna turns to move through the door and then stops and turns back.

HANNA

What answers have I been seeking?

MELIES

Your mother's death was a devastating accident, no?

Melies gives Hanna a slow smile and disappears in a flutter of particles.

INT. BAPTISTE'S BALLROOM - DAY

Baptiste steps off the podium, waving at a cluster of monitors that float throughout the room. On each monitor, reporters and camera people shout and clamor.

The sound of their voices and the flash of bulbs follow him as he steps off the stage.

The Smoke Raven waits at the periphery along with a row of SECURITY GUARDS. The guards turn and eye the Smoke Raven as Baptiste approaches. They are clearly not comfortable around it.

BAPTISTE

Have you begun to search for a child?

SMOKE RAVEN

Yes. The database is narrowing down candidates as we speak.

BAPTISTE

Good. Keep me informed. I want this resolved by the weekend.

The Smoke Raven prickles noticeably.

SMOKE RAVEN

Yes, sir.

Baptiste gives a final wave to the reporters as the Smoke Raven ushers him toward a set of wide double doors. The guards turn to watch them go.

INT. CONRAD AND HANNA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Conrad sits on the couch finishing a sandwich. He looks at the pattern of crumbs on the plate.

INT. LIVING ROOM- FLASHBACK - DAY

Jeannie finishes the last bites of a sandwich and throws her hair up into a bun, as a younger version of Conrad stands across from her, arms crossed, concern in his face.

CONRAD

Third one this week.

JEANNIE

I'm crawling out of my skin, Conrad.

CONRAD
It just feels like...

JEANNIE
Like what?

CONRAD
Nothing. We miss you is all.

JEANNIE
It will only be for a few hours. In and out. Quick and easy. And I will be much more pleasant to be around when I get back.

She gives him a kiss and heads upstairs.

CONRAD
I think we need to talk about this. Not tonight. Go. But maybe tomorrow.

She stops on the stairs and turns.

JEANNIE
Talk about what?

CONRAD
Nothing. We don't-

JEANNIE
Conrad... what?

CONRAD
We have a daughter now. The job it's just... it's risky. It's reckless. It's exciting and the pay is good and I get all of that, but we're parents now.

JEANNIE
I was a hacker before I became a parent. If I knew giving up myself was part of the package I wouldn't have agreed to have kids in the first place.

CONRAD
That's not what I meant.

JEANNIE
I love you. I'll be back later. Don't worry so much.

INT. CONRAD'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - DAY

Conrad stands over Jeannie in their bed. Her face has turned blue and her body is seizing and rioting on the sheets.

Conrad shakes her, crying and screaming for help.

INT. CONRAD'S BEDROOM - BACK TO PRESENT - NIGHT

Conrad smooths the sheets and lies down on the bed. He presses the blue circle on his wrist and closes his eyes.

EXT. ROOF OF LARGE PARKING LOT - DAY

Conrad emerges in a large rooftop parking area. A loud roar fills the space and wind whips between the parked cars carrying dust and debris. Through the roar, the sound of giant wings can also be heard.

Everything around him moves in slow motion, though Conrad himself is in real time - untouched by the wind and elements.

Conrad runs toward a group of people on the ground. As he gets closer, we recognize Jeannie, dressed in all black now, farthest from Conrad. She is surrounded by blue light that flickers around her as her body convulses.

There are several other people around her in a similar state.

A rumble fills the parking garage, and through an opening in the concrete, a huge Tsunami-like wave of smoke and dust roars across the landscape. Screams and cries as those who are still standing run to escape but are mowed down by the wave.

INT. CONRAD'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hanna knocks softly on the door and pushes it open. Conrad is lying on the bed, his breath going in and out evenly. The blue circle glows on his wrist. Hanna shakes her head, her face contorting with annoyance.

HANNA

Dad?

He doesn't stir. Hanna sighs deeply.

She moves up beside him and lies down. She stares at the ceiling, and then turns and watches his face for a moment, his breath coming in and out evenly.

Rags appears on Hanna's HUD.

RAGS
He won't like being disturbed.

HANNA
He could be in there all day.

RAGS
So you're going to ask him? About
the job?

HANNA
I haven't decided yet. Lets see
what kind of mood he's in.

She reaches for his wrist. She touches the blue circle.

EXT. BLACK GRID - NIGHT

Hanna stands on a blank grid surrounded by the translucent golden firewall on all sides. In front of her is a floating door with a lock on it.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Password?

Rags appears beside Hanna.

RAGS
He changed his password again.

HANNA
I can figure it out.

Hanna pulls up a variety of images and virtual screens in front of her and swipes through them. She makes noises of annoyance and frustration until finally:

HANNA (CONT'D)
Got it.

She turns her attention to the lock. She raises her hand and a small spout of fire emanates from her palm and snakes its way into the lock. A click and the lock falls off the door.

Hanna gives Rags a self-satisfied smirk.

EXT. ROOF OF LARGE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Hanna appears suddenly in the parking lot. In front of her she sees Conrad stooped over something on the ground. The Tsunami wave roars over the parking structure.

Hanna gasps as she sees the bodies writhing on the floor.

HANNA
(in a whisper)
Rags! Where are we?

Rags appears behind her, tail between his legs.

RAGS
This is the night of The Crash,
Hanna. We shouldn't be here.

HANNA
Dad's in a memory?

RAGS
We should go.

Hanna ignores him and moves quietly closer to her father. She moves around a parked car to get a closer look.

Conrad shifts and Hanna sees her mother on the floor, writhing in blue light. Her body convulses violently one more time and then she grabs Conrad's hand.

Suddenly the sound on the scene is muted. The chaos still reigns, but it's eerily quiet.

JEANNIE
I'm sorry, Conrad. You were right.

CONRAD
What happened? Jeannie, what happened?

JEANNIE
It's my fault.

A tear slides out of her eye and then her body goes still. The particles making up her virtual avatar drift apart.

A sob escapes Conrad. Hanna throws her hands over her mouth to keep from crying out herself.

RAGS
(in a whisper)
Hanna, please. Let's go.

Conrad looks up. He pauses the memory.

CONRAD

Hello?

Conrad stands and turns toward the parked car.

CONRAD (CONT'D)

Who's there?

Rags tugs at Hanna's shoe.

RAGS

Come on!

Conrad moves slowly to the car and looks behind it.

No one is there.

INT. CONRAD'S ROOM - DAY

Hanna sits up on the bed and lets out a violent sob. She buries her face in her hands and cries freely.

Rags lies sympathetically in her HUD, unable to console her, but desperate to. After a while her breathing calms and she wipes her eyes.

RAGS

You shouldn't have seen that,
Hanna. You were never meant to see
that.

HANNA

I'm taking the job.

Rags lays his head on his paws.

RAGS

Are you sure?

She looks over at her father who still lies quietly on the bed.

HANNA

Dad still isn't out of VR. He
probably won't even notice I'm
gone.

RAGS

Hanna...

HANNA

Rags! You saw him in there! He doesn't know what happened to her either! It's been 8 years and he is just as sad as he was when it first happened. Nothing's changing. He's not getting better. Maybe if he understood...

Hanna pushes her hair behind her ears defiantly.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Melies said I would find the answers to my questions. And I will. I have to.

Rags whimpers softly.

EXT. VR TREEHOUSE - DAY

A large green field spotted with gigantic, beautiful trees. In each tree, large fantastical treehouses are perched amongst giant branches. A warm breeze blows through the leaves.

INT. OKU'S VR TREEHOUSE - DAY

Oku sits on a plush couch inside her treehouse, holding a glass of wine. On a large virtual monitor in front of her, Baptiste's press conference is airing.

INT. BAPTISTE'S BALLROOM - DAY

Baptiste stands with a starched smile in front of an empty room. Monitors fill the space with reporters and camera men patched in from another location.

BAPTISTE

Regulation is the price of comfort and safety. People are usually willing to give up small freedoms in exchange for comfort and security in this world. That is something that the CorpoNations have been able to provide for their citizens. And that doesn't come without a cost.

REPORTER 1

What about the so called "outlaws" living and working on pirate servers that are unregulated by you or the CorpoNations?

BAPTISTE

People living outside the server do so at their own risk. Those domains do not lie within the protection of our security systems. It's unsafe, and in my opinion, should be illegal. Are they free from rules and regulations? Sure! But at what cost?

REPORTER 2

And what about The Crash? You have assured us that the new security systems will prevent anything like that from happening again. But if the virus that killed 3 million people worldwide came into existence without your knowledge, isn't it possible that a new super virus could do the same?

BAPTISTE

Because of my software, we have not lost a single soul in 8 years. I call that a success.

The press conference moves to a smaller screen, and a NEWS ANCHOR speaks to the camera.

NEWS ANCHOR

Baptiste Corp is currently in preparations for the annual fund-raising gala - a rare opportunity for the corporate heads to enter Baptiste's secure corporate headquarters and mix and mingle with the head honcho himself in a VR ballroom of his own design.

The image changes to show a tower reaching up into the sky on a small island reachable by one long bridge. Security cameras and towers dot the landscape.

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

The party is rumored to be an "out of this world" visual and tactile extravaganza.

(MORE)

NEWS ANCHOR (CONT'D)

Party-goers have to travel to Baptiste's secure tower to enter the party. A destination few have ever been invited to visit.

Oku swipes her hand through the air to change the channel. She stops on footage of a race in progress between teams of men and women riding the most bizarre animals imaginable. Oku sits back, intrigued.

EXT. CASTLE - NIGHT

Hanna and Rags stand outside Hanna's castle on the grid.

HANNA

Melies?

He appears before her in a flurry of particles, his entourage of ghosts accompanying him.

HANNA (CONT'D)

I'm in. What do I need to do?

That same slow smile creeps across his face.

INT. HANNA'S BEDROOM - BEFORE DAWN

Hanna eases herself out of bed quietly and slips to the floor. A packed backpack sits by her dresser. She moves to her closet where an outfit is laid out in wait. She pulls the various items down.

EXT. CONRAD AND HANNA'S HOUSE - DAWN

Hanna moves quietly into the hallway, checking her father's door, which is closed. She hikes a backpack onto her shoulders. Rags appears in her HUD.

RAGS

It's 4AM Hanna. It's not safe for you to be out on the streets.

HANNA

I'm going.

RAGS

Then I'm going with you.

HANNA

When I enter that tower you'll be disconnected anyway. I'd rather say goodbye now.

RAGS

Don't go, Hanna. Please don't go. Stay here where I can look after you.

HANNA

I'll be fine. I have to do this. I'm not changing my mind.

A gentle whimper escapes Rags.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Don't do that. It's hard enough.

His whimper increases and he lifts one paw to paw at the air in front of him.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Shh!! You'll wake up Dad!

RAGS

I don't care!

Hanna takes a shuddering breath.

HANNA

I'll be back soon.

She raises a hand to her temple and Rags is extinguished in a flash of color.

Hanna wipes a tear out of her eye, tightens the straps on her backpack and heads off.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

Conrad moves out of his bedroom and into the hallway toward the bathroom. As he passes Hanna's door, he stops, surprised to find it open. He moves into the room to find her bed empty.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF CITY - SUNRISE

Hanna emerges out of the city. The hundreds of creche towers stretch into the sky behind her as she sets her course for the waterfront.

Way out in the water, Baptiste's island tower rises up, looking more like a prison than a place of business.

The sun starts to peak out from behind the tower, bathing it in light. It sets the jagged rocks at its base and the roiling blue ocean below on fire with morning light.

EXT. BRIDGE - MORNING

Hanna stands at the edge of the long stone footbridge. It arches across the crashing waves like an ancient Roman aqueduct.

A guard gate stands in her way. Across the bridge, Baptiste's tower climbs into the sky, a viscous red shimmer encasing it on all sides like an aura.

Hanna walks up to the window and a beam of light shines through, giving her a full body scan.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

Hanna Tolen. Security Clearance VI.

A whirring sound and then a bright orange badge is spit out of a small slot.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

Here's your pass. Wear it on the outside of your clothes at all times. Walk straight across the bridge. Wait for further instruction at the double doors.

Hanna grabs the pass and sticks it on her shirt.

The gate slides open. Hanna walks onto the causeway. The gates slide shut behind her.

Hanna looks up at the tower with wonder. The red aura glints in the sunlight. An imposing set of double doors lie in wait at the end of the bridge. Hanna takes a deep breath, steels herself, and sets off across the bridge.

The steep rocky island and the tower grow ever closer as the waves lap far below her feet.

EXT. BAPTISTE'S TOWER - DAY

When Hanna reaches the two massive double doors, another beam of light shines out through the wall and does another body scan.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Please extend your hand, palm up.

Hanna extends her hand slowly.

A mechanical arm slides out of the wall and takes Hanna's hand.

HANNA
Ouch.

She pulls her finger back. A small dot of blood pools on the tip of her finger.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Scanning...

Hanna sucks her finger and waits.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Hanna Tolen. Enter. Follow the hallway to the end. Do not deviate from the path.

The huge doors unlock with a click and swing open. Hanna steps nervously into the tower. The doors swing shut forcefully behind her with a bang.

INT. SECURE TOWER - DAY

Hanna walks down a long marble hallway. Her footsteps echo on the polished stone. Above her, camera's track her movement with mechanical whirrs that fill the space.

A small drone with a glowing red eye hovers in front of her face for a moment and then flies away.

Hanna reaches the end of the hall where a large circular bank vault door reaches from floor to ceiling. Made of solid steel, it is an imposing and seemingly impenetrable sight.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
When the air-lock door opens, enter the room and an attendant will meet you with further instructions. Do not touch anything or anyone.

Hanna nods.

The vault door echoes with a loud bang as gears and bolts are released. It opens slowly into another smaller airlock chamber. Hanna steps inside. The door closes behind her and then another bank vault door opens in front of her.

Hanna exits the airlock and moves inside the vaulted room.

INT. VAULTED ROOM - DAY

Hanna gasps as she enters the room. The ceilings stretch high into the sky. Every inch of space on the wall is filled by open Creche drawers with bodies hooked up to machines.

Motorized elevator platforms move up and down between the ground and the higher levels.

The Nurse we saw with Nanako steps toward Hanna without expression.

NURSE

Follow me.

Her heels click on the marble as she moves to the elevator and climbs in. She motions for Hanna to follow. She does.

The elevator ascends into the vaulted room. Hanna scans the rows and rows of bodies.

Finally they reach the right level and the elevator slows. Hanna and the Nurse climb off and walk into a small room separate from the main room. It looks like a small hospital exam room. In it, a bed with white sheets lies in wait.

We recognize this as the same bed Nanako was lying on earlier. It looks the same. Sterile. Empty. The monitors overhead are now dark.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Lie down.

Hanna swallows nervously as she climbs onto the bed. The monitors above Hanna shudder to life. A steady pulse tracks her heartbeats and brainwaves fill the other screen.

Hanna cranes around to see where the sounds are coming from.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Stay still.

The Nurse puts a firm hand on Hanna's chest to keep her down.

NURSE (CONT'D)

When you get inside, someone will
be waiting for you. Don't try
anything clever.

She presses the blue circle on Hanna's wrist, and everything goes dark.

INT. CONRAD'S HOME - DAY

Conrad has his finger to his ear as he paces the floor. The ringing of a phone echoes in his head.

RANSOM (V.O.)
Conrad?

CONRAD
Is she there?

RANSOM
Is who here?

CONRAD
Hanna.

RANSOM
Hanna? No. Was she supposed to be?

Conrad rakes his hands through his hair.

CONRAD
No. I don't know. Thank you. I have to go.

Conrad presses his ear and the call disconnects. He slumps. His face is haggard and worried. Then, his eyes widen as he has an idea.

CONRAD (CONT'D)
Rags?

Conrad's HUD comes into his peripheral vision.

CONRAD (CONT'D)
Parental override.

A shimmer and then a very dejected looking Rags appears on the screen.

CONRAD (CONT'D)
Rags? Where's Hanna?

Rags looks up with dull sad eyes.

RAGS
She's gone.

CONRAD
Where?

INT. MARBLE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hanna stands alone in the same long marble Hallway we saw Nanako in earlier. She looks around, awed by the splendor. Suddenly, the Smoke Raven appears.

Hanna jumps back in alarm.

HANNA
Who are you?

SMOKE RAVEN
Follow me.

The Smoke Raven drifts down the hallway. Hanna follows, her shoes clicking on the marble.

Hanna starts to lag behind. Her neck cranes to take it all in. Suddenly, she looks back and the Smoke Raven is nowhere to be seen. The hallway itself looks different.

Hanna stops, turning in alarm. Then suddenly, the Raven is beside her again.

SMOKE RAVEN (CONT'D)
You have to stay close.

He turns again and starts walking. Hanna follows closely.

At the end of the hall, they reach a set of grand double doors.

The Smoke Raven pushes them open, revealing the computer room with hundreds of desks. It is now empty of employees.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - NIGHT

Hanna follows the Smoke Raven through the same computer room we saw earlier, marveling at the technology and the number of monitors.

Finally, they reach the end of the room. They stare at a blank wall. The Smoke Raven turns to Hanna.

SMOKE RAVEN
Wait here.

He oozes around the door frame and vanishes.

Hanna looks around the empty office. Through the windows, planets and galaxies spin amidst spectacular nova gas clouds.

Hanna moves over to the window and looks out. Stars twinkle as wisps of grey clouds drift past. The moon shines impossibly large, casting white light into the room.

The Smoke Raven appears suddenly beside her again.

SMOKE RAVEN (CONT'D)

He'll see you now.

The wall opens revealing Baptiste's office. Baptiste stands in front of his desk with a stern calculating look in his eye.

INT. EMPTY GRID - NIGHT

Conrad stands in an empty grid. A locked door floats in front of him. Rags sits beside him.

RAGS

I'm sorry. She encrypted the password.

CONRAD

You don't know it?

RAGS

She reprogrammed me to remove certain knowledge and overrides.

CONRAD

Of course she did.

Conrad paces in frustration, raking a hand through his hair.

RAGS

You are worried about her.

CONRAD

Of course I'm worried about her!

RAGS

She would be pleased to know that.

Conrad looks at Rags with surprise as he takes this in. Rags cocks his head and looks back.

Conrad pulls out a silver laser gun and aims it at the lock. He shoots. The lock doesn't give.

Conrad grumbles and kneels with his weapon. He pulls it apart and re-assembles it into an even larger version.

He aims this new gun at the lock and fires. The lock trembles but still doesn't give.

CONRAD
Damn it, Hanna!

Conrad throws the gun and begins to pull pieces out of the air. A huge shoulder canon comes into form. Conrad heaves it up onto his shoulder and aims.

The door splinters apart with a loud explosion. Conrad sets down the gun and moves through the doorway.

Conrad now stands in front of Hanna's castle. Rags runs ahead of him.

RAGS
Initiating replay. Follow me.

Conrad follows at a jog. In the distance, a hologram of Melies, Hanna and Rags shimmers into focus. Ghosts drift across the empty grid, some clustered around Melies, some wandering aimlessly.

Rags turns and waits for Conrad to catch up.

CONRAD
Where are we?

RAGS
We built this place.

Rags and Conrad move closer to listen to the conversation, already in progress.

MELIES
...This is a simple hack job. I need a secure server brought online.

HANNA
OK. What server?

MELIES
... Baptiste's server.

HANNA
That's impossible.

MELIES
As luck would have it, it's not. We've chanced upon an opportunity that I couldn't pass up.

(MORE)

MELIES (CONT'D)

I wasn't entirely honest with you before. Your skill is impressive, but the main reason I need you for this job is your age.

HANNA

My age?

MELIES

So young. So lovely.

Hanna stares at him blankly.

MELIES (CONT'D)

Baptiste is currently running a search for a female child to bring into his secure server. His people claim it's an educational outreach program... I suspect it's more sinister than that.

HANNA

Why?

MELIES

He is specifically looking for girls who are unattached... orphans, runaways, girls who won't be traced. Or missed.

HANNA

I'm not an orphan. Or a runaway.

MELIES

Negligible. I've managed to infiltrate the search engine and plant a false background for you. I also manipulated the algorithm to insure you got selected. So you see, it will be a bit of a game, really.

HANNA

So they've already chosen me.

MELIES

Of course. I made sure of it. They expect you at Baptiste's tower tomorrow.

Hanna swallows.

HANNA

And what happens if I don't show up?

MELIES

Then both of us miss a valuable opportunity. One that you will not be offered again.

RAGS

I don't like this, Hanna.

Hanna shushes him.

HANNA

So I pretend to be this orphan girl and they let me into the secure server... and then what?

MELIES

I don't know what's waiting for you inside, but while you are in there, I need you to find a way to disengage the disruption field that surrounds the tower. I only need a few minutes of connection to get inside. And that's it. You get paid and you return home to your father.

HANNA

Sounds easy enough.

RAGS

Will she be in danger?

Melies eyes Hanna with a mischievous twinkle.

MELIES

Most certainly.

The hologram shimmers and vanishes. Conrad presses his hand to his ear urgently.

INT. BLASTED BUILDING - NIGHT

A game is underway. Jimmy and Oku crouch out of sight underneath an awning. This time, Sam is on their team.

Jimmy aims a sniper rifle and fires a shot. Sam readies a grenade. The chat screen scrolls along the side with commentary from the viewers.

Suddenly, a flashing green light begins to pulse on both Oku and Jimmy's wrists.

SAM
Don't answer that.

OKU
It's Conrad.

Sam tosses a grenade out the window as Oku engages the connection.

OKU (CONT'D)
Conrad?

She dodges as bullets ricochet off the wall around her.

CONRAD (V.O.)
Guys... I need you. These
coordinates. It's an emergency.

The call disconnects and Jimmy and Oku exchange a look. Sam looks between them.

SAM
You have got to be kidding me.

OKU
Sam? We are so, so, sorry.

SAM
Unbelievable.

He stomps his foot and a red light flashes as a gong sounds. Sam moves to the window with his hands in the air.

SAM (CONT'D)
We fucking forfeit!

A hail of bullets blow Sam's body back into the room. Riddled with bullets, he hits the floor, groaning. With his dying breath, Sam gives them the finger.

JIMMY
We'll make it up to you.

Jimmy and Oku vanish out of the building.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Hanna stands as Baptiste circles her slowly.

BAPTISTE
How old are you?

HANNA
Twelve.

BAPTISTE
Your health?

HANNA
Good. I'm not sick or anything.

BAPTISTE
Any living family?

HANNA
My mom... I mean, my parents...
they both died in The Crash.

A momentary flicker of surprise crosses Baptiste's face.

BAPTISTE
I'm sorry to hear that. But I'm
glad you've found your way to us.
We will be your family now.

He gives her a cold calculated smile. Hanna smiles in what she hopes is a convincing manner.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
What we are offering you is a
chance to be a part of a new
cutting edge experiment. A chance
to really make a difference. To be
a part of something special. Would
you like that?

HANNA
Oh, yeah. I'd love it.

A smile flickers across Baptiste's face.

BAPTISTE
Good. Then there is someone I would
like you to meet.

INT. NANAOKO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Baptiste knocks and opens the door. Nanako, sitting on her bed, looks up with surprise as Baptiste ushers Hanna in the door. Outside in the hall, the Smoke Raven stands in wait.

NANAKO

Father?

BAPTISTE

I've brought someone to meet you,
Nanako.

Nanako gets up and shyly moves over to Hanna.

HANNA

Hi.

NANAKO

Hello.

BAPTISTE

She's going to be sharing your room
for a while. I thought you might
like to have a playmate again.

Nanako inspects Hanna with curiosity.

NANAKO

Thank you, Father.

BAPTISTE

Think nothing of it. You'll build
Hanna a bed and then both of you
should get some sleep. We all have
a busy day tomorrow.

Baptiste turns and strides out the door, leaving Nanako and
Hanna alone in the room. They eye each other shyly.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Baptiste nods to the Smoke Raven who moves in front of the
door as it closes. Baptiste strides away down the hall.

EXT. BLANK GRID - NIGHT

Jimmy, Oku, Conrad and Rags stand outside the castle. The
Melies hologram shimmers and vanishes. Jimmy and Oku look at
Conrad with shock.

OKU

Who is this guy?

RAGS

His name is Melies. I've run a
search through all the databases I
have access to.

(MORE)

RAGS (CONT'D)

There is no record of him anywhere.
It's like he doesn't exist.

CONRAD

We have to find a way to break in
and get her out.

JIMMY

Break into Baptiste's server?

CONRAD

You got a problem with that?

Oku puts a hand on Jimmy's arm. He nods and then more gently:

JIMMY

Any idea how we might pull that
off, partner?

CONRAD

No. None. That's why I called you.

JIMMY

I've never even heard of anyone
getting past the bridge guards.
There's security all over that
island. No one gets in without
being invited.

Oku looks up suddenly at this remark.

OKU

They are holding the annual fund-
raising gala on the secure server
this weekend. Corpo heads and their
plus ones have already received
invitations to the event.

Jimmy and Conrad look up at her with surprise.

OKU (CONT'D)

So, all we need to do is figure out
a way to wrangle some invitations.

CONRAD

If this "Melies" could get Hanna in
with falsified data, I'm sure he
can manufacture a few extra
invitations. We need to find him.

INT. NANAKO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Hanna and Nanako sit across from each other on twin beds. Hanna shuffles her feet through the air. She eyes Nanako.

HANNA
How long have you been here?

NANAKO
A long time. Sarah for even longer.

HANNA
You're an orphan, too?

NANAKO
I was.

HANNA
Did your parents die?

NANAKO
I don't know. I never met them.

Hanna slides off the bed and looks around.

HANNA
I like your room.

NANAKO
Thanks.

HANNA
Well... our room now, I guess.

NANAKO
Yes. For now.

HANNA
What do you mean?

NANAKO
It used to be Sarah's room. If something happens to me, it will be your room.

HANNA
Who's Sarah?

NANAKO
She was the one he chose before me. And now he's chosen you.

Nanako sighs and stands. She moves to the window and looks out.

NANAKO (CONT'D)
I wish you hadn't come.

HANNA
Why?

NANAKO
It means that he doesn't think I
will succeed. I must not be strong
enough.

Hanna moves in closer to Nanako.

HANNA
Strong enough for what?

Nanako lowers her voice to just above a whisper.

NANAKO
It's not safe here.

HANNA
... I know.

Nanako turns with surprise.

NANAKO
How do you know?

Hanna lowers her voice as well.

HANNA
I-

NANAKO
Not here. Come with me.

Nanako moves to the center of the room and pulls the fabric apart like we've seen Hanna do. Through the hole, we see Nanako's sailboat on the water. Nanako crosses onto the deck and beckons for Hanna to follow.

Hanna steps across the threshold, eyeing Nanako with surprise.

Nanako closes the window and then opens a hatch in the ship's deck. The girls descend into the hull of the sailboat.

INT. SAILBOAT HULL - UNDERWATER

Nanako and Hanna descend into the glass hull of the sailboat. Outside, the water surrounds them, dark and mysterious. Strange fish and creatures swim by.

A little way out in the water, a red shimmer can be seen surrounding the entire boat.

HANNA
This is so cool.

She moves up to the glass as a large shark-like creature swims toward them.

NANAKO
We should be safe to talk here.
I've created a disruption field
around the whole boat to prevent
eavesdropping.

HANNA
...I've been sent here to do a job.
And when I finish it, we will both
be able to get out of here.

NANAKO
Both of us?

HANNA
What happened to your friend? To
Sarah?

Nanako hesitates, and then decides to reveal what she knows.

NANAKO
I'll show you.

Nanako climbs back up to the deck of the ship. Hanna follows.

EXT. DECK OF THE SHIP - NIGHT

NANAKO
I'm going to show you a memory.
Don't be afraid.

HANNA
I'm not.

Nanako closes her eyes and then suddenly, around them, the hologram of Nanako and Sarah shimmers to life. Nanako retreats beside Hanna to watch.

As the hologram plays, Hanna's face changes from wonder and surprise to fear. The shock-wave hits and Nanako squeezes her eyes shut as Hanna watches in amazement.

The hologram disappears.

NANAKO

That's the last time I saw her.

NANAKO (CONT'D)

Did you see her eyes?

NANAKO (CONT'D)

Up close, there is nothing inside.
Just rows of code. It's like she...

HANNA

Didn't exist anymore.

NANAKO

But then she came back. I saw it.
Right before she disappeared.

HANNA

We have to get out of here.

NANAKO

And go where? I have nowhere else
to go.

HANNA

You can come live with me. I'm sure
my Dad won't mind.

NANAKO

You mean... back in the Real?

HANNA

Yeah.

A small smile traces across Nanako's face.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Nanako... will you help me? You've
created a disruption field, and I
have to figure out how to disengage
one.

NANAKO

Why?

HANNA

Because until I do, we are both
trapped in Baptiste's server. And
because the man who sent me here
has answers that I need. I will not
let what happened to Sarah happen
to either of us. No way.

NANAKO

You'll really take me with you?

HANNA

I promise. And I never, ever, break my promises.

NANAKO

OK.

Hanna reaches out and squeezes Nanako's hand. Nanako squeezes back and gives Hanna a trusting smile.

INT. HANNA'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Conrad, Jimmy and Oku follow Rags through the dark hallways of the castle.

All three adults stare wide eyed at the incredible spectacle unfolding inside. The hallways twist and turn up impossible staircases, defying gravity.

The landscape seems to continuously shift and change, but always leading them on a linear path deeper into the castle.

RAGS

This way.

Rags leads them down a winding staircase.

OKU

This place is incredible.

Conrad says nothing but he clearly agrees.

Suddenly, in front of them, a female GHOST drifts through the wall and down the passage. We can't see her face. The team stop in their tracks.

JIMMY

What the hell was that?

RAGS

Ghosts.

Conrad starts to follow slowly behind the ghost. His face has lost some color.

OKU

Conrad, what is it?

Conrad approaches the ghost and reaches a hand out for her shoulder. His hand passes right through her, but the ghost stops and turns. It's Jeannie.

Conrad gasps. The ghost's eyes go wide and then she vanishes.

Oku and Jimmy stand open mouthed behind Conrad.

CONRAD

Did you...

OKU

It was Jeannie.

Conrad looks at them with an ashen face.

CONRAD

What the hell is going on in here,
Rags?

RAGS

We didn't create the ghosts. They
just appeared one day.

MELIES (O.S.)

They followed me.

The group turns to see Melies standing before them in the hallway, surrounded by a cluster of ghosts.

CONRAD

You!

Melies laughs but takes a step back from Conrad.

MELIES

No need to get upset, Conrad. I'm
thrilled to meet the father of such
an impressive young woman.

CONRAD

That was my wife.

Conrad's face is ashen.

MELIES

She must have died in the crash,
and for that, I am truly and deeply
sorry.

Melies gives him a sad smile and then opens a door that suddenly appears to his right and takes a staircase that winds impossibly up a wall and continues along the ceiling.

Conrad hesitates, and then follows him. Oku and Jimmy on his heels.

INT. UPSIDE DOWN STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Melies continues to wind up the stairs with the team teetering nervously behind him.

JIMMY
This can't be safe...

CONRAD
Where's my daughter?

MELIES
You know the answer to that already, Conrad.

CONRAD
Who are you?

MELIES
My name is Melies.

CONRAD
I know your name. Why don't you exist in any of the databases?

MELIES
Because I'm not, strictly speaking, human.

Melies jumps off of the staircase and lands nimbly on the floor below where a series of plush arm chairs are arranged before a roaring fire. Melies looks up at the team hanging above him.

MELIES (CONT'D)
Shall we sit?

Melies sits luxuriously. Conrad, Oku and Jimmy look at each other just as gravity shifts and they all fall to the floor, directly into plush chairs of their own.

MELIES (CONT'D)
It all began on a dark and stormy night...

JIMMY
You aren't serious...

Melies smiles.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

A woman with long black hair runs as fast as she can across a barren, rocky landscape. Behind her, a terrifying roar can be heard. Winds whip the dust around her into a frenzy. She stumbles and turns to look behind her.

We see her face. This is MAYA BAPTISTE. Her eyes, like Sarah's at the end, are wide and black. She crouches down suddenly between two rocks and turns her back to the storm. Light emanates from the spot in front of her, though we can't see what she is doing.

Slowly, she pulls a stream of white code from her temple, and places it on the ground in front of her. The light flares bright and then goes out.

Maya rights herself. A small bundle is left, almost indistinguishable against the rocks. It starts to wiggle and move, and then a small arm pokes out.

Maya reaches out her hand and takes the small baby's hand in hers.

MAYA

Melies...

The wind howls around her and she takes off running again, leaving the baby where it lies.

After she has run a good distance, she turns with defiance in her eyes. She spreads her arms wide and faces down the storm. For a moment, the black in her eyes flickers and is replaced by a soft brown. A single tear slips down her cheek.

Then, her eyes blaze black once again. She squeezes them shut and screams a loud primal cry, sending a forceful blast of energy at the Smoke Storm. It is stopped momentarily, shimmering in place, but then, with renewed force, the wall of wind, dust, and thunder overtakes her.

The particles making up her body drift apart and are carried away by the roaring wind.

We move in closer to the small bundle as it wiggles and dislodges itself from its blankets. A BABY BOY sits up. His eyes scan the landscape.

A flicker and he ages 5 years. He stands up. His eyes are solid black, his movements jerky and strange.

Melies moves over to the spot where Maya once stood and kneels. He touches the dirt.

INT. BAPTISTE'S SECURE SPACESHIP - MONTAGE - FLASHBACK

Maya walks through the hallways.

A map on the wall of Baptiste's virtual bedroom shows the pattern of the changing hallways.

Maya and Baptiste embrace in Baptiste's office.

The spaceship hangs in wide black space.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

The boy rights himself. He tremors and is now a teenager. We now can recognize him as Melies. He reaches out into the air and procures clothes for himself.

Suddenly, Baptiste appears a few yards away. Melies watches as he calls out in a loud strong voice. The raging storm stops in its track and turns, following Baptiste's call.

As the storm gets closer, Melies runs and hides behind the rocks. The winds whip around him and he cowers in fear.

Melies peeks between the rocks to see a thick sea of ghosts milling across the landscape on the outskirts of the storm. He shuts his eyes tight.

The winds lash and howl and then suddenly, silence everywhere.

After a few moments pass, Melies emerges from behind the rocks and moves closer to investigate the strange shimmering crowd of ghosts that cover the ground in every direction.

The ghosts have begun to drift off in all directions across the grid, but as Melies approaches, a small band of them flock toward him, surrounding him.

Their mouths flap wordlessly, their faces all share the same empty expression as they gesture weakly.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - LATER

Melies, now fully grown, walks through the landscape towards the glowing cities in the distance. A trail of ghosts follow in his wake.

INT. HANNA'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Conrad, Oku and Jimmy stare at Melies wide eyed.

CONRAD
I don't understand... so you're-

MELIES
An AI.

CONRAD
And you, somehow, have all of her memories?

MELIES
Not all of them. Just bits and pieces. Enough to know that Baptiste is doing more than he lets on inside that tower... and lives may be in danger.

CONRAD
Including my daughter's.

Melies nods.

JIMMY
And the ghosts?

MELIES
Have followed me since the day of The Crash. Their existence is a plaguing mystery... they cannot communicate, though I can tell they have much to say. My presence seems to offer them some comfort... and so we continue on this way. Until I can figure out how to set them free.

A young female ghost drifts close to Melies, brushing past his shoulder. Melies reaches out a hand to the girl. She stares at it with wide eyes, she brushes herself close to his hand again and then vanishes.

Conrad, Oku and Jimmy take this in.

CONRAD
You think all of this is linked to Baptiste?

MELIES
I do. Yes. And that is where Hanna came in. I can't access the server myself. I needed a child...
(MORE)

MELIES (CONT'D)

She is just one of a long line of girls that Baptiste has invited into the secure server under false pretenses. These girls are never heard from again. His experiment is failing. Over and over. Lives are in peril, and he must be stopped.

OKU

What experiment?

Melies pauses, as a softer expression comes over his face.

MELIES

He's creating artificial intelligence in that server. Somehow these girls are linked... You must understand, if there is another being like me in existence... someone who might understand the strange and lonely life I have led... I have to make sure they are not extinguished.

Jeannie's ghost appears in the periphery of the room. All eyes turn to her.

MELIES (CONT'D)

She can be at peace, Conrad. It's all connected somehow. Give me the chance to find the answers.

Tears tremble at the corners of Conrad's eyes. Melies watches, tears filling his own eyes in response.

The fire crackles behind them, sending glowing sparks into the room that dance around the walls. Jeannie vanishes again and Conrad comes back to himself. He takes a shuddering breath.

CONRAD

I'm willing to make a deal with you.

MELIES

What kind of a deal?

CONRAD

You help me get into the secure server and find my daughter... and I will make sure the server is brought online. Help me get her to safety, and I will get you what you want.

Melies smiles.

MELIES

I've always admired humans' ability
to improvise.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Baptiste sits at his desk. In front of him on the office
floor an image of Maya rotates slowly. Baptiste stares at it.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Maya lies in a hospital bed. She is hooked up to a breathing
tube and a number of wires. Her face is etched with wrinkles.
Her brown eyes sparkle with kindness.

Baptiste, also old and etched with wrinkles, sits beside her,
holding her hand.

MAYA

It won't be much longer now no
matter what they do.

BAPTISTE

Don't say that.

MAYA

I want you to do this. Your work is
too important.

BAPTISTE

It's too early. It's untested. I
don't know what will happen.

MAYA

I have hardly any life left as it
is. And what if this works,
Baptiste? We could be together.
Free from this place and this body
that's caused me so much trouble.

BAPTISTE

Maya...

MAYA

I'm not taking no for an answer, my
love. I want to do this. It's my
last wish. You need a test subject,
and I have nothing left to lose.
Except for you.

Baptiste crumples in his seat.

MAYA (CONT'D)
Will you do this for me?

Baptiste nods. He stands.

BAPTISTE
I have some preparations to do.
I'll be back in an hour to begin
the process.

He turns to go.

MAYA
You have to promise me something
first.

BAPTISTE
What?

MAYA
If it goes wrong... if I can't
control it... you will terminate
me.

BAPTISTE
Maya...

She sits up defiantly, her brown eyes determined.

MAYA
I won't do this unless you promise
me!

She collapses into a fit of coughing.

Baptiste moves back down beside her and takes her hand.

BAPTISTE
Very well. I promise.

MAYA
Then I'm ready.

INT. HANNA'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Conrad and his team sit expectantly across from Melies while
he deliberates. Ghosts drift to and fro.

CONRAD
There is a gala tomorrow night at
Baptiste's secure tower.

MELIES

Ah. The annual founders ball.

CONRAD

You managed to forge credentials for Hanna. So I thought, maybe...

MELIES

Done.

JIMMY

For us too.

Melies nods.

CONRAD

And once we're inside?

MELIES

I can prepare you as much as I am able... the memories I was given are fragmented. But I will give you what I can.

CONRAD

OK.

Melies stands and extends his hand. Conrad takes it and they shake.

MELIES

I will be in touch in the next 24 hours with the information you need to access the tower.

Melies bows luxuriously, and turns to go.

CONRAD

Melies?

Melies turns back.

CONRAD (CONT'D)

Do you think she's suffering?
Jeannie?

Melies takes Conrad in for a moment. Then, with feeling:

MELIES

I don't know. But all I feel from them is emptiness. They are lost, Conrad. And together, perhaps, we will find a way to release them.

Melies vanishes.

INT. NANAKO'S ROOM - MORNING

Nanako and Hanna both lie in their beds, eyes closed, breath rising and falling softly. The faint sound of wings beating grows closer and closer.

The Smoke Raven wafts into the room through one of the walls and glides through the room. He inspects both girls, and then evaporates through another wall.

As soon as he is gone, both Nanako and Hanna spring out of their beds. Both are fully dressed.

NANAKO

Come on.

The room shimmers and the long hallway full of doors appears. Hanna and Nanako clamber into this hallway and Nanako's room dissolves behind them.

NANAKO (CONT'D)

The key is to switch enough times to lose him completely. I've only done it once before. In here.

Nanako and Hanna hurry into one of the doors and close it behind them. The room morphs and changes.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

A beautiful green meadow stretches out before them. The room they entered is nowhere to be seen. The girls take off running through the grass and flowers. Puffy white clouds dot the sky overhead.

A rumble and the Smoke Raven appears some distance behind them.

NANAKO

Take my hand!

Hanna takes Nanako's hand and they leap into the air. The scene changes and they find themselves:

INT. SKYSCRAPER - DAY

Hanna and Nanako run through the fluorescent lit, carpeted halls of a towering sky scraper. Out the windows, a futuristic city sprawls out in all directions.

Hanna spots an open doorway and pulls Nanako inside. She shuts the door behind them and locks it. They wait.

The Smoke Raven appears outside the door and turns in all directions looking for them.

NANAKO

We have to go.

HANNA

Wait....

Hanna turns to the room and raises her hands into the air. Slowly, the four walls of the room begin to change and shift.

The skyscraper stretches and changes, hallways jutting suddenly out of walls, staircases twisting and winding through the floor until the inside of the skyscraper resembles the inside of Hanna's castle: A beautiful maze of optical illusions and misdirects.

INT. ESCHER SKYSCAPER - DAY

The girls open the door into the hallway. The Smoke Raven now finds himself in a twisting staircase that keeps looping around on itself. He can't get out.

Nanako's face lightens and she laughs.

NANAKO

Let's go.

She grabs Hanna's hand.

HANNA

Let me do this one.

She raises both arms into the air. Suddenly, the ground beneath them falls away and the girls fall into an endless black sky.

EXT. CLIFFS - DAY

Hanna and Nanako continue to fall, but now they are attached to a billowing red parachute. Nanako is strapped in front of Hanna, who has her arms wrapped protectively around.

The black sky has turned to blue, and they land gently on the edge of a cliff.

Their parachute balloons in the breeze as it settles.

The girls de-tangle themselves.

HANNA

That should keep him occupied for at least a little while. What now?

NANAKO

Now we need to find a way into Baptiste's office.

HANNA

Any ideas?

Nanako thinks.

NANAKO

I've been in there only twice... when I first arrived and... the other time.

HANNA

How do you know that the information is there?

NANAKO

I don't know, exactly. The last time I was there... I blacked out and when I woke up I just knew. I knew the layout of the entire server, and where all of the important information was contained. It's almost like a memory... I can't explain it really.

HANNA

OK. So how do we get into Baptiste's office?

NANAKO

We have to find a way to cut through. The door is always guarded. And the hallways are monitored.

HANNA

That's easy. I do that all the time.

Hanna turns to a patch of air in front of her and gently manipulates the air as we saw her do before. She pulls away a chunk of the rock and we see the grid stretching out beyond.

Nanako inspects Hanna's work. She runs her hand along the seams.

NANAKO

It's a good start. From there we should be able to re-enter wherever we want to.

Nanako moves up to the hole and widens it. She slides through and Hanna follows.

HANNA

How can we be sure Baptiste isn't in his office?

NANAKO

He takes meetings every morning from 8-10.

Nanako seals it up behind them.

A wind ripples through the desert, and the red parachute swells in the breeze.

Just then, smoke blankets the ground and the Smoke Raven materializes. He inspects the parachute. His smoke tendrils feel through the space. He caws loudly in frustration.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - MORNING

The sun shines brightly through clear blue skies. The office hangs suspended in the blue, the desk the only solid looking thing in the room.

Suddenly, a black square shaped hole appears in the air in the center of the room. Hanna pokes her head in and then slides her body into the room. Nanako follows.

NANAKO

Hurry. Over here.

The girls scurry around to the front of Baptiste's desk. Nanako reaches out and the monitor appears.

NANAKO (CONT'D)

It's password protected.

HANNA

Here. Move over.

Hanna slides into the chair and studies the screen. She types several keys. Beads of sweat stick out on her brow.

NANAKO
Hurry, Hanna.

Hanna continues to swipe and type.

HANNA
Got it! We're in.

Nanako squeezes up beside Hanna.

HANNA (CONT'D)
What are we looking for exactly?

NANAKO
Plans... blueprints. I think if I
connect into his database I can
find it.

She lifts her hand toward the screen when Hanna's finger
finds a strange looking file.

HANNA
What's this?

She pulls it open and suddenly the holograms of all of the
women appear in the center of the room. Maya on one end.
Sarah on another. Nanako gasps.

HANNA (CONT'D)
Who are they?

Nanako points to the end. Next to Sarah, we now see Nanako.
The same vacant holographic expression on her face.

Hanna turns back to the monitor. She highlights Nanako and
the hologram comes to life. Suddenly we are inside her last
memory.

We see the Smoke Raven envelope her. The blue light begins to
glow. Hanna and Nanako gasp.

Nanako's body starts to jerk and pixalate. The Smoke Raven
holds her steady.

Hanna turns her eyes back to the monitor.

HANNA (CONT'D)
Look.

Nanako turns to the screen. A live action video plays on the
monitor, showing Nanako's body in the real world. The monitor
flat-lines and Nanako's body dies.

Nanako throws an arm over her mouth as the sheet is pulled over the head of her now deceased body on the screen.

Back in Baptiste's office, the hologram of Nanako is set gently on the floor. The Smoke Raven backs up. Nanako's eyes open - black and gaping. Then, slowly, the blue fills in and hologram Nanako sits up.

Baptiste rounds the table and kneels beside her. The hologram shimmers and vanishes.

Nanako still holds her hands clamped over her mouth.

Suddenly, voices in the hallway. Both girls turn in alarm.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Oh no. What do we do?

Nanako remains frozen.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Nanako!

Nanako jerks out of her state and turns to the monitor.

NANAKO

We'll have to take it with us.
There's no time.

HANNA

Take it with us?

Nanako takes her hand and presses it against the monitor. Data starts to flow up her arm and fill her body. Lines of code stream across her skin. Her eyes turn black and fill with code.

Hanna steps back and watches with alarm. The voices in the hallway are getting closer.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Nanako!

Nanako ignores her. The final lines of code enter her body, and then with a shudder, her normal form crystallizes again.

NANAKO

Let's go.

She runs for the hole in the center of the room. Hanna follows. Nanako dives in. The handle of the door turns. Hanna dives in after Nanako and seals up the hole just as the door opens.

Baptiste walks into the room. He looks around in confusion for a moment, alert to some change. Then, seeing nothing out of the ordinary, he moves to the desk.

INT. NANAKO'S SHIP - UNDERWATER

Hanna and Nanako sit sprawled on the floor of the ship's hull, breathing heavily. Nanako is still visibly shaken up.

HANNA

I don't understand.

Nanako scrambles to her feet and reaches out her hand. A replica of Baptiste's home screen appears in the air in front of them. Nanako scans it with her eyes, and then the line up of holographic women appear before them.

Nanako selects Sarah and a hologram comes to life. We see the moment she was uploaded, her body on the same bed as Nanako and Hanna dying before them. The Smoke Raven cradles her inside Baptiste's office.

Then, we see the moment of Sarah's virtual death, as her body drifts apart. Baptiste's face, cold and calculating, watching this happen.

Nanako selects the next GIRL, and we watch a similar scene unfold. The Smoke Raven holds each girl. Each girl dies.

Nanako goes down the line until she gets to Maya.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - HOLOGRAM - DAY

Older Maya lies in her hospital bed. The upload process begins and we see her body begin to twitch. Older Baptiste sits beside her holding her hand. The upload continues. 50%. 75%. The monitor flat lines. Older Baptiste presses his blue circle.

A younger version of Maya appears in the hologram standing across from a younger Baptiste. Details fill in slowly. Black gaping eyes fill in with warm brown..

Maya smiles. She runs to Baptiste and they embrace. He holds her tight as tears run down his cheeks.

The scene changes.

Both girls are ashen faced as the movie of Maya's death begins to play. The dust storm whips around them as Maya is overtaken.

HANNA

I've seen this before... this storm. Is this the night of The Crash?

NANAKO

Yes.

Hanna moves in closer to the wall of Smoke and debris. She studies it and then gasps.

HANNA

Look.

She traces her finger over a set of black raven wings that can just be seen at the top of the smoke and dust.

NANAKO

The Smoke Raven.

Nanako starts the video again and we watch the Smoke Raven devour Maya. The Smoke Raven grows in size and topples like a tsunami wave toward a town in the distance.

The hologram shimmers and terminates.

Both girls stand in silence, absorbing what they have seen. Finally:

NANAKO (CONT'D)

Baptiste lied to me.

HANNA

The Smoke Raven was the virus that killed all those people. My mother...

Tears spill out of Nanako's eyes as she falls to the floor.

Sobs escape her and Hanna moves carefully beside her, draping a gentle arm across her shoulder. She is still white and shaken.

HANNA (CONT'D)

It's OK. Shhh....

NANAKO

You saw those images! You saw them take my body away. What am I? How am I still here?

Hanna runs a hand over Nanako's head.

HANNA

I don't know.

EXT. EMPTY GRID - MONTAGE - VARIOUS

Conrad, Oku, Jimmy and Melies stand on an empty grid. Conrad draws a small square on the floor marking off a clear space.

The team surrounds the space, and immediately it rises up in a miniature replication of the exterior of Baptiste's secure tower. The inside is empty.

Melies steps forward and changes the outline to that of a spaceship. Conrad looks at him with surprise. Ghosts drift and meander around the outskirts of the group.

Oku kneels down in front of a little boy ghost and reaches out a hand. The boy slowly reaches out his own hand to meet hers, but halfway through the action he seems to lose focus and his eyes drift to the other side of the room.

Melies steps into the center of the empty spaceship. The team follows.

Melies waves his hand and the inside of the spaceship starts to fill in. It's incomplete with a lot of holes and question marks.

INT. CONRAD'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Conrad, Jimmy and Oku sit around the coffee table. Three matching grey suits hang over the arm rest, an array of papers and maps and diagrams litter the table and the floor.

They all look exhausted.

CONRAD

That's it. Get some rest. We've done what we can from here.

Oku stands and stretches. She moves to Conrad and gives him a kiss on the head.

OKU

See you tomorrow, boss.

CONRAD

Yeah.

Jimmy stands and follows Oku out the door.

JIMMY
We'll get her back.

Conrad gives a wave as the two close the door behind them.

Conrad sits alone in the middle of the floor. He takes a shuddering breath as his eyes drift down to the carpet.

INT. LIVING ROOM - FLASHBACK

Conrad lifts a giggling BABY HANNA from her playpen on the floor and twirls her around. Jeannie watches in the background with a smile.

INT. NANAOKO'S SAILBOAT HULL - UNDERWATER

Hanna and Nanako sit on the floor, their eyes red and exhausted. Rows of code and document after document fly by. They scan and dismiss them one by one.

Finally, Nanako finds a folder and opens it. A layout of the tower stares back at them.

Both girls perk up instantly.

HANNA
This must be it!

Nanako scans it rapidly.

NANAOKO
Look. Here.

She enlarges the blueprint into a 3D model and steps forward into it.

NANAOKO (CONT'D)
Baptiste's office is here. It looks like there is a hatch in the floor that leads down here.

She reaches up and releases the invisible hatch which opens. The blueprint shifts and Hanna and Nanako find themselves on the underside of the spaceship. Scaffolding hangs down, and across a metal platform a small door can be seen.

Hanna excitedly moves up beside Nanako.

HANNA
It's through that door. It has to be.

NANAKO

The control room. All of the security features are inside.

They move along the platform until they are directly in front of the small door, hardly bigger than a crawl space.

NANAKO (CONT'D)

It's completely secure. Password protected, encrypted... But once we're inside, I think I can shut it down.

HANNA

I can get us in. I can hack it.

The girls look at each other and then back at the blueprint around them.

NANAKO

There appears to be a room directly below Baptiste's office... the door is sealed, but if we can get inside, we should be able to cut through into the hatch.

Nanako pulls the blueprint wide again to show the hallway below Baptiste's office and a door marked DO NOT ENTER that leads into an ambiguous square of space.

NANAKO (CONT'D)

Right here.

HANNA

Are you sure it's a room?

NANAKO

I'm not. It's strangely unclear... but what else would it be?

Hanna looks to Nanako with excitement.

HANNA

So, when do we go?

NANAKO

Baptiste has the founders ball tonight.. He'll be distracted. We'll go then.

EXT. BAPTISTE'S TOWER- EVENING

A red carpet is unfurled across the bridge. REPORTERS and PAPARAZZI clamor and snap photographs from the shore as a procession of CORPORATION HEADS walk the carpet towards the building.

Everyone wears a crisp grey suit, fitted to perfection, but otherwise identical.

Conrad, Oku and Jimmy, also wearing impeccable grey suits, stand in line. At the head of the carpet, each guest presents their invitation to the security robot who releases the air-lock door to let them in.

The line inches closer as reporters and photographers buzz by. Conrad is next.

CONRAD

Here we go.

Conrad presents his invitation and waits, holding his breath, as the computer processes the invitation.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Welcome, Conrad Tolen.

The gate releases and Conrad starts to breathe again. He gives an encouraging smile to Jimmy and Oku and then steps through the gate.

EXT. BRIDGE - EVENING

Conrad waits nervously as first Oku, and then Jimmy present their invitations, and are ushered through. Melies appears in their HUD.

CONRAD

You did it.

Oku and Jimmy move up beside him and they turn to make their way up the red carpet.

MELIES (V.O.)

I told you. Cake. The hard part begins now, and I will be of no further use to you until the server is brought online.

Oku, Jimmy and Conrad approach the building itself. The double doors are opened wide and decorative drapings line the hallway toward the vault. The red disruption shield sparkles all around.

JIMMY
Quite the shindig.

MELIES (V.O.)
Good luck. Once the server is
brought on-

They reach the double doors and Melies starts to glitch and static.

OKU
We're losing him.

MELIES (V.O.)
Disruption... shield. Don't-

CONRAD
We've got it from here. See you
soon.

Each of them stretch out their hands to receive the blood test and as each are approved, they step through the disruption shield and the door and Melies is gone.

INT. VAULTED ROOM - EVENING

The guests stand along one wall of the vaulted room. Conrad scans the creche drawers along the tower walls, searching for Hanna.

Suddenly, out of the wall behind them, row after row of creche drawers open. These are deluxe, with plush satin linings and gold leafing around the sides.

The guests exclaim and admire as they climb into their drawers.

Conrad continues to search the drawers across the way, eyeing the elevators ascending between them.

OKU
Conrad... come on.

Conrad turns to see that almost everyone has climbed into their drawer. Oku and Jimmy lead him to three empty ones, and they all climb in.

CONRAD
Here we go.

Conrad presses the blue circle on his wrist and lays back.

INT. LAVISH BALLROOM - NIGHT

Oku, Conrad and Jimmy stand, wide eyed at the edge of an incredible ballroom. They still wear the grey suits.

Glowing lights flicker and fly through the air and a starry night sky dots the ceiling. Fountains of chocolate and champagne mark the borders of food tables that seem to stretch into infinity.

The guests below are no longer wearing simple grey suits, but are decked out in outlandish and lavish dresses and suits. Bright colors, impossible fabrics and hairstyles that defy gravity, make the room a sea of color and texture.

Guests directly in front of the team interact with a menu of outfits, selecting bright and colorful ensembles that instantly replace their grey suits. They move into the ballroom.

The guests are already taking to the floor and dancing. Others fill plates with mounds of food.

Conrad scans the periphery to see guards every hundred feet or so in imposing black suits and dark glasses.

Oku, Jimmy and Conrad approach the changing stations. They each stand in front of a virtual monitor and scroll through outfits.

As they stop on each, the outfit they are wearing changes to match. To their dismay and horror, a hilarious assortment of hair styles, bizarre jackets, dresses, pantsuits and shoulder pads parade by.

Oku dismisses the monitor as she lands on a stunning royal blue ball gown with a matching feathered hat. Her hair is now tumbling down her back in curls and a tattoo of a peacock in matching colors spreads across her bare back.

Jimmy and Conrad stop on brightly colored suits. Conrad sports a red tie that spirals down his shirt, and Jimmy wears a matching fez.

Jimmy's mouth drops open when he sees Oku.

CONRAD

Wow. You clean up nice.

Oku does a little spin. Jimmy still has not moved.

OKU

Close your mouth, Jimmy. I look hot. Just say it.

She swishes past him with a smirk.

JIMMY

You... look... hot. Yep.

He follows after her. Conrad descends the steps slowly. He keeps his eye on the guards, marking the boundaries of the room.

When they reach the main floor, they stop.

CONRAD

Blend. I'm going to try and get the lay of the land. Meet me back here in 15.

Conrad splits off. Jimmy waits a beat and then sticks a hand out to Oku.

OKU

What?

JIMMY

You heard the man. Let's blend.

He grabs her hand and twirls her onto the dance floor.

OKU

I don't dance.

JIMMY

Neither do I.

He pulls her in and places his hand on her bare back. He swallows. Oku relaxes slowly into his grip.

OKU

Step on my toes and I'll kill you.

JIMMY

I'd like to see you try.

They join the whirling throng of dancers.

INT. NANAKO'S ROOM - NIGHT

Nanako and Hanna lie in their beds, both with their eyes wide open. The sound of wings, and then The Smoke Raven materializes through the door and sweeps the room. Both girls shut their eyes before he comes over to check on them.

He leans down over each, listening for their breath. Convinced they are asleep, the Smoke Raven evaporates.

Nanako and Hanna leap out of their beds.

NANAKO

We have 15 minutes before he comes
back.

Nanako pulls the sleeve of her shirt up and touches her forearm. A glowing red clock appears, embedded in her skin. It is already beginning the countdown.

Hanna makes a bee-line for the door. She reaches the door and opens it quietly. She sticks her head out and then gestures for Nanako.

HANNA

Lead on.

Nanako hurries out the door. Hanna follows, gently closing the door behind them..

INT. MARBLE HALLWAY - NIGHT

The girls walk quickly down the hallway. Every so often Nanako pulls up a hovering map to refer to.

NANAKO

This way.

Nanako diverts them to the right just as the hallway shivers and changes.

Hanna hurries to stay right on Nanako's heels.

HANNA

How do you know when it's going to
change?

NANAKO

I just know.

Nanako grabs Hanna's sleeve and stops her cold. The hallway shifts around them. Nanako turns sharply in several directions and then pulls Hanna back the way they came.

INT. MARBLE HALLWAY - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Hanna and Nanako stand in front of the same sealed door that Nanako found in her exercise. Above the door in bold letters are the words "DO NOT OPEN."

HANNA

Is this it? Isn't this a little obvious?

NANA KO

We don't know what will happen...

HANNA

Oh please.

NANA KO

It could be for our protection. We don't know what we will find in that room.

HANNA

We know exactly what we will find. The way out of here!

Nanako shakes her head. A beep sounds and Nanako looks down at her wrist.

NANA KO

9 minutes 49 seconds.

HANNA

If we don't open this door everything will have been for nothing.

Nanako sighs and moves to the door. She grabs the handle and pulls. It doesn't budge.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Move. Let me...

Hanna tries the handle herself. Then she explores the surface of the door with her hands.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Whoever built this door is a master coder. There's things here I've never even...

She stops over the center and pulls the door apart to reveal the code underneath.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Wow. Ok.

NANA KO

Can you open it or not?

HANNA

Give me a second!

Hanna pulls a stream of fire out of the air and gently inserts it into the gap she created. The fire is absorbed by the code, and suddenly the whole door glows orange.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Here goes nothing.

Hanna tries the handle again and this time, with a whoosh it opens. Outside, black endless space stares back at them. A breath, and then both girls are sucked out into space.

INT. LAVISH BALLROOM - NIGHT

Conrad continues to slide along the edge of the room. Laughter and general gaiety float through the air along with the music that swells and crescendos with the whisks and sways of the dancers.

Conrad passes the guards one by one, making note of the entrance they are guarding. He marks their height, any visible weapons, etc.

One guard watches Conrad suspiciously as he passes by, and follows at a close distance.

Oku and Jimmy continue to dance, but their eyes also scan the room. Oku takes note of several cameras on the walls, and Jimmy marks an area of particular commotion near the front of the room where a small stage has been erected.

His eye is then caught by a man gorging himself on chocolate cake at one of the tables.

JIMMY

Ah... the privileged class enjoying their privileges.

Jimmy spins Oku closer. She turns just in time to see Baptiste emerge from an almost invisible entrance. Behind him, the Smoke Raven materializes, blocking the door that was visible for that split second.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Bingo.

OKU

I'll get Conrad.

Oku disengages from Jimmy with a charming smile for anyone watching and swishes off toward the edge of the dance floor.

Conrad moves to one of the pillars and reaches into his pocket.

GUARD

HEY!

Conrad pulls his hands out of his pockets just as Oku sashays in from the dance floor. She spots the guard and puts on a coy smile. She moves over to Conrad.

OKU

There you are, silly! Come dance with me! You promised!

GUARD

Ma'am...

She turns to the guard with wide eyes and a pouting lip.

OKU

Hey, you're cute. Don't you think he's cute, Conrad?

She stumbles in a perfect drunken performance and places a hand on the guard's chest.

OKU (CONT'D)

Strong.

The guard looks flustered.

Oku flashes him a flirtatious smile and talks over her shoulder as she moves back to Conrad.

OKU (CONT'D)

Save me a dance for later?

She pulls Conrad on the dance floor, leaving the guard confused and flustered on the sidelines.

OKU (CONT'D)

I need to show you something.

Oku leads him quickly toward Jimmy who now stands awkwardly by himself in the middle of the floor.

No sooner have they reconvened when the music quits and a hush falls over the room.

Baptiste ascends the steps to the platform and the crowd erupts in applause as the guests gather for his speech.

Baptiste moves to the front and touches a hand to his chest. When he speaks, his voice booms out - amplified to fill the room.

BAPTISTE

Hello everyone! I trust you are enjoying the evening as much as I am.

Shouts and cheers from the guests are his reply.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

If you haven't sampled the spinach puffs they are... "virtually" the best thing I have ever tasted.

Laughter and applause from the crowd.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

This is one of my favorite times of year. To see each of your faces and know that these are the very people on whose shoulders this great cyber nation sits. Your support, your hard work, and your dedication to your people and this server humble me and inspire me to reach for even greater heights.

Baptiste procures a champagne glass out of the air and suddenly, every person in the crowd is holding a similar glass. The ballroom itself explodes with golden fireworks that sprinkle golden dust down on the guests.

Gasps and applause follow.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)

Tonight we are here to celebrate you. I raise my glass to each and every one of you. Thank you for your continued loyalty and service.

Glasses raise all around the room.

JIMMY

What an asshole.

Jimmy takes a long slug of the sparkling liquid.

EXT. OPEN SPACE - NIGHT

Hanna and Nanako spin through space, receding rapidly from the door they fell out of. The spaceship starts to recede into the distance.

HANNA

Not good!

Hanna immediately springs into action. Into the air, materials and structures begin to spring to life.

NANAKO

What are you doing?

Hanna's hands move rapidly as she builds the yellow and red rocket that she saw in Kidverse. She finishes with a flourish and jumps into the front seat, reaching out a hand for Nanako. Nanako grabs it and Hanna hauls her in as the engine revs and they are propelled back towards the spaceship.

NANAKO (CONT'D)

Aim for the bottom. Underneath that lower bank of windows.

Hanna aims the rocket-ship downward. The spaceship looms larger and larger.

NANAKO (CONT'D)

There!

Just then, their rocket-ship is suddenly dragged downward with tremendous force.

HANNA

What's happening?

Both girls turn in alarm as the spaceship is sucked down.

NANAKO

We have to jump! Now!

Hanna immediately launches herself off the rocket toward the side of the spaceship. She manages to grab onto a metal panel. Nanako lands beside her, but her hand slips and she cries out as she begins to fall.

Hanna throws out her hand and grabs Nanako's wrist. With a groan, she pulls her in and Nanako is able to grab a hand and foothold beside Hanna.

Just below them, the rocket suddenly erupts in blue light and breaks apart into particles before vanishing completely.

The girls stare wide eyed. Nanako's arm beeps again.

NANAKO (CONT'D)
6 minutes 32 seconds.

The girls both look down where they can just make out the platform jutting off below. They begin the descent.

EXT. SPACESHIP PLATFORM - NIGHT

Hanna pulls herself over the railing and collapses on the metal floor. Nanako falls beside her. The girls haul themselves up and hurry down the platform towards the small hatch door at the other end.

INT. LAVISH BALLROOM - NIGHT

Baptiste continues to speak. Conrad eyes the Smoke Raven behind him as Jimmy and Oku carefully move themselves through the crowd toward the other end of the stage.

BAPTISTE
This is just one of the many
exciting changes that I propose for
the-

All of a sudden, Baptiste's form glitches and freezes. The champagne glass slips out of his hand and shatters on the floor.

The crowd gasps and the security guards from all around the room run for the stage.

EXT. SPACESHIP PLATFORM - NIGHT

Nanako and Hanna stand outside the small secure hatch. Hanna is crouched on hands and knees as Nanako anxiously watches.

Hanna shoots a long sustained fiery blast at the lock, but it holds firm. She grunts in frustration and pushes the hair behind her ears to try again.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Password, incorrect. You have two
more attempts.

A loud rumble makes both girls turn. Behind them, the platform splits apart and a section farthest from them breaks away and falls into space.

Just like the rocket, when the platform hits the security field, it glows blue and then disintegrates.

NANAKO

Hanna...

HANNA

I've almost got it.

Hanna backs up and stands. She puts her hands together and rubs them until a white hot fire builds between them. She pulls her hands apart and watches it grow into a fireball. It hisses and spits as she aims it toward the hatch.

She hurls it at the door and turns her face away as it hits. A click. A grin spreads across Hanna's face.

The lock, however, doesn't budge, and instead, a frightening rumble begins to split apart the platform beneath her.

HANNA (CONT'D)

No!

The next chunk of platform falls away.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Incorrect password. You have one more attempt.

Nanako hurries closer to Hanna as the platform disintegrates in a cloud of particles. Hanna and Nanako now stand on a small square of platform, which is all that remains.

NANAKO

If you get it wrong again...

HANNA

I know!

Nanako's wrist beeps.

NANAKO

4 minutes.

Hanna faces the door. She lays her palm flat on it and it springs to life with lines of code. She shifts them around slightly, modifying a line or two as it scrolls past. Then she steps back.

HANNA

This will work.

NANAKO

Hanna...

HANNA

This will work!

She pulls a fireball even bigger than the last one out of the air and holds it right up to the door. A click. Hanna winces.

Suddenly, the door glows red hot and then melts away entirely. An empty room stares back at them.

They exchange a look and then move purposefully through the opening and into the control room.

INT. LAVISH BALLROOM - NIGHT

The guests have now crowded the stage, shouting and yelling. The guards have created a line of defense between the guests and the stage, holding them at bay.

Baptiste's form is still frozen, and the sound of a heart monitor flat-line fills the space. His form moves for a second and then freezes again. Blue light surrounds him.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Paddles are placed on Baptiste's rib cage as electricity jolts through his aged body. A weak heartbeat starts again.

DOCTOR

He doesn't have much time.

INT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Baptiste shimmers back to life. The crowd has pushed in closer, being held at bay by the security guards.

Conrad has pushed his way to the front of the crowd. Jimmy and Oku are nowhere to be seen.

Baptiste puts a shaking hand to his chest and his voice booms out once more.

BAPTISTE

Do not be alarmed...

A tremor shakes his body and he stumbles. People gasp and shout. Baptiste blindly hurtles his body toward the back of the stage. His balance fails him and he starts to fall face first off the stage.

The Smoke Raven springs into action and grabs him before he falls. The doorway behind him becomes visible once more.

Conrad, watching the whole thing through the commotion, quickens his step around the side of the stage. The guards are distracted by the concerned crowd and don't notice him crossing around behind them.

The Smoke Raven pulls a weakened Baptiste through the door and it begins to swing shut behind them. Before the door latches, Conrad puts his foot in the opening and the door jams.

Oku and Jimmy appear beside him and all three of them disappear quickly through the door, closing it behind them.

The commotion in the ballroom continues. No one noticed the three intruders.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The room, though appearing small from the outside, is in actuality an expansive chamber. Rows of monitors, equipment, and scrolling computer data line four walls of the lofty room.

Hanna stands nervously as Nanako presses one hand firmly to the wall. Her body and eyes are filled with lines of code. She has merged with the machine.

After a moment, she releases her hand. Her face and body regain their normal coloring.

NANAKO

It's over here.

Nanako takes off toward the back of the room. Hanna follows.

Hanna rounds the corner to see Nanako stopped in front of a small angular monitor. A rotating and shifting image of the Real world tower is seen, with charts monitoring the disruption shield.

Nanako reaches out her hands and engages with the monitor. It leaps to life.

HANNA

That's it? No more passwords or anything?

NANAKO

I guess no one expected we could get in here.

Nanako spins the image and moves deeper into the coding of the security system.

NANAKO (CONT'D)

Ah. It's in here... the shut off...

Nanako shudders.

HANNA

What is it?

Nanako pulls her hands away from the monitor and shakes her head. She puts her hands back on and then removes them again.

HANNA (CONT'D)

What?

Nanako stumbles back and turns to Hanna. Her eyes have become black-on-black.

HANNA (CONT'D)

No. Nanako!

Hanna flings herself at Nanako, but Nanako quickly reaches up both hands and shoots a burst of white hot energy at Hanna. Hanna is stunned as her body skitters across the floor and crashes into a bank of monitors on the opposite wall.

Nanako's form starts to shudder. The black eyes begin to flicker between blue and black.

Hanna scurries to her feet.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Nanako?

The flickering continues. Nanako is clearly undergoing a fight with herself.

The blue eyes blaze clearly for a moment.

NANAKO

Hanna! Go!

HANNA

No!

Hanna moves defiantly toward Nanako, even as another burst of energy begins to rev up in Nanako's hands. The blast is released and Hanna ducks beneath it.

She runs at a crouch and wraps her arms around Nanako, just as Nanako had done to Sarah. Hanna cries out. Nanako's body is red hot. Hanna's skin begins to burn, but she holds on.

Nanako's eyes flicker, her body in turmoil. Hanna hangs on tight, pain distorting her features.

Finally, with a scream, Nanako slips out of Hanna's grasp and crumples onto the floor. Her body suddenly looks small.

The room goes very silent. Hanna kneels slowly, her skin still sizzling, and gingerly turns Nanako over. Her eyes are closed, her breath coming in and out evenly.

Hanna gently shakes her shoulder. Nanako's eyes flutter and open. Bright blue and shining, they take in the room.

NANAKO

What happened?

Hanna hugs her friend tight. Nanako hugs back as the color begins to flood back into her face. They pull apart and Nanako notices Hanna's burned skin.

She reaches out her hands and golden light floods over Hanna, healing her burns completely.

Hanna pulls back and Nanako stands shakily. She squares her shoulders to the monitor and submerges herself back into the screen.

NANAKO (CONT'D)

Let's shut it down.

INT. DARK MARBLE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Conrad, Oku and Jimmy creep silently down the dark hallway. Ahead of them, scuffling and labored breathing can be heard. Every so often a pained cry echoes through the hallway.

Conrad has pulled up a virtual map of the layout of the palatial server.

CONRAD

It's enormous. She could be anywhere.

OKU

So lets pick a starting point and work our way through each section.

Conrad consults the map.

CONRAD

This bank of rooms along the east side.

Suddenly the hallway begins to shimmer.

JIMMY

Boss...

The three turn in alarm as the hallway changes. Conrad finds himself staring straight at a solid wall. When he turns, he is alone.

INT. ALTERNATE MARBLE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Oku and Jimmy spin around in confusion.

OKU

Where is he?

JIMMY

What the hell just happened here?

They turn back the way they came.

OKU

It's like it reversed direction.

JIMMY

A security feature maybe?

OKU

Let's just start opening doors.

They take off at a run.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The door to Baptiste's office flies open and Baptiste stumbles through the door, barely able to stay upright. The Smoke Raven billows in behind him.

Baptiste crashes his way to the desk and grabs the monitor. It springs to life at his touch.

Suddenly, on the monitor, we see Baptiste himself spinning on the screen. Baptiste gasps in a labored breath.

BAPTISTE

Begin the upload!

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Commencing upload.

Baptiste sags to the floor clutching his chest. He looks up at the Smoke Raven.

BAPTISTE

Do it. Put me out.

The Smoke Raven, still in the doorway, moves toward Baptiste when suddenly, his ears prick at a sound outside.

SMOKE RAVEN

Someone is here.

He vanishes in a flash of smoke.

BAPTISTE

No! I can't do this without you!
Come back!

Baptiste stares ashen faced at the empty room.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - NIGHT

Conrad stands pressed against the wall, holding his breath.

The Smoke Raven billows past him, stops, cocks his head for sounds, and then dissipates through the walls.

Conrad turns his attention to the open door in front of him.

INT. MAZE OF HALLWAYS - NIGHT

Oku and Jimmy walk quietly through the halls. Jimmy holds a rifle out in front of them. A flashlight on top of his rifle illuminates the darkened corners.

Oku opens the door of every room they pass and Jimmy does a sweep with his scope. As more and more generic offices and living quarters are revealed, their pace quickens. Their gaming experience has made them an expert team.

At the end of one hallway, Oku throws open the door into Nanako and Hanna's room.

OKU

Jimmy... look at this.

She moves into the room. Jimmy does a sweep of the hallway and then follows.

INT. NANAOKO AND HANNA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jimmy and Oku move through the room, examining the toys and the two beds. Jimmy moves to the window and looks out at the European city.

JIMMY
This is amazing.

OKU
She was here. Should I call Conrad?

JIMMY
Not yet. She isn't here.

Jimmy throws up a hand for silence. The distinct sound of wings and wind can be heard down the hallway.

OKU
(whispering)
Is that what I think it is?

JIMMY
I'm not sure I want to find out.

Jimmy and Oku hurry out of the room, closing the door behind them. The sound is coming ever closer. Jimmy and Oku take off at a run.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - DAY

Conrad peeks slowly around the door.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Upload 15% complete.

Baptiste crawls around the edge of his desk. His body is still glitching and trembling.

The world starts to go fuzzy around him. He pulls himself painfully onto the carpet in the center of the room. He looks up and locks eyes with Conrad.

Conrad moves to run, but Baptiste sees right through him.

BAPTISTE
Maya.

We now see the shimmering form of Maya standing in the doorway instead of Conrad. Baptiste pulls himself slowly onto his back as the form of Maya approaches and kneels beside him.

MAYA
You look terrible.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Upload 30% complete.

Maya takes his head and props it in her lap. She smooths the hair from his face.

MAYA
So you're really doing it.

BAPTISTE
Yes...

MAYA
And what about the contingency? Who will send a wild winged smoke storm after you if you lose control of it?

Baptiste shudders.

BAPTISTE
Hold me.

Maya holds him tighter.

BAPTISTE (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry. It was the hardest thing I've ever done.

Maya kisses his forehead.

MAYA
You did exactly what I asked you to do.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Upload 50% complete.

BAPTISTE
I'm losing my grip on this reality... I-

MAYA
Shhhh.... I'm here. Focus on my face. You're halfway there.

Baptiste clutches Maya tight as a spasm shakes his body.

INT. DARK HALLWAY - NIGHT

Oku and Jimmy run as fast as they can down a long stretch of hallway. Behind them a thunderous roar alerts them to the Smoke Raven gaining on them quickly.

JIMMY

What the hell is this thing? Some kind of security feature?

Oku dodges into an unoccupied living space. Jimmy follows and locks the door behind them. They run toward the window on the opposite wall.

A sickening sound makes them both turn in time to see the Smoke Raven ooze around the locked door and enter the room.

Oku sends a blast of energy at the window but it remains firmly shut.

Jimmy fires his rifle. The bullets bounce off harmlessly.

OKU

Oh God. We're trapped.

She runs along the wall with Jimmy on her heels. Then suddenly, Jimmy stops.

OKU (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

Oku turns to see a clawed hand wrapped around Jimmy's ankle. The Smoke Raven pulls Jimmy toward himself.

Jimmy slips to the floor, his body shuddering and convulsing like Jeannie's did all those years ago. A blue light begins to glow around him.

OKU (CONT'D)

No!!

Oku dives at Jimmy and pulls with all her might. When that fails, she pulls healing spells one by one out of the air and throws them at the Smoke Raven. They bounce off with no effect.

The Smoke Raven lets out a roar and reaches toward Oku with his other hand. Jimmy's form freezes and begins to flicker.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Nanako and Hanna stand at the console of the computer. Nanako is still engaged with the complex system. Suddenly, a crack and a whirring sound, and then a section of the grid goes dark.

As it does, we see the image of the disruption field shimmer and turn off.

The girls look at each other and then bolt out of the control room.

EXT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The girls stand on the small square of platform. The whole spaceship starts to rumble, and suddenly, beneath them, huge golden tree-like roots begin to grow from the bottom of the spaceship.

Snaking out, roots of golden light descend into the darkness until they hit a solid mass of empty grid.

From there, the golden roots stretch out in all directions on the empty grid, and suddenly, whole cities can be seen in all directions. Lights and buildings twinkle to life as the golden roots connect to each one.

Laughter can be heard. Snippets of phone conversations. Sounds of gunfire and other gaming noises.

Hanna and Nanako look to each other in triumph.

HANNA
We're online.

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

The Smoke Raven snaps his head alert as the Alarm sounds. With a cry like a prehistoric creature, the Smoke Raven releases Jimmy and rushes the window like a river tide. The window blasts open.

The Smoke Raven launches himself out the window. He flies down along the golden trunk towards the glittering cities in the distance.

Jimmy's body lies limp on the floor. Oku has tears in her eyes as she scrambles to him.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

An alarm starts to ring loudly through the room. Baptiste jerks out of Maya's hold toward the sound.

BAPTISTE
Oh no.

The perspective shifts and we see that Conrad is the one kneeling beside Baptiste. Just as he knelt beside Jeannie.

CONRAD

Where is my daughter? Baptiste?
Where is she?

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)

Upload 75% complete.

Baptiste's body shudders and glitches. The beep of the heart monitor filling the space again. The blue glow around his body grows stronger.

INT. DARK ROOM - NIGHT

Oku holds Jimmy in her arms.

OKU

Jimmy? Jimmy. Can you hear me?

She gently shakes his shoulders. He doesn't move.

OKU (CONT'D)

Shit. Shit shit shit. Don't do this
to me, Jimmy.

Tears cascade down her cheeks as she summons up a golden healing spell. Oku presses both of her hands into Jimmy's chest and closes her eyes.

Nothing happens. Oku screams in frustration and tries again.

This time, golden light spills from her hands and fills his body. Jimmy shudders and then his eyes flutter open.

Oku flings herself into his arms. A look of surprise and delight crosses his face. He pulls her in closer, stroking her hair.

JIMMY

I was fine, you know. I didn't need
your help.

Oku laughs and then takes his face in her hands and kisses him.

Jimmy wraps her in tighter and kisses her with gusto.

A pop, and then suddenly beside them is Melies. Jimmy and Oku spring apart.

MELIES

Well, well.

OKU

You.

Jimmy and Oku scramble to their feet. All through the room, ghosts begin to appear. Rather than flocking toward Melies, they all gravitate toward the window where the Smoke Raven disappeared.

MELIES

She did it. The server is online.
For how long, we don't know. We
have no time to lose.

He strides toward the door. Jimmy and Oku exchange a look and follow after him.

INT. BAPTISTE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Conrad sits with Baptiste, his eyes darting wildly every time the alarm sounds. He is obviously itching to get out of there.

CONRAD

What is that alarm? What's going
on?

BAPTISTE

If the Raven gets out, I won't be
able to keep them safe.

CONRAD

Keep who safe?

BAPTISTE

Millions died. I never intended for
that to happen.

Conrad reels back.

CONRAD

What are you talking about?

BAPTISTE

I've kept him contained all these
years. If the shields are down,
he'll already be gone.

CONRAD

I don't... Where is Hanna?

Baptiste's eyes glaze over.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Upload 90% complete.

When Baptiste turns back to Conrad, he sees Maya again. This time she is old, with life lines and a halo of white hair. Her hands tremble as she runs them down Baptiste's face.

BAPTISTE
We're not gonna make it.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
95%.

MAYA
It's been a long road, my love.
Aren't you tired of holding on?

Tears trickle down Baptiste's cheeks as his body heaves one final time. Maya's face swims in front of his eyes as a flat-line tone fills the room and his body goes limp.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Upload interrupted.

Slowly, the particles making up Baptiste's body drift apart until nothing remains.

WOMAN'S VOICE (V.O.)
Upload failed.

Conrad sits in the center of the floor alone.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Baptiste's old wrinkled face stares blankly up at the ceiling. The Nurse slowly closes his eyes, tears stinging at her own as she pulls the sheet over his face.

EXT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Hanna and Nanako still stand on the platform above the dazzling golden tree-like trunk that now connects the spaceship to the ground below.

Suddenly, a motion to their right catches both girls attention.

HANNA
What is that?

Below and moving rapidly away from the tower is the Smoke Raven. He gains size and momentum the farther he gets from the tower.

Behind him, on the ground below, a small procession of ghosts follow. From all corners of the grid, more begin to appear and join the procession.

Nanako gasps.

HANNA (CONT'D)

What?

NANAKO

We let him out.

HANNA

What do you mean?

NANAKO

He was trapped in the secure server just like we were. He caused The Crash.

Both girls let the gravity of the situation sink in.

HANNA

We have to stop him! We can't let him hurt anyone else!

Hanna screams in frustration and sends a series of fire bolts blasting uselessly after the Raven. Just then, a flurry of particles dance to life in front of them.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Rags?

The dog comes fully into form before them.

HANNA (CONT'D)

RAGS!!

Rags is beside them. He jumps on Hanna and licks her face, barking and wagging his tail. Hanna laughs and scratches his head.

RAGS

You did it! You did it! Hanna!
You're here! You're here!

Hanna fends him off, remembering the dire situation.

HANNA

Rags... Where is Melies?

RAGS
I don't know.

HANNA
He promised he would come.

RAGS
I'll go get him. I'll find him.

Rags turns to go.

HANNA
Wait! There's no time. Look!

She points to the Smoke Raven in the distance.

RAGS
What is that?

HANNA
A second Crash if we don't stop
him.

Rags takes this in and then jumps up into the air.

HANNA (CONT'D)
RAGS!

NANAKO
What's he doing?

His body starts to stretch and grow. His ears and paws stretch into wing-like appendages.

Transformed into a giant flying dog, Rags turns back to them.

RAGS
Climb on.

Hanna and Nanako scramble over the edge and on to his back.

RAGS (CONT'D)
Hold on tight!

They dig their fingers into his fur.

Rags swoops away from the balcony and dog and girls set their course after the Smoke Raven.

INT. DARK HALLWAY- NIGHT

Melies, Jimmy and Oku hurry down the hallway, followed by a few scattered ghosts. Conrad bursts around the corner almost colliding with them.

MELIES

There you are.

CONRAD

Baptiste is dead. Where's Hanna?

MELIES

Come with me.

Melies reaches out his hands. They all link up and with a pop, they vanish from the room.

EXT. SPACESHIP - NIGHT

Melies, Conrad, Oku and Jimmy reappear outside on a stretch of empty grid several hundred feet from the spaceship and the giant golden tree trunk. They all look in amazement at the network of roots spidering out in all directions.

OKU

She really did it.

MELIES

It may have been an error in judgment.

Conrad shoots him a look.

CONRAD

Where is she??

Melies points toward the flickering lights of the cities which are now much closer. The team cranes their necks to see the shaggy brown form of Rags gaining on the Smoke Raven which has now become a monstrous storm.

A thick sea of ghosts now stands between the team and the Smoke Raven. They blanket the ground like a fog as they follow blindly after the storm.

The few ghosts still clinging to Melies turn and drift after the others.

OKU

What is that?

Conrad's eyes grow wide as he recognizes the storm.

CONRAD

Another crash. Maybe you guys should disconnect.

OKU

We're not going anywhere.

MELIES

When we brought the server online, we inadvertently let it out. There was no way we could have known.

Conrad and Oku gasp in unison.

CONRAD

It's Rags. Is that...

MELIES

Your daughter. She has the AI with her.

Conrad takes off running toward the lights in the distance. The rest of the team follow after him.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF CITY - NIGHT

The Smoke Raven, now a colossal storm, barrels down on a glittering virtual city. Thousands upon thousands of ghosts surround him on all sides, drifting out of the way as he presses onward.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

People on the streets shout and spread the word as the giant storm approaches. Chaos and panic everywhere as people start to vanish out of the town, unplugging from VR as fast as they can.

The Smoke Raven reaches out an enormous clawed hand toward the people on the streets. They scream and run in the opposite direction.

EXT. BARREN WASTELAND/OUTSKIRTS OF CITY - NIGHT

Hanna and Nanako, astride Rags, watch with horror as the Smoke Raven descends on the city.

HANNA

We have to get him away from that city! Rags...

RAGS

I understand, Hanna.

NANAKO

Look at all the ghosts.

They stretch out across the ground in all directions creating a sea of translucent bodies.

With a deep growl, Rags revs up and speeds toward the Smoke Raven with renewed force.

HANNA

Hey! HEY!!!

Hanna sends several blasts of fire at the Raven. The first two miss, but the third connects with one of his wings and he spirals to the ground.

The ghosts scatter and form a circle around him. The Smoke Raven turns in surprise to see Rags and the girls land beside him.

HANNA (CONT'D)

You want that city? You'll have to go through me!

Before Nanako or Rags can protest, Hanna leaps off of Rag's back and spirals to the ground. She lands purposefully and stands to face the Smoke Raven.

The Smoke Raven has turned his full attention on Hanna. The ghosts move aside to include Hanna in the circle. The Smoke Raven laughs a deep booming laugh and moves toward her.

NANAKO

Hanna! No!

Hanna begins to rise up in the air, just as she did in the game. The air seems to move in around her as she revs up for a fiery blow.

Nanako slides off of Rag's back and he and Nanako run toward Hanna, pushing through the wall of ghosts.

The Smoke Raven continues to move in on Hanna as she releases a giant wall of fire that moves toward the Smoke Raven.

It hits him full force and he shudders slightly before ripping through the fiery wall like it's paper. Everything around him is destroyed in the blast.

Now standing on an empty grid, Hanna's shoulders slump.

HANNA

Oh no...

She turns to run when a clawed hand reaches out and grabs her by the shirt collar, lifting her into the air.

Her body immediately starts to seize.

NANAKO

HANNA!

The Smoke Raven pulls her closer, when suddenly a rush of brown fur leaps at him. Rags digs his claws and teeth into the Smoke Raven and bites down hard.

The Smoke Raven cries out and releases Hanna. Hanna falls to the dirt and Nanako runs to her side. Blue light has begun to glow around Hanna.

OKU (O.S.)

Move out of the way!

Nanako turns to find Oku running toward them. She kneels quickly beside Hanna and pulls her onto her lap.

Behind her, Conrad and Jimmy have already pulled out weapons and run full force toward the Smoke Raven.

JIMMY

My God. Look at all of them!

They push through the ghosts to square off with the Smoke Raven.

Oku reaches out and golden light flows from her hands and into Hanna. Hanna sits up, eyes blinking furiously. Her eyes rise up to see Rags beating his wings, grappling with the Smoke Raven... And her father and Jimmy beyond.

Oku leaps up and runs after Conrad and Jimmy, pulling a weapon of her own out of the air.

OKU

She's fine!

Rags continues to bite and claw at the Smoke Raven. The Smoke Raven swells in size and with one final furious growl he takes Rags in both claws and squeezes. Rags yelps helplessly.

The Smoke Raven lets go and Rags falls to the ground, deathly still. His body shrinks down to its normal size.

The Smoke Raven lets out a mighty roar and turns back toward the city.

Just then, an army of giant bubbles float up into the Smoke Raven's face. He looks at them with surprise. As they make contact they begin to explode one by one.

On the ground below, Conrad and Oku send a succession of fiery bullets into the Smoke Raven. Jimmy prepares another round of bubbles.

Hanna runs to Rags and cradles him in her arms.

HANNA

Rags. Rags! Answer me!

She shakes his small form lightly. He stirs slightly and opens wide brown eyes to look at Hanna.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Why did you do that? Why did you do that, Rags?

RAGS

It is my... duty... to protect you.

He gives her hand a weak lick and then collapses into her arms. Hanna wails and clutches him tightly to her as the particles making up his body drift apart.

Nanako watches with tears in her eyes.

NANAKO

Hanna...

Hanna's face has gone rigid with rage. She stands and turns to see her father and Oku and Jimmy fighting with the Smoke Raven.

CONRAD

Hanna! We need your help!

The team all look to her expectantly.

Hanna runs to join them, revving up a gigantic fireball in her hands.

Nanako looks around frantically, unsure what to do, when suddenly, beside her, is Melies.

NANAKO

Who are you?

MELIES

Don't be frightened.

He stares at her with wonder and then very slowly holds out his hand. Nanako takes it tentatively and suddenly both of their bodies light up with lines of code.

Tears spring to Nanako's eyes, and tears fill Melies' as well. Slowly, they pull apart.

NANAKO

I'm a...

MELIES

Yes.

NANKO

I thought I was all alone.

MELIES

As did I. For many years.

A roar of dust and wind causes them both to turn. Hanna, Conrad, Jimmy and Oku have managed to create a barrier between the Smoke Raven and the city. All of their strength is being used to hold the Smoke Raven in place.

NANAKO

They need help!

MELIES

I've seen the destruction of this virus before... If we can connect into his main code...

NANAKO

We can shut him down.

Melies smiles and the two of them run towards the Smoke Raven. The ghosts look to Melies with mild recognition, some reaching out their hands as he passes by.

MELIES

Hello my friends.

Conrad, Jimmy, Oku and Hanna continue to throw everything they have at the Smoke Raven.

CONRAD

We can't hold him off much longer!

Just then, Nanako and Melies walk calmly into the circle of chaos. The bullets pass through them harmlessly, the wind and dust brush past them as they make their way closer to the Smoke Raven.

HANNA

What are you doing?

CONRAD

Get back!

Melies and Nanako continue their calm walk forward. When they are inches from the Smoke Raven they look to each other, clasp hands tightly, and then reach their free hands directly into the Smoke storm.

A moment of nothing... and then an explosion of white light sends a shock-wave that nearly knocks the team off their feet. Nanako and Melies glow with white shimmering light.

The light travels slowly from Nanako and Melies, up the Smoke Raven's body. He looks around in confusion, writhing in an attempt to escape.

Nanako and Melies wear identical expressions. Their eyes are lit up with lines of code.

We follow their gaze and suddenly we see the Smoke Raven in lines of code as well. Snakes of white light are slowly infiltrating the lines, pushing them aside and moving their way toward the center.

A FLASH.

INT. LAB - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Baptiste stands over a metal table. In his hands, he slowly adds a final piece to a small black form before him. As the last piece is placed, it suddenly shivers to life.

We see the Smoke Raven beginning to take shape lying in a fetal position at Baptiste's feet. It blinks several times and looks up at him with awareness.

Baptiste stares at it with cold calculating eyes.

INT. BAPTISTE'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK - NIGHT

Maya, with black-on-black eyes, paces around the room in fear. White hot light builds around her. Baptiste tries to calm her. The Smoke Raven, nearly full formed, watches from the corner in chains.

Maya screams and flings herself out the bedroom window. She falls a long distance to the ground below and then takes off at a run.

The Smoke Raven springs quickly to the window. Baptiste stops him. Tears burn Baptiste's eyes. The Smoke Raven struggles to escape.

BAPTISTE
I'm sorry, my love.

Baptiste unchains the Smoke Raven and it flies out the window after Maya.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

The Smoke Raven destroys Maya. As her particles drift apart, he lets out a mighty roar and makes a beeline for the glittering cities.

EXT. CITIES - FLASHBACK-MONTAGE

The Smoke Raven grows and grows as he rushes over throngs of running screaming people. Each one that dies is absorbed into his ever growing storm.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - FLASHBACK- NIGHT

Baptiste lets out a loud call. The Smoke Raven turns at the sound. He wrestles with himself for a moment, and then rushes back toward Baptiste.

A long procession of ghosts stretch in the Smoke Raven's wake. Baptiste stares at the untold thousands of ghosts and then walks inside the storm.

As the winds swirl around him, Baptiste locates the small black piece that he placed when the Raven was a baby. He wraps his hand around it and pulls it out.

The Smoke Raven glitches and tremors, deflating in size until he is the size of a man again.

Thick silver chains appear, binding his wings to his body.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE/OUTSKIRTS OF CITY - BACK TO PRESENT.

Melies jerks his hand further in. The white light continues to infiltrate through the Smoke Raven's code until it finds its way to the small piece that Baptiste placed.

The Smoke Raven is now entirely lit up by white light.

Melies wraps his hand around the piece. Nanako's hand reaches in beside his, and together, they crush it between their fingers.

With a cry, the Smoke Raven explodes up into the sky. Melies and Nanako stay their ground, their heads watching the Smoke Raven ascend higher and higher into the sky as his body begins to shrink back to it's normal size.

Suddenly, thick silver chains appear around the Smoke Raven's body, crushing his wings to his back. The Smoke Raven lets out a cry as he plummets to earth.

The team watch as the Smoke Raven falls from the sky, landing with a sickening thud on the ground.

Upon impact, a cloud of black feathers explode upward. No body remains.

Jimmy turns to Oku and they pull together in a passionate embrace.

Conrad drops his weapon and runs to Hanna. He pulls her into a hug.

HANNA

Dad... I'm sorry.

CONRAD

I'm sorry too, kid.

He pulls her in tighter.

CONRAD (CONT'D)

And I am SO proud of you.

Tears sting Hanna's eyes as she hugs her father closer.

Just then, a wave of light travels from the spot the Raven fell and through the sea of ghosts. Joyous shouts erupt all around as the ghosts come back to themselves.

Hanna and Conrad pull apart in surprise.

Jimmy and Oku move up closer as well.

Melies moves between the ghosts, tears stinging his eyes as they reach out to him. Their hands brush through him as they offer him their thanks. Their voices call out in laughter and shouts of joy.

The ghosts begin to notice the cluster of humans and make their way toward them, clamoring and reaching to get to them first.

FEMALE GHOST

I'm looking for Hector Prince. Do you know him?

MALE GHOST

My mother... Charlotte Garrett.

The ghosts push in closer clamoring for their loved ones. The team finds themselves surrounded by the translucent shimmering wall of ghosts.

OKU

I'm sorry. I don't know your family. I don't know them. I'm sorry.

HANNA

The cities. Go to the cities.

The ghosts turn and gasps ring out as they see the city lights behind them.

Slowly the throng of ghosts begin to dissipate as they rush toward the city. As the crowd thins, one solitary figure remains.

JIMMY

Conrad...

Hanna and Conrad turn as the ghost of Jeannie begins to slowly move towards them.

Conrad and Hanna move forward to meet her until the three of them are standing only inches apart.

JEANNIE

Hello.

HANNA

Hi.

Conrad can't find the words.

JEANNIE

You've grown into a woman, Hanna. How did that happen?

She smiles at Conrad.

Tears cascade down Conrad's face. He reaches out his arms to embrace Jeannie, but they move through her like mist.

CONRAD

I'm so sorry, Jeannie. I didn't get to you in time. I couldn't-

JEANNIE

Shhhh... This was not your fault. You know that. The guilt and fear you have carried all of these years... It's time to let it go.

CONRAD

I don't know how.

JEANNIE

You have a daughter, Conrad. And she needs you.

CONRAD

I know.

JEANNIE

You said that to me that night, do you remember?

CONRAD

Yes.

JEANNIE

You've gotten lost in a memory of a life you once had. And you're missing it.

CONRAD

What?

JEANNIE

Everything. This glorious life only moves in one direction.

CONRAD

I miss you so much it hurts.

JEANNIE

Because you're holding on so tight... let go.

Conrad takes a deep shuddering breath.

Jeannie starts to turn as sunlight breaks through the sky over the city.

HANNA

Mom.

Jeannie turns back to her daughter. Hanna moves up to her shyly.

HANNA (CONT'D)

Did you... I mean, do you-

Jeannie smiles.

JEANNIE

I loved you every moment of your life. And I love you now. I'm sorry if I did a lousy job of showing it.

Tears spring into Hanna's eyes. She nods. Jeannie blows a kiss into Hanna's hair and then a delighted smile breaks over her face.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

Keep following your heart. Listen to your gut. Never look back.

She turns into the sunlight, and slowly vanishes. Hanna and Conrad stand side by side as the sun rises up over the land.

Melies and Nanako stand behind, Jimmy and Oku close beside them.

EXT. BARREN LANDSCAPE - MORNING

The team has clustered together. Jimmy and Oku give Conrad and Hanna a hug, give a wave to Nanako and Melies, and vanish off the grid, hand in hand.

Nanako and Hanna turn to each other.

NANAKO

Hanna...

HANNA

You're staying here? With Melies.

NANAKO

I know what I am now. And there is so much for me to learn.

Hanna smiles at her friend.

HANNA

Thank you. For everything.

NANAKO

I have a family again. Thanks to you.

Nanako moves back to Melies who awaits her with a caring smile. The ghosts have now completely dispersed. Melies watches the last few disappearing into the distance.

MELIES

I'll miss them, in a way. They were the only family I knew.

Nanako takes his hand in hers.

Conrad and Hanna turn to each other.

CONRAD

You ready, kiddo?

HANNA

I'm starving.

Conrad laughs.

CONRAD

Me too. How about I make us some lunch, and you can tell me all about your adventure?

HANNA

Yeah.

CONRAD

And just so we're clear... you aren't going to do anything like this... ever... again... right?

Hanna laughs.

HANNA

No promises.

With a final wave to Melies and Nanako, Conrad and Hanna disappear.

INT. BLOWN OUT BUILDING - 6 MONTHS LATER

Hanna crouches behind the pillar. Her hair now cascades down her back in one long sheet. She no longer wears her school uniform, but rather her own set of fatigues. Weapons of varying assortments adorn her body.

The sounds of bullets and exploding mortar fill the room.

Next to her, a graceful lion crouches in wait.

LION
Chances of detection are high,
Hanna.

HANNA
Shh. You can go.

The lion vanishes. Hanna pulls a grenade out of her belt and moves into the room.

Oku, Jimmy and Conrad turn. Oku puts a finger to her lips, and Conrad motions Hanna over.

Hanna moves beside her father. He gestures to the window and Hanna creeps below the sill and peaks down. Below, Sam and his team are hiding behind a portion of blown out wall.

One of the team members looks up. Hanna gasps in surprise as she sees that it's Max. Max, recognizing her, gives her a small wave, blushing red. Sam catches him and smacks him on the back of the head.

HANNA (CONT'D)
What's he doing here?

CONRAD
Sam's little brother. You know him?

HANNA
Kind of...

She steals one more look at Max. A faint blush paints her own cheeks. Conrad notices but he keeps it to himself.

Just then:

WOMAN'S VOICE
Sorceress527 you have a message.

HANNA
Patch it through.

Ransom appears in Hanna's Heads Up Display.

RANSOM
Just wanted to wish you good
luck... knock em dead kid!

With a smile and a wave he's gone.

CONRAD
You ready?

Hanna nods.

CONRAD (CONT'D)
On three...

Oku and Jimmy ready their weapons.

CONRAD (CONT'D)
One....

Jimmy grabs Oku's hand and gives it a kiss. We see that they now wear matching wedding rings.

CONRAD (CONT'D)
Two...

Unseen by the team, Melies and Nanako suddenly appear at the rear of the industrial building. They each rev up a gigantic fireball.

CONRAD (CONT'D)
THREE!

The team leaps into action, firing shots into the courtyard. Two giant fireballs rush past them and they turn to see Nanako and Melies smiling mischievously just as the red violation symbol descends.

WOMAN'S VOICE
Illegal players detected.

From below we hear:

SAM
God damnit, Conrad!

Hanna moves to the window and looks down at them.

HANNA
Play on?

Sam turns to Max.

MAX
Play on!

BLACK OUT.

The End.