

BEASTRIGGER PILOT

FADE IN.

EXT. FOREST MOON - EVENING

CAP: ELYSIA, 1400 PARSECS AWAY FROM EARTH, 2271.

A forested moon pockmarked like a golf ball with craters and burning timber. Smoke rises from hundreds of downed star ships. A ringed aquatic planet in the background dwarfs the moon.

Sleek white KURO MINING militia ships (union-busters) decimate the remaining squads of revolting Union contractors.

Scavenged Union star ships with a symbol spray-painted over the Kuro logos fire ineffectual volley after volley at the Kuro mining vessels.

INT. UNION BASE - CONTINUOUS

COMMANDER CYRUS FOLEY, forties, watches the scene intently from within the Union base. He turns the feed to the faces of the remaining fighters.

FOLEY

Men, today we stand here in this home that we built with our own hands, sweat, and blood--will we let those filthy rich CEOs take it away?

FIGHTERS

No!

FOLEY

Then let us stand. Fire the mortars. Chances are they haven't planned for old tech.

EXT. UNION BASE

The fight continues with renewed vigor.

One Union fighter's lucky shot hits a Kuro triangular shielding drone as a mortar volley pushes it just outside the shield. The shot takes it down, disabling the ships' barriers.

FOLEY

Execute Plan Delta.

UNION PILOT
But that will--

FOLEY
It's the only way we'll win.

The Union ships gain altitude. Foley watches them.

UNION PILOT
Altitude 2000. 3000. 4000. At
target altitude, sir.

FOLEY
(to others)
Match that height.

Foley waits, watching the Kuro ships take down more and more of his fighters.

Finally, Foley flips a switch when the remaining Union fighters are near-orbit.

INT. KURO SHIP

KURO PILOT
They're retreating?

KURO COMMANDER (O.C.)
Don't let them escape!

An EMP rocket whizzes past the main Kuro Command Ship--

KURO PILOT
What is that?

--and explodes. The Kuro ship loses power and altitude as the pilot SCREAMS, attempting to wrest control and, failing that, rapidly flipping the dead eject toggle.

The ship crashes into a silvery lake.

EXT. UNION BASE

Both sides lose power, leading the Kuro low-fliers to crash. The Command Ship begins to lose altitude, heading straight for the base.

INT. KURO COMMAND SHIP

The bridge buzzes like a hive. Technicians struggle to get the electric backups working.

KURO ADVISOR
This is lunacy.

The Kuro commander grits her teeth at him.

KURO COMMANDER
And it's working.

Meanwhile:

INT. UNION SHIP

The Union ships lose control and altitude. A pilot takes a few deep breaths as his ship begins to fall.

UNION PILOT
Alright, it's gonna be dicey--

He flips a few switches and turns on a backup gas generator, which sputters to life. His ship regains altitude just in time, skimming the surface of the lake. Some of his comrades aren't so lucky.

The tide of battle rapidly begins to shift in the Union's favor.

INT. UNION BASE

Foley's stunned it worked.

FOLEY
We've almost done it. Gods, we've--

He composes himself.

FOLEY
Mortars, the port side!

UNION PILOT
Sir, there's no way we can turn that ship!

EXT. UNION BASE

Mortars fire on the Kuro Command Ship's left side, causing it to reel and list. It narrowly scrapes the top of the base.

INT. KURO COMMAND SHIP

The crew gives up on the generator and hangs on for dear life.

KURO COMMANDER
Everyone brace!

EXT. UNION BASE

The Kuro Command Ship hits the ground and slides, toppling hundreds of trees. Flames shoot out from its wounds, setting the forest alight.

INT. KURO COMMAND SHIP

The Kuro Commander smirks as blood trickles down her face.

KURO COMMANDER
That EMP stunt you pulled... cute.
But you'll never...

She shudders and dies.

EXT. UNION BASE

The Union fighters clean up the last Kuro ships and land.

Foley and a small squad approach the Kuro Command Ship with weapons drawn. A group of EIGHT SURVIVORS climb out of the command ship with their hands up.

The survivors, dressed plainly, all have arcane Brands visible somewhere on their bodies.

A Union pilot looks behind them. There's a solid drop pod chamber with eight body harnesses.

The ringleader, SARAH CAELIT, thirties, keeps her bored eyes on Foley. Her tone is dry and ironic. The fighters march them toward the base, guns at their backs.

The pilot who saw the container hurries toward Foley and takes him aside momentarily.

UNION PILOT
Sir, I don't think they're--

FRANK MINOS, 30's, stumbles. A fighter goads him along, pushing him into the one in front of him--

A SCREAM cut short makes everyone turn.

The fighter in front of Frank now hangs impaled on a massive bovine horn... sprouting out of Frank's forehead as he grows into the form of a hulking Minotaur. His body is now covered in arcane tattoos branching out from a singular Brand on his chest.

The fighters immediately train their weapons on him. One shoots. The bullet just scratches his tough hide.

Caelit steps into the middle of the group, scooping up a bit of the fighter's blood and watching it flow down to her fingertip as if bored.

CAELIT

Now, now. You don't all have to die.

FOLEY

(knowing)

The White Death. How much did they pay you to crawl out of your holes?

CAELIT

Enough.

(casual)

They wanted some crowd control. However, they forgot to start the clock early enough. So...

Caelit flicks the drop of blood onto his uniform and looks into his eyes, still bored but dead serious.

CAELIT

What's it worth to you?

Foley stares long and hard. The fighters look uneasy.

FOLEY

You can't barter with lives forever. Someone will kill you.

Caelit looks mildly annoyed, like a bug crawled on her leg.

CAELIT

Wrong answer. Seven?

Frank throws the dead fighter at another, causing the latter's gun to burst fire. Caelit takes a deep breath and opens two arcane portals with her Branded hand, one in front of the fighters just before the bullets hit them.

She sends the bullets toward the lake, causing spouts of water to shoot up. With a dismissive wave of her hand, she closes the portals.

She suddenly looks at Foley with the yellow eyes of a fox.

CAELIT
Come again?

Foley looks at his terrified soldiers.

FOLEY
You want to deal with me? Let them
go home to their families.

Caelit shrugs, then slowly walks toward him, casual in manner. The fighters look at him, then each other as they cautiously withdraw. The group of seven encircles Foley.

CAELIT
I sense there's... something else.

He stares hard at her, but tears slip from his eyes. His voice almost breaks.

FOLEY
You want to be Kuro's lapdogs for
another hundred years?

Caelit CHUCKLES, amused.

CAELIT
How could you possibly afford us?

She glances at the silvery lake. Looking closer, there are the tops of ruins sticking out of it.

CAELIT
(low)
You don't even comprehend what
you've dug up here.

He clears his throat and hands her something we can't see. Her smile drops and her expression changes from bored bemusement to discomfort.

FOLEY
(defiant)
This enough?

She snatches it away.

CAELIT

Tell your people to prepare for war.

She looks at DARREN HEWES, forties, whose throat Brand glows as scales form on his skin. He steps far away from the others as he grows into a draconic Wyvern. Caelit draws a portal and enters, appearing on his back with the others in tow.

EXT. RINGED AQUATIC PLANET

CAPTION: PHIPPE, AQUATIC PARADISE PLANET

The forested moon looms in the backdrop.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

In the back lot. It's a drug deal. The buyer sizes up the dealer and his case, fingering a police-issued gun. COLE PHELPS, thirties, ambitious narcotics detective--and bitter fiancé.

PHELPS

It's that new stuff, Queen's Tears?
It makes you forget?

The dealer nods and chuckles, opening the case. Inside is a syringe and vial of blue liquid.

DEALER

You're in luck. One case left.

Phelps throws money at the dealer and snatches the case, hurrying away.

The dealer watches him.

Phelps glances at his ear-piece's projected text message log. The last is a breakup text by a speed-dial contact named "Maggie."

Phelps shakes his head, turns off the earpiece, and puts the syringe on his arm. He mockingly repeats their last conversation and injects the liquid.

PHELPS

Is that what you think of me?
"Idiot--distant--unfeeling son of a--"

The drug hits. This one's not a normal trip. Black, starry, arcane floaters drift upward toward the night sky. He sees something weird. Flashes of...

CUT TO:

EXT. SPACE

A private, rounded star-ship struggles to escape a white hole in the void. The passengers panic as they're sucked in. The pilot freaks and engages thrusters, to no avail. They pass the threshold.

It's bright outside the ship.

WHISPERS and LAUGHTER play around the exterior of the ship. Shadows flit just out of sight. Several slip in and attack the passengers, destroying their human shadows and becoming monstrous half-beasts in the harsh light.

BACK TO:

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - PRESENT

A woman's voice CHUCKLES, echoing around Phelps. He whirls, panicked, putting a hand to his gun as the world reels. Nobody's there.

He staggers and catches himself on a brick wall. The mark where he stuck the needle glows blue, then dims as he collapses.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Wyvern touches down and Caelit gets everyone off with a portal. She glances down at her still-clenched fist, takes a deep breath, and looks over toward an ancient house near the trees.

HEWES

Ah. That's why.

Caelit holds up her pointer finger and walks up to the door. She looks down at her fist again and slowly unclenches it.

A key. She unlocks the door and walks in.

INT. OLD HOUSE

The place hasn't been touched in a century. RALPH DUNHAM, thirties, looks around her.

RALPH
This was what we missed out on
payday for?

Caelit snaps.

CAELIT
You think it started with that
Door? No. It began here, with
someone else.

They follow her as she moves methodically, but with quickened steps, through the rooms, eyes sweeping the windows and corners as if watched.

MINOS
Kuro never had it after all.

CAELIT
I want to know why he did.

She goes to the fireplace and moves the logs to reveal:

A lockbox. She opens it.

EXT. OLD HOUSE

Caelit exits, holding the lockbox like a child. Her steps are fast and determined, and she keeps looking behind her.

WYVERN
Where will we go?

CAELIT
Disperse. We'll reconnect once we
know who...

She glances up at the night sky. CHUCKLES and WHISPERING surround them. The moon looks red. Caelit breaks into a run and the others follow her lead.

CAELIT
We need to go, now!

RALPH
They'll just find us again.

CAELIT
Not if we hide in plain sight. For
longer this time.

EXT. PARK - EVENING

CAPTION: FIVE YEARS LATER

Ralph watches his young daughter play on a playground. She runs up to him, crying over a scraped knee.

His SHADOW is that of a two-headed snake man.

He hugs and comforts her but seizes, tears rolling down his cheeks as his pupils thin to slits. He smells her blood, and it's taking everything he has not to kill her.

The SHADOW claws at his shoes. He stomps his feet, forcing it back onto the ground. The stomping makes his kid laugh.

DAUGHTER
Daddy, are you a rabbit?

He stomps one last time, then picks her up and kisses her, relieved.

RALPH
Yes, sweetie, I am.

Caelit, wearing an oversized coat, sunglasses, a scarf, and a single earbud, watches them. Her SHADOW is that of a monstrous, multi-tailed fox.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

An electric station with just one dusty pump relegated to the gas holdouts. On the windows, a neon sign with tropical beers gleams.

Canned steel drums POUND a melody from somebody's car until the ROAR of a gas engine drowns them out.

An old Jeep, either too rebellious to drink clean, or too stupid, haphazardly pulls into a parking space.

In the driver's seat:

Caelit fingers the steering wheel, glancing around.

Dog tags hang from her keys. She keeps fingering something under the scarf, taking deep breaths.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Caelit glances at the exits and cameras as she enters.

The drowsy cashier eyes her as she combs through the jerky section. Her movements are practiced, but her posture is hesitant. She pulls up a bank account hologram with her earbud, then groans.

She stuffs a third of the bags in her coat and watches the cameras as she pays for some candy.

CASHIER

And the jerky?

Caelit freezes.

CASHIER

Honey, I've been around for a while. I know a junkie when I see one.

Caelit's fingers tremble. She bolts through the door as two scruffy men enter.

Time SLOWS. The cashier hits the alarm.

Caelit notices GUNS on both of the men. She closes her eyes as she passes them. Her breathing quickens. The doors close.

One of them pulls the gun on the cashier.

Caelit turns and bursts in, stunning the second gunman with the door and knocking him to the floor with a kick to the chest. He rolls, and she pins him down.

She kicks him in the head. Twice. Thrice. She incapacitates him with military precision.

The other man grabs the cashier. Caelit roundhouse kicks him, but he blocks it, twisting her leg. He's got a military tattoo.

He shoots the cashier, then trains his gun on Caelit and fires. One, two, three, four, five shots to her chest. She's down.

Except her body's still moving. Her SHADOW ENVELOPS HER, switching places:

A shadowy, bipedal vulpine form with razor-lined jaws the entire length of its snout, multiple tails, and withered musculature—FENRIS, twice the height of the tattooed man.

Her human form is forced into the place of the shadow, devoid of light. Fabric showers the floor, flinging jerky everywhere.

We see her from the security camera. The monster pounces on the tattooed man and the screen goes black. We see STATIC.

INT. GOVERNMENT FACILITY - NIGHT

The same video feed streams to a hologram placed in front of Caelit, now again human and seated in a government holding cell, with the fox shadow underfoot. She wears a man's jacket too big for her.

AGENT BLACKWELL, fifties, slicked-back hair, clears his throat.

BLACKWELL

Sarah Caelit. Leader of the White Death. Now this? Quite a fall from grace.

He stiffens.

BLACKWELL

Fortunately, he shot you before...

Blackwell pauses on a close-up of the beast's face and gestures to it with a modicum of acceptable disgust.

BLACKWELL

...Well, it won't be charged as murder. You're placed in a very good situation, given the circumstances.

CAELIT

...You're going to ask me to work for you.

BLACKWELL

Quick on the uptake, I like it.

Caelit stares at the hologram, fingering her collar.

CAELIT

Why would you trust me?

INT. APARTMENT - MORNING

An alarm clock goes off. Caelit's hand swipes for it, misses twice, and briefly turns into Fenris' paw to smash it--and the nightstand.

The room is like the '80s rocketed into the 23rd century. Art Deco clashes with scrappy electronics and tiny-house bachelorette pad aesthetics. Several athletic trophies are gathering dust on the shelves.

She withdraws the paw, and the extra mass melts, running off into a vapor as it hits the hardwood floor.

Her now-human hand shakes. She grabs for a bottle of pills, clearly anxiety meds, next to a new police ID with a fake name on the table.

GIGGLING and WHISPERING voices surround her and she quickly downs the pills.

As she takes them, she skims over a window-projected news feed: ANNIVERSARY OF ELYSIAN FREEDOM; MONSTER SIGHTING IN PARADISE?

She gets up and swallows hard as she opens the window.

EXT. APARTMENT - MORNING

Outside, there's a view of a solar-punk city and the coastline...

A drone buzzes past.

EXT. PLANET - MORNING

A beautiful blue, ringed marble again. The forested moon lies far off in the periphery.

Now, we see a group of islands on the planet that are a decent recreation of a tropical paradise, erring towards more beach real estate.

And on a small, twinkling patch of the most significant island...

...There's a group of police cars speeding down a road...

I/E. SHED - MORNING

A small building, ravaged by weather, looks abandoned from the outside.

Inside, though, a deal is going down. The heavily-guarded DEALER opens a case for two undercover cops:

DETECTIVE DAN LANE, forties, nearing retirement, and his partner Phelps.

Inside the briefcase are vials of clear blue fluid in syringes. The group haggles over prices.

LANE

Or you could give me all of it for free...

The two undercover cops subdue the dealer and his guards together like clockwork.

It's over quickly.

The arrests are made as the injured are carted off in large drone ambulances.

Phelps drives off in a hot rod. Lane tries to start one of the lower-class gas holdouts, an antique.

EXT. TERRARIUM HIGHWAY - MORNING

Hover-bikes and electrics pass Lane as he rumbles along a superhighway lined with glass terrariums.

There's an abundance of overpasses and roundabouts, with traffic to match. Lane HONKS, frustrated with the blockage.

He turns on the holographic police lights. It would be like the parting of the sea if it weren't for some jerks swerving around the stopped cars and gunning it through the empty spaces.

Lane swerves around them, trading a bit of paint as he makes it to the open road and into the glimmering lights of downtown...

EXT. MOONSHINE SECTOR - MORNING

It's like the Las Vegas Strip but coyer about its intentions. Beautiful, blinding, filthy.

Opulent excess gives way to the gray tones of practicality as he pulls into a nondescript police station.

INT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

Lane walks past the statues of heroes but limps up the stairs. He's totally winded by the top--a has-been with good aim.

He watches Phelps swerve into the parking lot through the windows and shakes his head. Phelps runs into the building. Taking two steps at a time up the stairs, he sees Lane in the bullpen.

PHELPS

We might get a promotion.

LANE

No more narc duty, I hope.

Lane picks up a paper on his desk marked "URGENT." He reads it and passes it to Phelps.

LANE

And going into babysitting.

Phelps looks it over. He interrogates Lane, not really mad at him.

PHELPS

What's he got against us?

Phelps just shrugs and waves it off.

LANE

Keep it low, Phelps. Don't rub the blister.

Phelps' phone BUZZES.

PHELPS

What is it now?

LANE

Give Cheryl a hello for me.

Phelps hangs up.

PHELPS

Uh, about that...

Phelps fingers his wedding band in his pocket and shakes his head.

Lane places a hand on his shoulder as he steps into a vending machine's motion detector. The cheery AI blares at him and internally cycles through cylindrical racks of items.

VENDING MACHINE

Hi! What can I get you today--

He's not in the mood.

LANE

--Coffee!

The vending machine takes a moment to process this.

VENDING MACHINE

Detective Lane... According to your medical chip, caffeinated drinks should be avoided.

It takes the canned coffee out of sight. He GROWLS in frustration and kicks the machine.

VENDING MACHINE

I'm afraid I'll have to report this to my manufacturer ARC Coalition, inc. If you believe this was in error, please appeal this via your personal--

Lane hobbles towards Captain's door, Phelps in tow.

INT. CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - DAY

Dark, imposing, nighttime to the bullpen's day. CAPTAIN MEYERS, fifties, is clearly tired of his job and the ghosts it gives him.

LANE

Is it the K9 squad? Giving us a robo-dog like you gave Lassiter before you made the machine the whole show and sent him off to pasture?

CAPTAIN

Can it, Lane. No, not a robot. I heard what you did to the vending machine.

Lane grimaces.

CAPTAIN
I've got something else picked out
for you two. As of today, you're
backup in whatever department you
are needed.

Lane and Phelps start to complain.

CAPTAIN
That's it. Go to briefing.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

Rows of impatient officers sit glaring at an empty podium,
chatting, or daydreaming.

Caelit bursts in and scrambles to the seat next to Phelps
just as Captain Meyers steps behind the podium.

CAPTAIN
Everyone, I'd like you to welcome
our newest recruit...

While he introduces Caelit, Lane and Phelps whisper to each
other.

PHELPS
Tch. Straight out of the academy.

LANE
Or high school.

Captain looks at the two of them.

CAPTAIN
...will be shadowing Detectives
Lane and Phelps.

He gives them a satisfied, but repressed smile.

INT. CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - DAY

After roll call, Lane, Phelps, and Caelit stand,
uncomfortable, in front of the Captain's desk. Caelit knows
Meyers personally, and it shows. She avoids eye contact with
him.

Lane's flustered, Phelps is incredulous, jabbing a finger at
Caelit.

PHELPS
That kid?

LANE

Our new partner is a child?

Captain stands up and tosses a tennis ball at him.

CAPTAIN

And that's the closest you'll get
to retiring with a mutt.

PHELPS

So we're supposed to babysit this
kid?

Captain points to Caelit, who's not pleased.

CAPTAIN

This "kid" is the future of law
enforcement, Phelps. Far more than
those mutts. If you can't see that,
you might as well quit now.

Lane's shuffling his feet. He turns and sees them.

LANE

Why now?

Captain picks up his desk sign.

CAPTAIN

What does that say?

LANE

I have a partner. I don't need a
third-wheel rookie. Especially not
one that smells like a dog.

CAPTAIN

In other words, she's perfect for
you two. I suggest you respect that
your new assignment was not made
out of spite. You've earned plenty
of that in other ways.

There's not much to refute. The two partners walk out ahead
of Caelit, ignoring her. She takes a deep breath and
squashes a flame forming in her palm.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Dispatcher relates a 10-97, domestic disturbance. They answer
and head to the nearby address.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

They pull up outside and idle.

PHELPS
This again? Every week...

Lane and Phelps both look at her. Phelps gets out and opens the back door, staring at her.

CAELIT
Are you serious?

LANE
You want front-line experience? Go on in there.

CAELIT
Alone?

PHELPS
...You scared?

She grumbles but goes up to the door.

LANE
Twenty bucks says she'll come running out in two seconds.

PHELPS
Make that forty.

LANE
You're on. At any rate, she's not too hard on the eyes, is she?

PHELPS
(joking)
You should look in the mirror more often, old man. You uh, still got that place up in Moonshine sector?

Lane smiles at him.

NOISES from inside the house. A domestic disturbance they've heard a thousand times.

PHELPS
Still ain't coming out...

LANE
She'll be here.

A large man is thrown backward out the window. Behind him is Caelit, with cuts down her arm, having just flipped him.

Phelps takes the forty from Lane as Caelit loads the terrified guy in the back with her.

She climbs in on the other side.

PHELPS

Hey, maybe you're not so bad, kid.
Just won some cash off you.

Phelps waves the forty bucks. Caelit grabs the cash out of his hand.

CAELIT

(sarcastic)
Thanks, Pops.

Lane laughs.

INT. DINER - DAY

Phelps and Lane sit with cheeseburgers, watching Caelit push raw hamburger meat in between the buns. Phelps watches the waitress walk past.

PHELPS

Oh, there's Darla--the nice one.
You want to send that back...?

Caelit eats it anyway. Lane just shrugs and eats his burger. Phelps pushes his plate forward.

PHELPS

Hey, kid. Where'd you learn to
throw that guy?

She flinches at the word *kid*.

CAELIT

Merc jobs off-colony.

Phelps looks closer at her hand. There's a tribal tattoo over her Brand.

PHELPS

Is that where you got that tattoo?

CAELIT

Look, I'm not here to play twenty questions, and I know you'd rather be celebrating your "dream team" heroics than babysitting me. I've been around the block. None of this is new to me.

PHELPS

(dry, joking)

Credits wouldn't transfer?

Lane spits his drink.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Ralph watches his daughter happily stomp on the welcome mat a few times. She starts to hop up the stairs to her room.

DAUGHTER

Daddy, I'm a rabbit!

He pulls her aside, smiling wearily.

RALPH

Hey, how about you be a quiet rabbit and tiptoe up the stairs, so you don't wake your mother?

She tries very hard to do this. He can't help but smile at her attempt as he unpacks her bag. He pulls his head up and catches his reflection in the mirror.

A twin-headed snake man. Basilisk. But it's only a reflection.

Ralph shivers and searches through a few drawers to find a key. Unlocking a drawer, he grabs a small case with empty vials. There's one vial of the blue stuff left.

He sighs in relief but fingers his hair.

RALPH

He's not going to come through for me. I've got to find some.

He looks in the direction of the stairs.

RALPH

For her.

Ralph injects himself with it and watches his reflection become human. He dials a phone number.

RALPH
Tower. It's as you said. It's
taking over.

He glances upstairs, trembling and biting his lip.

RALPH
I almost... You said the military's
the only stock left.

A moment passes. He curls his hand into a fist so tight it
draws blood.

RALPH
Don't have much choice, do I?

INT. CAR - DAY

Phelps and Lane eat fries and watch Caelit try to clean her
busted lip in the side mirror.

From her point of view, she sees Fenris in the mirror.

LANE
We've been on patrol for a few
months. It's killing my knees.

PHELPS
Starting to miss narc duty? Yeah, I
know what you mean. It's been fun
using the kid to do all the work,
though.

Dispatcher calls.

DISPATCHER
10-92. Bank robbery in progress.
Hostages involved.

LANE
This is a big one.

PHELPS
Probably be on the news.

EXT. BANK - DAY

They pull up near the bank. From the squad car, they see:

Ralph waves his gun toward the customers. He's wearing an
earpiece and waiting for orders. He's cold and determined, a
stark difference from his earlier demeanor.

CAELIT
 (knowing)
 Who's this guy?

Lane reads off the computer.

LANE
 Frank Minos. 28. Accountant, family
 man. You'd think he'd be in a
 better financial state than this.

She's quiet. He notices and snaps his fingers.

LANE
 You know him?

CAELIT
 Yeah. His real name's Ralph. Ralph
 Dunham. We were in the same merc
 group.

LANE
 False identity, robbing a
 bank—what's his endgame?

CAELIT
 I don't know. Maybe he's changed
 since I knew him.

Phelps shakes his head.

PHELPS
 Snipers trying to get a clean shot.

CAELIT
 Wait, he might have a bomb. Could
 be tied to whether he's—

They exit the squad car. Lane and Phelps run to the SWAT
 captain. Caelit runs to the bank.

INT. BANK - DAY

Ralph tosses a basket at a hostage. The hostage fails to
 catch it, and Ralph shoots him.

RALPH
 You know this game. Gimme your
 phones, all smart devices... think
 you can sneak anything by me,
 you're dead.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Lane and Phelps catch up to Caelit. Caelit notices the earpiece.

CAELIT
He's taking orders from someone.

LANE
Yeah, I got that. CSU's already trying a trace.

CAELIT
What are his demands?

LANE
Captain says twice the amount he's got and to walk out of here.

Ralph's gaze drifts over to the front window. He sees her and stops. He looks horrified.

Lane gets a call. His face blanches.

PHELPS
What is it?

LANE
His wife has been found dead at their residence. Snake bites all over her body. Dead from the venom. His daughter's missing.

Caelit listens. She takes a deep breath. Muffled cries reach her ears.

DAUGHTER (O.C.)
Help!

She turns towards the sound. There's a beat-up white van parked across the street. She starts towards it.

INT. BANK - DAY

Ralph sees Caelit look in the direction of his daughter and fumes. He tosses out his earpiece and steps on it.

RALPH
The game has changed. I don't care about the money.

He jabs a finger at Caelit. His pupils thin to a slit.

RALPH
I want her.

CAPTAIN (O.C.)
Not part of the deal.

RALPH
You really don't take me seriously,
do you?

Ralph shoots a hostage with as little care as squashing a bug.

RALPH
Who else has any objections to what
I want?

EXT. BANK - DAY

Captain looks at Caelit, then Phelps and Lane. Caelit swallows hard and whispers to Lane.

CAELIT
The white van. Parked across the
street.

Phelps takes the radio.

PHELPS
You want her, you get me too.

RALPH (O.C.)
Fine.

Captain leads Caelit and Phelps to the door. Ralph unlocks the door. As they enter, Ralph motions to the others.

RALPH
Over there.

He locks the door behind them but neglects to grab any guns. Phelps immediately pulls it on him.

RALPH
The gun down! Now!

Ralph points his gun at Caelit, who responds by pulling her gun and aiming at his head.

She pulls her lips back into a snarl. He glares at her, pupils thinning again. There's a silent power struggle between them.

Black liquid creeps down her fingers from the "tattoo" on the back of her hand, wrapping around the gun. Phelps notices this but keeps his gun on Ralph.

CAELIT

Put the gun down, or I will be forced to terminate you.

RALPH

Oh, kit. I would love to see you try. You told them I had a bomb, didn't you? How cute.

He shoots her in the leg. She crumples, and her head hits the floor. Phelps grabs her gun, now glowing with arcane symbols. He glances at her, backing up as his vision blackens, sending him to...

INT. THE VOIDSEA

A fluid space, black, glittering, flowing...

The room becomes a voided space, with a thunderous, swirling vortex beneath Phelps. He falls through the evaporating floor and finds himself on a black, rocky platform.

Shadows flit in and out of his vision, GIGGLING and WHISPERING. A full-bodied, strong female voice echoes around him.

FEMALE VOICE (O.S.)

My children... You... Interloper...

A bright light shines at the far end of the walkway. He stumbles toward it, nervously aiming the glowing gun at everything.

A pale QUEEN stands at the end of the "hallway", the blue liquid from the vials flowing from wounds beneath her stark white dress.

Phelps aims at her. She looks at him, not it, as her lips move to the shape of nearly indistinct words...

QUEEN

...Guardian... Rebis... Put right...

She tilts her head at him.

QUEEN

You. You have tasted before.

Phelps scratches his arm, then notices his track mark... glowing with a bluish hue.

PHELPS
What the hell is this?

QUEEN
His machinations have woven you three together.

PHELPS
Whose?

QUEEN
The Shadowed Man. It will not make sense to you now. Go. Return my wayward child to me. Reclaim the time he stole...

The Queen leans forward, revealing multi-faceted pupils.

QUEEN
...and fear not my Kit.

Phelps recoils... into reality.

INT. BANK - DAY

He finds himself standing in front of Caelit.

RALPH
So, I've got a bomb, huh? Well, if one more of you tries to be a hero, none of you get to go home to your families.

He thrusts a hand under his jacket and pretends to arm an explosive. The hostages struggle.

RALPH
(angry)
We were feared, you know? Our names meant something. We could eat and live comfortably. Her Tears sustained us. Now? Just look at yourself, One.

Caelit grimaces.

RALPH
I tried to carve out a new life, but I guess the only phantom chasing us... was you.
(MORE)

RALPH (CONT'D)
 You angered her and cut us off, and
 now--

His voice breaks.

RALPH
 --I want to look at my daughter
 without smelling her blood!

EXT. BANK - DAY

Lane runs with a couple of officers towards the van. He breaks the window and unlocks the doors.

Heavy gusts of wind force them to the ground. Wyvern with an earpiece breathes fire over the cop cars. Everyone dives for cover. Bullets ricochet off the monster's scales.

Wyvern grabs the van and carries it away.

INT. BANK - DAY

Everyone except Ralph freezes as Wyvern ROARS outside.

PHELPS
 This can't be real. This isn't--

CAELIT
 It's real.

EXT. SNIPERS NEST - DAY

The SNIPER, fifties, clips Wyvern's wing as it passes. He reloads, aiming at Ralph. The sniper's rifle has the same arcane sigil as Caelit's.

SNIPER
 This better be worth the money.
 We're about to have a real mess on
 our hands.

BLACKWELL (O.C.)
 It will be.

INT. BANK - DAY

Ralph grabs Caelit and pulls her toward the exit.

RALPH

Move!

The Sniper shoots Ralph in the head.

The void liquid runs from his chest and expands over his body, hardening into scales. Basilisk.

Tongues flick out of Basilisk's twin heads, tasting the air. The mouths draw in breath. Phelps freezes.

Caelit covers her nose as poison gas pours out of Basilisk's two mouths. She grabs Phelps' belt and shoves him out of the way, hard enough to slam him against the back wall.

CAELIT

Cover your nose and get low to the ground! Do it now!

Most of the hostages fumble to cover their mouths. Caelit coughs and lies on the ground as the hot gas fills the room. Basilisk's second head whips around.

A neck wraps around her arm and yanks her up into a choking cloud of poisonous dust.

BASILISK

Three years. You have changed, Fen.

His other neck slips around her throat. A fireball fully materializes in her palm. She presses it against the neck, but his scales prevent any damage.

CAELIT

(coughing)

-You gonna take the easy way out?
Should've said it would go off if
you died first!

She chokes. Bruised and bloodied, Phelps gets to his feet like a newborn goat and aims. Caelit closes her eyes.

A muzzle flash, a GUNSHOT. The grip on her arm and neck tightens, then lies slack.

Her back hits the marble floor hard. Phelps keeps shooting Basilisk. Caelit's gun is the only thing doing damage to him.

PHELPS

What the hell... are you?

Phelps fumbles his shirt collar over his mouth and nose.

BASILISK

I suppose we haven't been properly introduced. You may know me as Basilisk, worm.

A head turns towards a hostage and plucks them up from the floor, swallowing the head whole before the rest of the body.

The hostages run for the front door, but most succumb to the poison. Caelit distracts Basilisk as Phelps tries to get them out.

CAELIT

Hey, Ralph! Bet no one would call a god that sissy name!

Basilisk's snake irises narrow at her from a side-eye. He HISSES and bites her. Caelit goes limp in the head's grip, foam dripping from her mouth. Phelps is pissed.

He gets a shot in on Basilisk's eye and rescues Caelit, dragging her out of the bank. The EMTs load her into an ambulance. Phelps reenters.

PHELPS

Give up. You're surrounded, you scaly freak! You kill a cop, you sign your death warrant!

Basilisk toys with Phelps, countering his shots with smacks that send him sliding across the floor. Phelps can barely stand.

Basilisk finally picks him up and begins to constrict him.

BASILISK

This one is dangerous.

He breaks the gun and Phelps' armor with it. Phelps slips to the floor, wracked with pain.

The monster stands over Phelps, slit-eyes fixated. Basilisk keeps a head staring in the direction of the hostages.

BASILISK

What does she see in a weakling like you...?

Phelps YELLS as he shoots Basilisk over and over. It doesn't help.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Captain receives a video call. In the background, chaos as Wyvern melts military robots.

CAPTAIN

Great. Mech boys aren't coming.
They've got their own problem.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Lane heads a convoy of squad cars, navigating the carnage left in Wyvern's path. As he's driving, he rewinds the video on the heads-up display and watches the military base attack again.

LANE

It wasn't holding the van when it
attacked the base.

They keep driving, searching for the van.

INT. AMBULANCE - DAY

The EMTs strip Caelit of her gear. She keeps looking at Phelps as she seizes. The EMTs get her shirt open and recoil at the sigil as void liquid spurts from it.

She claws at them as the liquid covers her head.

Her body shifts in the way Basilisk's did. She grimaces as she morphs into Fenris, then draws a portal, leaping into it.

INT. BANK - DAY

Basilisk constricts Phelps. Fenris HOWLS and slams into Basilisk, sending them into the counter. Phelps hits the floor.

BASILISK

Finally, a challenge!

Fenris rips into Basilisk as he tries to fight her off. Winded, Phelps tries to get up. Basilisk sweeps him off his feet.

FENRIS

You're killing all these people for
what? To protect your daughter from
yourself? They're innocent!

BASILISK

It's taking over, Fen. You wouldn't understand. Someone knows what we are, and they're hunting us down, making us crazy. Do you hear it at night? The incessant whispers?

Fenris flinches. Basilisk pins her.

BASILISK

I need her to be safe! You know what they would do to her.

Fenris uses the same technique as earlier to flip and pin Basilisk down, then finishes off a head. Basilisk feeds off a corpse, regenerating his second head.

It's a bloody fight between the Beasts. Phelps struggles to his feet.

BASILISK

Of course, you were always her favorite.

FENRIS

I got just as much a part as you!

BASILISK

The First to receive her mark. The First to regain some semblance of normalcy. What do you think we got?!

Enraged, he bites her repeatedly. She stands up to the barrage.

BASILISK

I look human, sure... but I can't live like this anymore.

FENRIS

You think I want to?

Fenris grabs a fire extinguisher and tosses it to Phelps, who unloads it on Basilisk, choking him out.

I/E. BANK - DAY

While Basilisk is distracted, Fenris grabs the last two hostages and lays them on the ground in front of the police.

Phelps and the remaining police officers fire at Basilisk. Fenris redirects the hail of bullets past her body with a portal.

Weakened by the poison, Fenris grabs a fallen gun and lifts it to Basilisk's middle stump. Basilisk bites her arm, trying to pull her down. It almost works. She can't aim straight.

Void liquid from her chest wraps around the gun, burning it with arcane symbols. Phelps places a hand around hers, steadying it. She shoots.

Basilisk's body crystallizes instantly, from his sigil outward. Then, it falls apart, spilling into the Void liquid and evaporating on the floor.

Tears slip down Fenris' cheeks.

FENRIS
(low)
I'm sorry, Ralph.

EXT. BANK - EVENING

Phelps and two other cops help Fenris to a waiting stretcher. Twenty body bags are wheeled out.

Phelps looks at the gun, disturbed. The symbols and glow persist, including the mark on his arm. Terrified EMTs administer tranquilizers to Fenris.

Black government vans pull up, followed by news vans and helicopters. Drones buzz them for footage.

CAPTAIN
Change of plans. Take her out the
back.

The three officers groan and obey.

PHELPS
So much for the tranquilizers.

Fenris squints at him.

FENRIS
I owe you a drink, don't I?

PHELPS
Oh, you owe me more than that, kid.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Lane and the others comb through the most damaged section of the road and underbrush. Someone catches sight of the van stuck in a ditch.

OFFICER #1

It's here! The plates match.

Lane rushes to open the van's doors. The girl lies MOANING, with bruises and a broken leg.

LANE

She's alive! She's alive.

I/E. VAN - NIGHT

Phelps and the two officers load and squeeze in beside Fenris. Uncomfortable, Fenris avoids their stares. She leans against the wall and sniffs. Phelps' bandages are soaked through with blood.

They reach a tunnel and switch vans.

Fenris presses the palm of her marked hand against Phelps' chest. The two officers raise their tasers at her. Void liquid seeps down Fenris' arm into Phelps' chest, healing him. He resists.

PHELPS

You-what did you do?

FENRIS

Healed...

She passes out. Phelps checks his wounds. They're gone. He's conflicted. They all are.

Fenris begins to shrink, the matter dripping off and boiling as it hits the floor. Revealing: Caelit, human.

INT. SAFE HOUSE - NIGHT

Caelit lays cuffed on a bedroll in restless sleep. Images of Fenris' teeth and snarling features, then SCREAMS, then the WHISPERING forms inside the VOIDSEA, plague her nightmares.

An empty can rattles outside, startling her awake. She sneaks to the front of the house. Both officers are passed out on the tile, drugged. She looks for the handcuff key but doesn't find it on them.

A shadow passes by the front window. She drops to the floor. The front door is guarded by a man with a marked gun. She creeps to the back door. Another one. A helicopter WHIRS above them.

CAELIT

They know me.

She checks every window until she finds one that isn't guarded, then tries to slip out. The alarm triggers.

The armed men chase her. Caelit runs, getting shot multiple times. She seizes, falling to the ground. Fire erupts around her, quickly billowing into large fields of flame.

She becomes Fenris. The handcuffs melt off her wrists as she runs.

INT. REST STOP - NIGHT

Caelit washes blood off herself in the grungy bathroom. She sees Fenris in the mirror, wincing.

She breaks the mirror, then grabs a piece and places it against her wrist.

CAELIT

Just end it. It would be so easy.

She tries and fails to imprint her sigil on the glass.

INT. GOVERNMENT FACILITY - NIGHT

An executive office draped in shadow. Blackwell leans on a large oak desk, watching a DOCTOR, forties, enter.

DOCTOR

The transfer was successful.

BLACKWELL

Excellent. Mind wipe the girl.

DOCTOR

Are you sure? It could--

Blackwell nods and waves her off, stepping behind his desk. He unlocks a drawer and pulls out a file with the headline:

KURO MINING OPERATION.

He smiles.

EXT. POLICE STATION - MORNING

The parking lot. Phelps' eyes pass the rows of cars. He's troubled as he speaks to Lane on the phone.

PHELPS

It sounds nuts even seeing the newscasts. Even being there.

He sighs heavily.

PHELPS

Our rookie's a monster...

LANE

Afraid we need one. World's gone to hell.

He passes their squad car absently and stops a meter past it. He double-checks his vision. Inside the car, wrapped in a singed blanket...

Caelit's crumpled up inside.

PHELPS

H-hold on. I'll meet you inside. What the...

He raps on the window until she stirs and tries to shield her eyes from the light. She jolts awake when she sees him.

PHELPS

Come on, kid. Up! Briefing room.

INT. BRIEFING ROOM - DAY

As they enter, everyone looks at Caelit as though she were a predator. The three sit down in their respective places.

The Captain enters and clears his throat, dissipating the whispers.

CAPTAIN

Some of us may be divided on how to handle the situation that arose two days ago. What we shouldn't be divided on is that one of us was targeted. I don't care how you feel about the issue one way or another. We will protect our own.

INT. BULLPEN - DAY

Caelit's getting geared up. Lane's watching Phelps handle her.

PHELPS

Are we going to talk about this?

CAELIT

No.

PHELPS

You're sleeping out of the shop. The guys will roast you for this forever. Even if they do forget the other thing.

CAELIT

Compared to what I left, it's a paradise.

PHELPS

You want to bet?

CAELIT

Oh, come on! I don't have any place to go. After the media had a field day with my face plastered all over the news, doxxers leaking my address, drive-by hecklers, drones spying on me, all the creeps and weirdos digging up my socials to send me disgusting messages, and the arsonists that throw Molotovs into my apartment—

She's livid. If it wasn't apparent in her expression and tone before, it is now.

CAELIT

—You think there's some little corner out there where they don't recognize—

PHELPS

You were in a safe house! With two other officers—

CAELIT

—I'm sorry, you didn't notice the government agents that swarmed the place after you left? Yeah. I had to shake them on foot.

He's at a loss.

CAELIT

I get two steps into my apartment
for my go-bag, and that's when some
punks decide to throw firebombs.

Phelps loses his temper.

PHELPS

I don't even know if I can trust
you. Do you really think I care
where you lay your head?

CAELIT

Ditto.

They both stew for a moment.

CAELIT

I don't blame you for wanting a
transfer. I'll clean my stuff out
of the shop.

PHELPS

That's not the point! You could
get-

CAELIT

What could I get, Phelps? Hurt?
Groped? Pranked? Ostracized? Would
any of that be worse than what
happened?

Lane almost steps in.

CAELIT

Two days ago, the entire world got
to see my dirty laundry, and they
haven't given me so much as a
moment's rest or a chance to
explain myself. Everywhere I go,
they see a monster!

Her pupils thin to a slit for a second. She looks at her
reflection in the bullpen's glass. Fenris.

CAELIT

And they're right.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

Blackwell sits across from Captain, hands folded, exuding confidence. Despite his fury, Captain restricts his anger to a biting, militant tone.

CAPTAIN

Who shot that Beast, and what the hell's your endgame?

Blackwell looks him dead in the eyes.

BLACKWELL

Being a former detective yourself, you understand how the system's broken.

CAPTAIN

You think I'm going to let you play with my city?

BLACKWELL

Captain... there are many things beyond your grasp. Did I not also give you a mewling siren? To rid a house of pests, you must have bait. Would you rather let the infested structure stand as it is?

He stands to leave.

BLACKWELL

Take good care of my little Beast and you may get another chance.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Moldy walls, old apartment building.

Caelit exits the elevator on the top floor. She drags a heavy duffel bag behind her.

She stands in front of a room and pauses. She looks at the peephole, lets the bag drop, and knocks on the door.

No answer. The shower is running. She swallows her pride and knocks again.

CAELIT

Darn it, Cole. This isn't how I pictured this day going.

From the other side of the door, she can hear the water switch off. Caelit knocks again, wincing at every wet slap before the door opens.

A towel-wearing, shivering Phelps peers through the chain lock. He looks down, scoffs, and runs his hand through his wet hair.

PHELPS
You couldn't have picked a better time?

CAELIT
Lane wasn't home.

His eyes flick to her bag.

PHELPS
No.

Her fist trembles, knuckles showing white. She breathes out and unclenches it, hiding a snuffle as she dips her head.

CAELIT
Figured you'd say that. Forget I was here. Goodnight.

He shuts the door. She turns and grabs her bag, dragging it to the elevator. Phelps opens the door again.

PHELPS
Hey.

He scratches his head. She can't look at him.

PHELPS
(knowing)
You really don't have a place to stay?

She turns to half-face him.

PHELPS
Promise you won't eat my couch.

She smiles just a bit.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Phelps slams the door behind her. Caelit stiffens and breathes through gritted teeth, slowly turning back toward him.

PHELPS
Lane may be drinking away his
problems, but mine is standing
right in front of me.

Caelit's countenance drops.

PHELPS
Mind telling me what the hell
happened back there?

CAELIT
It's a long story--

Phelps circles around her and leans closer to her face, voice
calm, but frustrated.

PHELPS
--It's a long night, and if you
don't want to spend it on my
balcony, I suggest you start
telling me what I need to know to
trust you going forward.

Caelit sets down her bag and looks out his window, putting
distance between them.

CAELIT
Yeah, alright. That's fair. There
were nine of us.

He walks her out to the balcony.

EXT. BALCONY - NIGHT

Her eyes search the skies.

PHELPS
Are you looking for drones? We've
got a EMP net.

She chuckles.

CAELIT
So that's why your cell service is
so bad.

He's silent.

CAELIT
Basilisk was number Eight.

She watches the night sky, staring at the forested moon.

PHELPS
And you were One.

CAELIT
Yeah. The least likely to go crazy.
But a hundred years of mercenary
jobs has a way of making you numb.
None of us took to peacetime.

Phelps softens, beginning to understand. He WHISTLES and leans against the railing next to her.

PHELPS
A hundred years, huh? Guess I can't
call you "kid" anymore.

She sighs, eyes searching the horizon for a response. She finds none.

PHELPS
Alright. That's enough for now.
Who's going to strike next, and
what's their plan?

CAELIT
I don't know. But if it involves
Wyvern, it involves them all.

Phelps pulls out a list with their identities and code names.

CAELIT
Captain gave you that?

PHELPS
First, who is after you? Did you
get a good look at them?

CAELIT
Not government. But they were
organized like a militia. And they
had Branded weapons.

PHELPS
And you need a Beast to brand them.

She swallows hard.

CAELIT
Or the Queen.

A drone buzzes them. Caelit runs inside, followed by Phelps.

CAELIT

I thought you said there was an EMP net!

PHELPS

There is.

He runs to a switch on the wall and throws it. Nothing. He does so again and again.

PHELPS

Someone's cut the power.

They crouch low and look out the windows. Militants with Branded guns have surrounded the apartment.

Caelit hears several moving.

CAELIT

They're coming up the fire escape.

Phelps quickly leads her to the front door, where there's a militant armed with a Branded gun. Phelps and Caelit crouch behind the door.

Caelit slowly opens the door, sneaks up behind the man, and twists his neck, breaking it. Phelps GROWLS, frustrated, but leads her down the stairs.

PHELPS

What happened to "I don't kill"?

CAELIT

"Innocents." This is war.

Several militants notice and shoot at them. Phelps stays between Caelit and the wall as they descend.

PHELPS

How does it work? What are you, really?

A sad smile pulls on the edge of her lips.

CAELIT

This vessel was human.

Phelps takes a step back.

PHELPS

"Vessel"? You're possessed?

In a moment, time slows and the room shifts to:

VOIDSEA.

The marks on Caelit glow and twist, flowing off her and reforming into a ghost:

A female bipedal creature with the muzzle of a goat, striking eyes, ears of a Fennic fox, and elegant, twisting horns. She wears a billowing sash and piecemeal, interlocking marked armor. Her clothing is ornamented.

Phelps takes a few steps back and un-holsters his gun, aiming at her head.

CREATURE

I am Haruki, the last member of a race not so different than yours. I now share this pure body with the leader of the White Death—the Beasts we encountered. This body will not degrade as theirs, so they seek me.

Phelps doesn't lower the gun.

PHELPS

Why the secrecy?

HARUKI (CREATURE)

This government is not aware of my race's former existence, and I would not rush to correct them.

She holds a hand out. He hesitates.

PHELPS

So the government thinks you're playing for their side.

HARUKI

Yes. These weapons they possess and intend to control... I am one responsible for their creation... and for their destruction.

She grasps Phelps' arm and examines the track mark.

HARUKI

You ingested Resonance at one point. So you hear her words.

He tries to pull away.

HARUKI

Do not be alarmed. I want to impart
to you my seal.

Her ear twitches, and she places her palm on his mark. The skin begins to sear. He jerks away, but her grip holds him still. He bites his sleeve in agony, MOANING.

A moment passes and she releases him. He grabs his raw, blistered skin, gritting his teeth. His Brand is unique, derivative of hers, though his shadow has not changed.

PHELPS

(pained)

Will I... become a monster...?

Haruki yawns.

HARUKI

I tire. Caelit will remember
nothing of this.

The Voidsea dissipates, leaving:

Haruki seals her form back inside the marks, diving into Caelit once again. Caelit doubles over, COUGHING. Phelps, still shaken, stumbles backward.

CAELIT

Are you hurt? We have to go.

Caelit recovers and notices the Brand.

CAELIT

Did... did I Brand you?

Phelps nods and GRUNTS. She grabs his uninjured hand and leads him to another balcony.

EXT. BALCONY

Phelps backs away. The doors behind them swing open. Militia agents fan out.

PHELPS

Sarah!

CAELIT

Do you trust me?

PHELPS

Do I have a choice?

She climbs onto the railing and helps him up. A combat drone rises in front of them, laser sights shining on their foreheads.

CAELIT

Now!

They jump. Her marks spurt Void liquid that envelops the two of them and then reforms into one Beast—a fox-like dragon—that blows out the windows as it melds into the shadows.

The drone fires on it but hits only glass and concrete.

FENRIS

We cannot maintain this form long!

His Brand glows, resonating with hers.

The Shadow slips into the building and reforms into Fenris, holding Phelps in its chest cavity like a mechanical suit. Phelps struggles but can't get out.

His movements become hers.

FENRIS

Interesting...

PHELPS

What--

He stumbles, confused. She grimaces.

FENRIS

(dryly)

This will be fun. You'll have to control us, then. Get us to the quickest exfil.

PHELPS

Are you crazy? I can't pilot this thing!

Fenris snarls as she watches Phelps struggle to pilot her body. The militia get several good shots on them.

FENRIS

You can't just stand here!

PHELPS

It's not like there's a manual for this thing!

Lane calls Phelps, projecting a screen in front of Fenris' chest.

LANE (O.C.)
Phelps? Where are you?

PHELPS
Long story. We're leaving my apartment—the government has us pinned down.

The sound of an engine on Lane's end causes Phelps to briefly smile.

LANE (O.C.)
Always looking for me to bail you out, huh?

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

A small land-to-sky vehicle (local star-ship) tears past the cliff side. Lane's at the wheel, smiling through a cigar.

LANE
You're in a mech?

PHELPS (O.C.)
Something like that!

GUNFIRE on the other end. The militants breach the doors and fire escape, surrounding Fenris.

FENRIS
Alright. Breathe. You're stronger than them.

PHELPS
You draw a circle and come out the other end? How does it know where to go?

The militants close in.

FENRIS
You feel it.

Fenris opens a portal and looks outside. They jump through.

EXT. APARTMENT COMPLEX

They end up outside. Midair.

Fenris free-falls.

PHELPS
Another portal?

Fenris grits her teeth.

FENRIS
That would be helpful--

Fenris draws another portal and ends up thirty feet from the ground--and slams into the asphalt.

FENRIS
--in a minute.

PHELPS
You didn't tell me it was short-range.

FENRIS
I thought it was apparent.

Lane hovers his ship near them and helps Fenris in, staring at Phelps.

LANE
Should I be worried about this?

PHELPS
Yes.

FENRIS
No.

Lane closes the cockpit and takes off. Fenris melts, separating the two. Caelit struggles to her feet. Phelps can barely stand on his. He pinches the bridge of his nose.

PHELPS
You didn't tell me about the hangovers.

Caelit does the same, very annoyed.

CAELIT
I don't get them... much anymore.

They struggle to strap themselves in as Lane maneuvers out of sight of the pursuers.

LANE
I've got a place up in New Carol. Hasn't seen use in some time. We should be able to lay low there until this blows over.

CAELIT

If...

Phelps looks over his Brand. Caelit sighs, looking away.

CAELIT

I've never merged with anyone. I don't know why it happened now.

PHELPS

Does the name "Haruki" mean anything to you?

Caelit looks at him and shakes her head.

PHELPS

Have you ever seen someone that looked kinda like a goat-fox person, like in your dreams?

CAELIT

Sometimes, yeah. Just flashes of a face. Why?

Phelps looks at his Brand.

PHELPS

No reason.

I/E. BUNKER - NIGHT

A prepper's doomsday bunker, under a cabin.

Phelps enters, looks around, and WHISTLES. Caelit forms a flame on her palm, glancing around, and lights up in subdued admiration.

CAELIT

I may have misjudged you.

Lane opens up a well-stocked pantry.

LANE

Good an apology as any.

Phelps places his list of White Death members on a large table surrounded by half-rotted stools. Basilisk/Eight is crossed out, Caelit/One is circled.

LANE

Alright, kid. You wanna fill me in?

Caelit flinches and pulls up a chair.

CAELIT

It was a hundred years ago. We were
a merc unit on a high-profile
escort job. Then we found... it.

Phelps REMEMBERS the ship he saw during his drug trip.

PHELPS

"It"?

CAELIT

A Door. A hole in that black,
starry void. It led to a place that
haunts our nightmares. We were not
human when we returned.

LANE

So what's our next target?

Caelit points to number Five...

INT. CULTIST MANSION - NIGHT

TALIA VAUGHN, late twenties, an undercover investigative
journalist, smiles over a congregation. Said congregation
consists of two dozen ordinary folk wearing masks made in the
images of Beasts.

Talia has a white wolf's tail emerging from the back of her
dress and wears a mask.

Ralph's daughter, dressed in a multi-eyed beast mask and
robes, brings a large bowl and sets it in front of her. Talia
watches the child depart silently in concern.

Talia looks at a hooded man with a draconic mask off to the
side, out of the crowd's view. He nods to her.

TALIA

The Void is the darkness when we
close our eyes. The Singularity is
the moment the light touches our
waking. The two are one and
stretched between infinity. We are
only sojourners on a bountiful
planet, walking within the tracks
of the Ancients.

She pulls out a blue vial and empties it into the bowl of
water.

TALIA

And now, let us partake of their strength.

She glances sideways at a small militia of armed men watching her from the top of the staircase.

INT. BUNKER - NIGHT

While the others are sleeping, Lane receives a typed message from an anonymous contact.

FOLEY (V.O.)

There was one mention of your sister after the incident. It was in connection to "the Children of the Singularity." Do not contact me again. Their--

The call drops, replaced by static and small audio clips of people speaking words, cut and pasted into:

THE COLLECTIVE

Their-- eyes-- are-- on-- us--

Symbols appear on the wall above him, scrawled out by what looks like a clawed hand. The Voidsea WHISPERS and GIGGLING echo in the room and fade out.

Shaken, Lane opens the door a crack and looks in Caelit's direction. Haruki stands above Caelit, head tilted upward, muttering. Then she looks at him.

He shuts the door and locks it, breathing heavily.

EXT. AIRPORT - CONTINUOUS

Foley examines his phone. The screen has jumbled letters and glitched out text. He pockets it, shaking his head, and disappears among the pedestrians. Blackwell and another agent watch him from their car.

INT. DINGY FLAT - NIGHT

Talia, in less revealing clothes, sits at a desk with coffee and a multi-monitor laptop.

Her face is uncovered now, and she looks like she could be Caelit's younger identical twin.

She absently brushes the wolf tail sprouting from her waistband.

She's talking with her handler--really Blackwell, but with a disguised voice and appearance.

TALIA

No, no. Not an exposé. An investigation. You said it would be an indiscreet position, not the bond-mistress of the priest!

BLACKWELL

I see. Well, your contact got you in there. Your... features kept you there. I own you.

TALIA

Only until I've finished my--

BLACKWELL

May I remind you... I giveth, and I can taketh away.

He gestures to her tail. She quickly brushes it to the side.

BLACKWELL

Is it true you never reveal your sources? Or is that just one of your little flatteries?

TALIA

I don't reveal my sources.

BLACKWELL

Just remember who picked you up after they dropped you.

He cuts the feed.

Talia feels for faint bullet scars on her chest. She grimaces and walks to a mirror, seeing her reflection as a bipedal wolf with white fur and markings. Like Fenris, its jaw runs the length of its snout.

She looks at the Brand surrounded by differently tanned skin on the side of her neck over a red, swollen bump.

TALIA

It would be nice to forget.

FADE OUT.