

SHADOWS DOMAIN

Written by

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EXT. DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

HUGH (48) walks down an alley. He presses his head with both hands, because of a really bad headache. It hurts so much that he is forced to kneel down.

ZOOM OUT to show he is surrounded by five men. One of them (MISTER X) comes closer to Hugh, who is still down on his knees. Mister X leans forward to Hugh, in a disdainful way.

MISTER X
Lost something, friend?

Hugh faces the man. A strong RINGING pierces his left ear. Hugh brings a hand to this ear, making faces of pain.

MAN 2
By the looks of it, he lost his nerves.

MISTER X
You can't lose something you never had.

Mister X kicks Hugh's stomach harshly. Hugh, now lying on the floor, squirms in pain.

MISTER X (CONT'D)
Time to man you up, pal...

Mister X kicks Hugh in the back. On the floor and helpless, Hugh brings both hands to his head again. The pain in his head is unbearable.

Mister X turns to the other four.

MISTER X (CONT'D)
Come on. Are you leaving all the fun to me?

The other four open sardonic smiles and come closer to Hugh as well.

The five men beat the hell out of Hugh, brutally.

MISTER X (CONT'D)
Traacherous bastard!

Some shadows appear on the walls nearby.

A pool of blood surrounds Hugh and gets bigger.

MAN 2
Now what?

MISTER X
Now, he bleeds to death.

The five aggressors adjust their ties and go away.

INT. HUGH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hugh comes home and tumbles on the couch. He stands up with great effort and, even seriously injured, turns the TV on, which shows the newscast.

Hugh goes to the bathroom.

The TV is shown from a small distance.

ANCHORMAN

We still don't know precisely how advanced this ambitious project is, and if what we saw in the past few weeks is part of it or any other kind of natural phenomena. It is speculated that...

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hugh grabs a first aid kit and tries to patch his wounds and bruises as best as he can. He coughs up blood on the sink.

The migraines return. With shaky hands, he grabs a medicine bottle, opens it and ingests a fistful of pills.

Hugh looks in the mirror and stares at his hematomas-covered face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hugh watches the TV.

ANCHORMAN

Protest rallies take place all around the world about what might as well be an attempt of domination, something that many analysts classify as simple movie-like paranoia, created to compensate for empty lives...

He grabs the remote and turns the TV off.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - DAY

Hugh enters the police precinct.

Some hatred-loaded eyes turn to him.

By his desk, Hugh empties his drawer and puts his belongings into a cardboard box.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hugh opens his private locker and empties it.

A policeman comes to him.

POLICEMAN 1
Better late than never.

HUGH
Funny, but I agree with you.

Other cops come closer to Hugh, with unfriendly faces.

POLICEMAN 1
Are you alright?

HUGH
I've been better.

POLICEMAN 1
I can see that.

Hugh organizes his things, not paying attention to Policeman 1.

POLICEMAN 1 (CONT'D)
This place smells like shit all of a sudden.

HUGH
Yep, since you came. But it's alright, no deodorant can hide the reek of a crook bastard, I guess.

Policeman 1 slams Hugh's locker shut, almost hitting Hugh's hand in the process, also producing a very loud echo.

POLICEMAN 1
You've already lost everything. Do you want to lose your tongue as well?

The other cops approach Hugh in a threatening manner.

HUGH
Why do you want my tongue for?
Can't you reach your ass with yours?

Policeman 1 grabs Hugh's neck furiously with both hands, but Hugh counterattacks and pushes Policeman 1, who falls on the floor.

The other cops advance to Hugh, who try to push them back.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ
Whoa! What the heck is going on
here?

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ (52) stands in the middle of the men, to
break the fight.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ (CONT'D)
This is a precinct, not a goddamn
ring!

The cops' faces are still red in anger. Hugh face them with
furious eyes.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ (CONT'D)
If you want to make a mess, just go
to the House of Representatives!

Slowly, the policemen calm themselves down and go about their
businesses.

The lieutenant turns to Hugh.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ (CONT'D)
In my office. Now!

Hugh follows the lieutenant outside the locker room.

On Hugh's locker door, it's possible to see the plate with
his name on it, Hugh Montagnes.

INT. LIEUTENANT'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Hugh and Gomez enter the office.

People around stare at them.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ
Close the door.

Hugh does as told.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ (CONT'D)
What the heck happened to you? Have
you been hit by a train or
something?

HUGH
New girlfriend. I must have said
something wrong.

Gomez looks at him with eyes of reproach.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ
Why didn't you leave town, like I
said?

HUGH

I won't run away. Besides, all my favorite pole dancers are in this city.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ

That will be the day. You're too decent for it.

The lieutenant walks to a file cabinet. A coffee pot rests on top of it.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ (CONT'D)

Coffee?

HUGH

No, thanks. I've already had four cups on the way here.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ

Yes, you do resemble a walking enema.

Gomez fills a paper cup with coffee. He sips from it.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ (CONT'D)

Why don't you take a seat?

HUGH

Because I know I'm not gonna like what I'm about to hear.

Gomez sips a little more from the cup.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ

Too bad they don't teach intelligence on the police academy.

HUGH

If they did, neither one of us would be here.

Gomez smiles mildly, but gets dead serious again.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ

Coming in here was a big mistake, man! I told you I'd send your things!

HUGH

As I don't have any friends in here, I just thought I could annoy everybody with my presence.

Gomez faces him with eyes of disappointment.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ

No friends at all? Are you sure?

HUGH

I thought I had one.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ

You chose to stick your hand into the snake pit! I tried to warn you, but you just don't listen! Damn it, I had no choice!

HUGH

No, you did have a choice and you made it! I guess risking your neck to help a friend is a thing of the past, right?

Gomez takes a deep breath. He sips a little more coffee and puts the paper cup on his desk.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ

I'm too old to start a new career. Besides, you also had a choice. And you made the wrong one.

HUGH

I can't change what I am.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ

I thought I was like that, too. When you get to my age, especially in this business, surviving until retirement becomes a priority, even better with a full pension.

He takes a deep breath again.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ (CONT'D)

I worked too hard, and I risked too much to end my career with a dishonorable discharge. That's not how I want to be regarded. I also don't want to get beaten to death in some dirty alley.

HUGH

I risked my life, too. And for much more than just a resume.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ

Does Claudia agree with you?

HUGH

You'll have to ask her. It's been a year since she kicked me out.

LIEUTENANT GOMEZ

My point exactly! At least, I still have a family waiting for me at home.

HUGH
Yes, what you lost was something
else.

Hugh turns his back on Gomez and walks out of the office.

Gomez looks at him, anguished.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - CONTINUOUS

Hugh grabs his cardboard box and leaves the precinct.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

ALICIA (19) bikes around the college campus.

She comes to the door of the sorority building she lives in.
Alicia ditches the bike at the entrance and goes in.

INT. SORORITY BUILDING - DAY

Alicia runs upstairs. She passes by two other girls, which do
not care for her.

INT. ALICIA'S DORM - CONTINUOUS

She enters her dorm and opens the lid of her laptop. The
screen illuminates her face.

The laptop screen is shown. Alicia starts a video-conference.
The anguished face of a Japanese-American young man appears
on the laptop screen.

ALICIA
Okay, Sushi, let's have it. I came
in a real big rush because of you.

SUSHI (17) does not look at the webcam on his side of the
call. He seems distracted.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Hey! Are you with me?

Finally, Sushi looks at the webcam on his side.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
I got your message. What's so
important?

She grins.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Come on. Curiosity is killing me.

SUSHI

It... It was nothing, really.

The young man smiles nervously.

Alicia lifts an eyebrow.

ALICIA

What do you mean, nothing?

Sushi stares at the webcam, with frightened eyes.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Come on, I left my chemistry class
in the middle. What is it?

SUSHI

W-where are you?

ALICIA

At the Bahamas, surfing. I always
carry my laptop when I surf.

Sushi does not seem amused by that remark. He looks at all
sides, as if expecting to be attacked at any moment.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

I'm in the dorm, where else?

SUSHI

Alicia, you need to go...

ALICIA

What?

Sushi acts as if about to cry.

SUSHI

Look, everything I said in that
message is pure fake. Forget about
it! Just... erase it!

Alicia frowns in confusion and nod negatively.

SUSHI (CONT'D)

I gotta go...

ALICIA

Wait...!

He disconnects on his side.

Alicia puffs.

ALICIA (THINKING ALOUD) (CONT'D)

Freaking unbelievable.

She stares at the laptop screen.

ALICIA (THINKING ALOUD) (CONT'D)
I'm bored!

INT. SORORITY BUILDING MAIN LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

A group of armed men, composed by policemen wearing helmets and bulletproof vests, breaks into the sorority building, loudly and violently bringing the door down.

INT. ALICIA'S DORM - CONTINUOUS

Alicia paralyzes.

INT. SORORITY BUILDING LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Three girls sitting on a couch scream in fear.

POLICEMAN 1
Go to your rooms! NOW!

The young ladies run to their dorms, screaming and frightened.

Another girl enters the lobby, coming from the break room. A cop stops her, pointing a rifle to her face.

POLICEMAN 2
Alicia Silver!

GIRL 1
It's... It's not me.

POLICEMAN 2
I know, damn it! I asked where she is!

GIRL 1
R-room forty-two.

POLICEMAN 2
Get out of here!

The crying youngster staggers upstairs.

The armed group also goes upstairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

They find the room number 42 and take positions, one cop at each side of the door and another one in the middle of them, therefore right in front of the door. One of the cops on the side signals to the one in the middle, and he brings the door down with violence.

INT. ALICIA'S DORM - CONTINUOUS

A girl working a laptop jumps to her feet screaming, scared to death.

The cops point rifles to the girl's head.

POLICEMAN 1
You're coming with us!

GIRL 3
W... What did I do?

Another cop comes closer to them.

POLICEMAN 2 (WHISPERING)
That's not her.

POLICEMAN 1
Who are you?

GIRL 3
Anna.

POLICEMAN 1
Isn't this the dorm of Alicia
Silver?

ANNA
Y-yes, she called me here to play a
Role Playing Game.

POLICEMAN 1
A what?

ANNA
Role playing game.

POLICEMAN 2
Never mind that! Where's Alicia?

ANNA
I don't know. The room was empty
when I came in.

POLICEMAN 2
Damn it!

The cops get out of the room, leaving the stunned girl alone.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

POLICEMAN 2
Three-six-zero! Turn this place
upside down!

The armed group splits to conduct a door-to-door search.

They break into dorms, young women scream.

One of the cops notices a small door on a wall for garbage disposal. He signals to other two.

The three go downstairs.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

The cops search through garbage bags and dirty clothes. They find nobody.

EXT. SORORITY BUILDING ROOF - DAY

On the roof, Alicia comes out of the chimney. She walks along the roof edges, studying the building surroundings. She finds a dumpster below, on the street. She jumps.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Alicia lands into the dumpster. The garbage inside breaks her fall

She jumps out of the dumpster, just to stumble on another cop from the armed group.

POLICEMAN

Hey!

Alicia runs to the building main entrance. Anguished, she notices her bike is no longer there. Desperate, she gets into an alley.

POLICEMAN (ON THE RADIO) (CONT'D)

Subject found. She went into the alley. In pursuit.

The policeman also goes into the alley. Others join him in the chase. The alley is empty. They comb the place.

INT. UNDERGROUND SEWER SYSTEM - DAY

In the undergrounds, Alicia watches the ladder, right below the manhole cover, where she came in. It's possible to see flashlight beams. She holds still. The beams disappear.

Alicia runs, stepping on filthy waters.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF THE POLICE PRECINCT - NIGHT

Hugh stands cross-street from the precinct he used to work in. He watches the people coming and going, in and out the precinct.

He checks his wristwatch. The traffic of people decreases.

Hugh looks up. A strange mist hovers over house roofs.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - NIGHT

Hugh enters the precinct wearing jacket and cap, putting efforts to remain inconspicuous.

It is the end of the workday, the place is nearly empty. Detectives organize their desks and go away.

From the break room, comes out Hugh. He walks to Lieutenant Gomez office, which is empty. He tries to open the door, but it's locked. Hugh grabs a Swiss pocket knife and a paper clip from his pocket. With them, he picks the office door lock.

He hears voices and freezes. He looks over his shoulder and sees shadows in an anteroom. He stands still like a statue. The voices vanish, the shadows disappear. Hugh continues to work the door lock.

He manages to unlock the door and enters.

INT. LIEUTENANT GOMEZ'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Hugh walks to Gomez's desk and turns his computer on. But, he can't access the system, for it's password locked.

He thinks a little and tries a password. It doesn't work.

HUGH (THINKING ALOUD)

That's why you never remember your wife's birthday. You don't use the date as password.

Hugh thinks again. He writes the name 'Talissa,' as password. And it works.

HUGH (THINKING ALOUD) (CONT'D)

The hot newcomer. Gomez, you big dog.

Hugh investigates the computer of his former lieutenant. He doesn't find much. His face is one of frustration.

He checks his former boss' e-mails. Nothing interesting. He checks the sent e-mails folder. Nothing. He now investigates the outbox folder and frowns. Something calls his attention.

CLOSE-UP of the screen. There is a unsent e-mail, from Gomez to him. Hugh clicks on 'send.' A message that reads, 'Action not authorized' appears on the screen.

Hugh clicks to open the e-mail.

JANITOR

Hey! What are you doing in here?

Hugh immediately turns the monitor off.

HUGH

I forgot my car keys. I just came back to pick them up.

JANITOR

You're not Mister Gomez.

HUGH

He also forgot his car keys. He asked me to pick them up as well.

JANITOR

How did you get in here? Only I have the keys after hours!

HUGH

Alright. Look, I'm not gonna lie to you in this one, okay?

Hugh walks to the janitor with certain urgency.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Mister Gomez called me and asked me to come.

The janitor faces him with a suspicious look.

JANITOR

Is that so? Why?

HUGH

He suspects the precinct is gonna be invaded.

The janitor's eyes goggle.

HUGH (CONT'D)

You must call the night shift lieutenant right now. Go!

The janitor turns around in a hurry, but stops.

JANITOR

What night shift lieutenant?

Hugh puts both his hands on the janitor's neck, using a technique to render him unconscious. The janitor falls on the floor.

HUGH (THINKING ALOUD)

At least I didn't lie about the invasion.

Hugh takes a set of keys that was stuck on the janitor's trousers.

INT. POLICE PRECINCT - CONTINUOUS

Hugh goes to the back of the precinct, but stumbles on the night watchman.

NIGHT WATCHMAN

What are you doing here, man?

HUGH

It's not your business. Please,
just forget you saw me, Ben!

The night watchman draws his gun and points it at Hugh.

BEN

I'm sorry, man, you know I can't do
that. If you ask me, I don't think
you did anything wrong. But I'll
have to arrest you. I don't make
the rules

HUGH

Okay.

Hugh turns his back on Ben and brings both hands to his head.

Ben holsters his gun, goes to Hugh, and grabs one of his hands to handcuff him. When Ben takes his handcuffs with his other hand, Hugh uses his free hand to punch Ben in his face, stunning him.

Hugh turns around very fast and twists Ben's arm. The night watchman still manages to draw his gun with his free hand and shoots, making a loud noise. The bullet hits the ceiling. Hugh hits Ben's head against a wall, knocking him out.

HUGH (CONT'D)

No, I'm sorry, man.

Hugh takes the night watchman's gun and puts it in his trousers.

He goes to the grid panel that protects the evidence locker room. It's closed by padlock.

Nervously, Hugh tries on the padlock the keys from the set he took from the Janitor.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Don't they never clean this place?

A shot grazes Hugh's forearm.

He runs through the corridor.

Cops chase him.

POLICEMAN 1
Stop right there!

Hugh enters the archive room.

INT. ARCHIVE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room has a window to the outside.

The cops break into the room, shooting to kill.

Hugh drops a file cabinet and takes cover behind it, while returning fire.

One of the cops turns the lights on. They search the place, guns in hand.

From the top of a taller cabinet, Hugh jumps on a cop, dropping him to the floor. The others open fire.

Hugh uses the cop as a shield against the bullets and pushes him to the others.

Taking advantage of that momentary distraction, Hugh grabs a chair and throws it at the window, shattering its glass. He jumps out of the building.

The cops cautiously walk to the window and peek outside. They don't see anybody in the dark of night. Hugh escaped.

POLICEMAN 1
Are you alright?

The cop who was used as shield by Hugh nods a 'yes,' still a bit dizzy, while checking all holes on his bulletproof vest.

EXT. OUTDOORS RESTAURANT - NIGHT

People are having dinner on tables scattered across the sidewalk.

Alicia emerges from a manhole, handling with difficulties the heavy manhole cover. She puts the cover back to place.

A couple sharing a table close-by twist their noses due to the young lady's horrible smell.

ALICIA
Good evening.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - NIGHT

Alicia goes down a staircase that leads to a subway station. She has to put a quarter into a slot to open the door to the ladies washroom.

INT. LADIES WASHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alicia cleans herself as best as she can.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - CONTINUOUS

She leaves the washroom, looks at all sides, and goes down the escalators. The place is nearly empty.

The subway comes. She gets into the subway car.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Alicia climbs the stairs to leave the destination subway station.

She walks two blocks and stops in front of a two-storey house. She hesitates for a few seconds. She knocks on the door. Nobody answers it.

She turns the doorknob. It's unlocked. She enters the house.

INT. SUSHI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ALICIA
Hello...

Alicia closes the door and walks along the dark living room.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Sushi!

She finds a switch and turns the lights on.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
It's me, Sushi, you home?

Slowly, she climbs the stairs.

INT. UPPER FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Alicia walks to a room. The door is closed, but light comes out through the cracks.

She opens the door and goes in, confidently.

INT. SUSHI'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

ALICIA

Hey Sushi, what the heck...?

She silences, freezes, and swallows hard. It's not Sushi who's in the room, but two people, a man and a woman, both wearing white clothes from head to toe, including masks and caps. They are spraying something in the air, but they stop what they're doing when they see Alicia.

The man immediately grabs a cell-phone and types.

Alicia walks backwards.

INT. UPPER FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Frightened, Alicia runs downstairs.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

At the bottom of the stairs, Alicia stumbles on a man coming into the house. He's wearing the same uniform as those who invaded the sorority building in the college campus.

POLICEMAN

Hey!

Alicia runs to the back and finds a bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

She gets in and locks the door. In despair, she can only see there are no windows.

INT. FIRST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The policeman walks to the bathroom, but he notices that the two people wearing white watch him from the top of the stairs.

POLICEMAN

You go back to work!

In a big hurry, they disappear, back to work.

The policeman bangs on the bathroom door three times.

POLICEMAN (CONT'D)

It's over, missy. Open the door, please. I just want to talk.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alicia staggers backward, stunned and scared. She trips on the bathtub edge and falls inside of it. Only then she realizes she fell on something. She turns her head and sees that she fell on top of a person, a totally inert body of an old lady, with eyes wide open, pupils fixed on her own brain. It's the dead body of an old lady of Asian descent.

Alicia jumps out of the bathtub, screaming hysterically. She trips on the shower entrance. She grips the curtains to avoid falling on the floor, but fails. Alicia tumbles down, taking the curtains with her.

INT. CORRIDOR IN FRONT OF THE BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The policeman draws his gun and works the doorknob furiously, but the lock is too thick. He shoots the doorknob and enters the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The policeman is stunned by a very thick steam that impregnates the entire place. The shower is on, with extremely hot water pouring into the box, causing the steam. Waving the thick smoke out of his way, the policeman reaches the shower and turns it off.

He sees the dead body in the bathtub, but not Alicia. She had managed to pass by him unnoticed, using the smoke to cover her escape.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The policeman goes to the living room and sees the main door opened.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THE HOUSE - NIGHT

He leaves the house with gun in hand, but can't find anybody in the dark of night.

POLICEMAN

Shit!

INT. SUSHI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The policeman goes in the house again and grabs his radio. The man in white appears on top of the stairs.

MAN IN WHITE

But what are you gonna do about...?

POLICEMAN

I told you to go back to work!

The man in white returns to his business.

The policeman speaks on the radio (inaudible).

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Hiding behind a dumpster, Alicia bends her body, crossing arms against her abdomen. She brings a hand to her mouth and bursts into tears.

INT. HUGH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hugh fumbles into the house and goes straight to the bathroom. The shot only scratched his forearm, but he's bleeding a lot. He grabs his first aid kit, opens it, and covers the wound with lots of bandages.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hugh goes into the living room with his forearm covered with bandages, but he sees that there's a man sitting on his couch, watching cartoons on TV, with his back on him.

Hugh approaches the mysterious visitor, draws the gun he got in the precinct, and points it at the man's nape.

HUGH

Enjoying the show?

Four other men appear, all pointing guns at Hugh's head.

Mister X (sitting on the couch) turns the TV off and calmly stands up, to be face-to-face with Hugh, who still points the gun at him.

MISTER X

It's surely better than the newscast.

HUGH

Funny, but I agree with you.

MISTER X

I thought we had killed you in that alley.

HUGH

I'm full of surprises.

MISTER X

Well, not this time. By the way, if you don't drop your gun, my associates will turn your head into pudding.

Hugh hesitates, but drops his gun on the floor and raises his hands. Mister X grabs the gun.

MISTER X (CONT'D)

As you can see, we were already informed about your little visit to your former precinct. Certain people never learn.

HUGH

And what's gonna be tonight's lesson?

MISTER X

How to get beaten to death. And this time, we'll make sure to go all the way.

HUGH

To make it appear it was a robbery, and I caught you guys in the act.

MISTER X

That's right! You're a smart fella!

HUGH

Before you do that, can you at least tell me who the heck you are, and why you want me dead?

MISTER X

Oh, you earned yourself the right to know it, I give you that. But I'm afraid work gets in the way.

But, unexpectedly, Hugh brings both hands to his head. The migraines are back. He's forced to get down on his knees because of the pain.

MISTER X (CONT'D)

Pathetic. Well, now that he's already in position, finish the job, lads.

The four henchmen holster their guns and beat the hell out of Hugh, punching and kicking his entire body.

One of them throws Hugh's bloody carcass to a corner. Hugh tries to drag himself away from them, in agonizing pain. The five aggressors simply follow Hugh around while he drags himself, laughing and enjoying his humiliation.

Two of them lift Hugh against a wall, while two others punch his stomach. They throw him against a door, who gets opened with the impact.

INT. BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Hugh rolls down the stairs to the basement.

From there, it's possible to hear Mister X talking to somebody, but it's not possible to understand what he's saying, because his voice is muffled.

Suffering from the beating and the pain in his head, Hugh contorts his body in dreadful pain. He turns to one side and, to his surprise, there's a female silhouette in there, with him. At first sight, she looks more like a mannequin, only she moves and grabs a cell-phone. It's not possible to see who she is, only her silhouette is visible. She deals with her cell-phone.

All of a sudden, Hugh opens his eyes very much and winks frenetically. He acts like the migraines are completely gone. He stands up with difficulties for his body still aches from the beating he took.

Mister X and his four goons go down the stairs and spread around the basement, in a way to surround Hugh. He looks to the side. The female apparition is no longer there.

MISTER X

Well, enough foreplay. Finish this loser.

The four men advance to Hugh for the final blow.

But Hugh, once free from the headaches, gives his aggressors the beating of a lifetime, one by one, with precise martial art blows.

Stunned by such surprise, Mister X draws his gun, but Hugh notices it. With incredible speed, Hugh jumps to Mister X and twists his arm, forcing him to drop the gun. With equal agility, Hugh punches Mister X in the face, causing him to hit the deck with a bleeding nose.

The four goons partially recover from the blow. They grab their guns and fire at Hugh. However, Hugh grabs Mister X's gun, rolls on the floor and, like a cowboy, shoots with maximum precision, sending four men straight to hell. Hugh stands up and twirls the gun around his trigger finger.

Hugh approaches Mister X and lifts him by his tie, pointing his own gun against him. Mister X is still bleeding from his nose and moaning in pain.

HUGH

What? Stopping so soon? Now that I
starting to enjoy this?

Mister X chokes on his own saliva.

HUGH (CONT'D)

You don't strike me as nothing more
than a shitty mercenary, so I don't
really think you're willing to die
for your employer. That being said,
you just tell me who he is and I
kill you fast.

Mister X stares at Hugh with eyes goggling in terrible fear,
but speaks no word. Hugh pulls the man's tie even more,
suffocating him.

HUGH (CONT'D)

You're not gonna like the
alternative, I promise you that!

However, Mister X brings both hands to his temples and
screams in horrible pain. Blood comes out of his ears.

HUGH (CONT'D)

What the fuck...!

Hugh lets go of Mister X, who tumbles down on the floor,
dead.

Hugh looks at the corpse and nods negatively.

He turns around and sees the other four dead bodies in his
basement.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Damn it! Now I'll have to clean
this mess.

He opens his eyes very much, as if he had just recalled
something.

Hugh goes up the stairs.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He looks at all sides.

WOMAN

Not bad, for a cop.

Hugh turns around abruptly and finds the woman standing by
his doorway. Again, only her slim silhouette is visible.

HUGH

Who are you?

WOMAN

A friend.

She goes away.

HUGH

Wait!

Hugh runs to the door and out of the house.

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF HUGH'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Hugh searches everywhere, but the mysterious woman is nowhere to be seen. He gets into the house again.

INT. HUGH'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Hugh looks in the mirror. His face is a collection of bruises.

HUGH

Guess I'm not making Miss Universe
this year.

He moves toward the first aid kit, but stops.

Instead, he takes the medicine bottle, opens it, and throws all pills in the sink and down the drain.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hugh is in his bedroom. He grabs a picture frame and looks at it.

The picture frame contains a picture of him, together with his wife and daughter.

He puts the picture frame back to place.

Hugh takes a deep breath. He opens a drawer on the nightstand and grabs a photograph.

CLOSE-UP of the picture. It's an older photo of Hugh wearing an uniform, standing together with four other men of special forces.

EXT. FAÇADE OF LUXURIOUS HOTEL - DAY

A five-stars hotel façade is shown.

INT. LUXURIOUS HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

In the ample hotel room, a CHINESE MAN (55) talks on the phone, speaking in Chinese.

CHINESE WIFE (33) emerges from one of the many partitions in the room and smiles at her husband. He raises a hand, palm facing her, as to tell her to wait.

The three children of the couple, two boys (10 and 12 years old) and a girl (8 years old), run through the place. The mother calms them down.

The husband ends the phone call.

Now, daddy plays with his three children. Mommy joins the fun.

Somebody rings the doorbell. Daddy answers the door. It's room service, obviously bringing a very sumptuous meal. Daddy gives the bell-person a tip.

INT. HOTEL FLOOR CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The bell-person grabs a radio and speaks on it (inaudible). He puts the radio down.

He checks the tip money in his hand.

BELL-PERSON (MURMURING)
Cheapskate.

INT. LUXURIOUS HOTEL SUITE - CONTINUOUS

The family eats by the table. They talk cheerfully in Chinese.

An armed group breaks into the room through the window, shattering the glass. They throw smoke grenades to stun the family. The members of the group are wearing vests and helmets. It's not possible to see their faces.

Mother and children hit the deck, frightened and breathless. She hugs her children.

The husband tries to get to the phone. A member of the group stops him from doing it and hits the Chinese man's shoulder with the handle of his rifle.

Mother and children cry and beg in Chinese.

Another member drags the father to the corner where his wife and children are crouching on. The Chinese family is now sitting against a wall, hugging each other in fear.

Three soldiers point rifles at them.

A soldier sits down by the table, in a way that the family cannot see him. He lifts his helmet visor and tastes some of the room service.

SOLDIER IN THE ROOM
I love 'kung pao chicken.'

He grabs his radio.

SOLDIER IN THE ROOM (CONT'D)
Bravo Alfa, this is Bravo Delta.
It's done.

SOLDIER IN THE LOBBY (V.O.)
Copy.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The soldier in the lobby speaks on the radio.

SOLDIER IN THE LOBBY
Lobby secured.

WIDE SHOT shows that several soldiers keep employees and guests as hostages at the hotel lobby.

The hostages, men, women, and children, are on their knees, fingers crossed behind their heads and weeping faces, all under the barrel of rifles and machine guns.

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - DAY

SENATOR JENEUVE (60) gives a press conference.

SENATOR JENEUVE
...And our efforts will proceed as such. Our main goal is, as you all know, to best serve the people.

REPORTER 1
It is fair to say then that the situation is totally under control.

SENATOR JENEUVE
Well, considering the new developments, we're still a bit far from such conclusion. However, you also know that there are no limits to our determination.

An advisor comes and whispers something to the senator's ear.

SENATOR JENEUVE (CONT'D)
Ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid we'll have to stop here.
(MORE)

SENATOR JENEUVE (CONT'D)

An urgent matter was just brought
to my attention. If you excuse
me...

REPORTER 2

Could you at least tell us...

But, the senator disappears in the confines of the House.

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ANTEROOM - CONTINUOUS

SENATOR JENEUVE

What's going on?

ADVISOR

The Continental Power Hotel was
invaded. The prime minister of
China and his family were made
hostages.

The senator's eyes goggle.

SENATOR JENEUVE

But, who's doing this? Is the
entire hotel taken? How the hell
they pulled this off?

ADVISOR

We don't know yet, sir. We only
know the invading force, whoever
they are, mean business. They're
using state-of-the-art weapons and
equipment, very similar to the ones
employed by the police. They surely
don't act like a two-bits militia.

SENATOR JENEUVE

Well, send a division there.

ADVISOR

We already did. Trouble is most of
our troops are busy with similar
occurrences.

The senator scratches his chin.

SENATOR JENEUVE

Is the 'War Room' ready?

ADVISOR

Yes. I took the liberty to call the
boys.

SENATOR JENEUVE

Meet you there in a few.

The advisor leaves the room.

The senator grabs the cell-phone and types.

SENATOR JENEUVE (CONT'D)
Mister Campbell? (...) Jeneuve
here. (...) Looks like we have a
little problem.

START FLASHBACK

Wearing his uniform, Hugh stands in front of a special forces major.

MAJOR
Your badge and your gun, please!

HUGH
Jack, you know they set us up!

MAJOR
All I know is I don't want crooks
in my precious corporation!

HUGH
You know me, Jack.

MAJOR
Your badge and your gun!

HUGH
No.

MAJOR
Your badge and your gun, you shitty
scumbag! I'm not asking again!

HUGH
NO!

The major pulls out his gun and points it at Hugh.

Hugh goes for his gun, but it's not in his holster.

BANG! The major pulls the trigger.

END FLASHBACK

INT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY

Hugh jumps to consciousness from the nightmare. He is lying on a couch. Hugh brings a hand to his head.

MOGUL
Rough night?

MOGUL (72) enters the living room and sets the table for breakfast. He also turns the TV on, on the newscast.

HUGH
A little. I was dreaming of a
mother-in-law.

MOGUL
Mine or yours?

Hugh grins.

HUGH
Judge by the screaming.

Mogul smiles, too.

MOGUL
Yours, then. If you were dreaming
of mine, you wouldn't be awake now.

CLOSE-UP of the TV.

ANCHORMAN
The population is scared and for
good reason. The crime wave rises
and the authorities are powerless
to fight it. It is believed that
the situation will only gets
worse...

Hugh watches the TV.

HUGH
Turn off this garbage. My head
hurts and those drama queens are
not helping much.

MOGUL
Do you still have those headaches?

HUGH
If you're talking about the
migraines, yes. But this headache
now is for listening to all this
crap.

MOGUL
Right. And I suppose that a
mysterious woman who cures
migraines with a cell-phone is not
crap.

HUGH
Don't blame me. I only told you
what happened in my basement.

CLOSE-UP of the TV.

ANCHORMAN

In yet another coward terrorist strike, a woman was brutally murdered in her own home. She was sixty-five years old. The police speculates that...

Mogul watches the TV.

MOGUL

And now you brought all your problems to my home.

HUGH

I can leave now if you want.

MOGUL

I was kidding, you fool. I'm not a coward, for crying out loud. Besides, I'm sick of staying home, with my thumb up my ass.

CLOSE-UP of the TV.

ANCHORMAN

The victim was identified as Akemi Takei, Japanese immigrant and widower. Her seventeen years old son Toshiuky Takei, who lived with her, better known as 'Sushi' by his friends, is missing...

Hugh turns to Mogul.

HUGH

And how long have you been living like this?

MOGUL

Oh, not long. Only for the past twenty years.

HUGH

You are a legend, my friend.

MOGUL

Not to mention a scientific experiment. How somebody can scratch his balls for so long.

HUGH

Well, you can't complain anymore. You're up to your neck in shit, thanks to me.

MOGUL

Which is not bad. I could take a dump on my feet and nobody would notice.

CLOSE-UP of the TV.

ANCHORMAN

So far, the prime suspect of this terrible atrocity is this young lady...

A picture of Alicia Silver appears on TV.

ANCHORMAN (V.O.)

The dean of the college she studies in identified her as Alicia Silver, nineteen years old. It's possible that she have recently joined the terrorist group known as 'the Angels of the Shadows...'

Hugh grabs the remote control and turns the TV off.

MOGUL

Hey! I was watching this!

HUGH

I know, but the guest is always right. Can we eat now?

INT. LIEUTENANT GOMEZ'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gomez is having supper with his wife and their two teenage daughters.

They chat and laugh, except for one of the daughters, which is pouting. She stands up and goes to her room.

GOMEZ

What was that?

His wife MIA (47) smiles mildly.

MIA

In my particular interpretation of adolescent rebellion, version 'two-point-one,' I'd say that she considers our conversation a wee bit corny.

GOMEZ

I must say I'm surprised. I thought I was being the life of the dinner. Please, let me know when version 'two-point-two' is released.

The other daughter grabs her Smartphone and stares at its screen with a face fixed like stone.

Gomez turns to her.

GOMEZ (CONT'D)
No phones at dinner table, missy.
You should've known that already.

DAUGHTER
Alright.

She also stands up and goes to the back.

MIA
There you have it. Version 'two-point-two' is on the market.

INT. OFFICE IN GOMEZ'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Gomez enters his home office. The light is off. He walks to his desk and checks his computer monitor, which illuminates his face.

GOMEZ (WHISPERING)
Ah, family, family...

MAN
Well, you chose to have one.

Gomez is startled by that voice and turns abruptly to the couch behind him.

There is a man sitting on it.

GOMEZ
Man, you have just reduced my life
in at least ten years.

MAN
On the contrary. You could use a
little adrenaline in your system.

Gomez turns the lights on. As he already knew, the intruder is Hugh.

GOMEZ
How did you get in here? Did you
pick my lock, perhaps shot my
doorknob to hell...?

Hugh grabs a set of keys from his pocket and tosses them to Gomez, who catches them.

HUGH

I found those hidden under a stone
in your porch, the third from left
to right.

Gomez rolls his eyes around the sockets.

GOMEZ

Ah, Mia... She thinks spare keys
are necessary.

HUGH

And you know better than arguing
with wife.

GOMEZ

I suppose you're not here to have
dinner with us.

HUGH

No, but it smells deliciously!

GOMEZ

Come on, man! I won't turn you in,
but you know you're risking my life
and my family's.

HUGH

You were gonna send me an e-mail,
but got no permission. What was in
it?

Gomez hesitates and his eyes show affliction.

GOMEZ

Does it matter? I couldn't send it
anyway and, after your little stunt
in the precinct, they confiscated
my PC for analysis.

HUGH

I didn't ask you to send me the
damn thing. I asked what was
written in it. What were you trying
to tell me?

Gomez hesitates again, frowning a lot.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Come on. I know they would've never
cancelled your authorization to
send e-mails unless there was
something real fishy in them.

GOMEZ

Hugh, I'm already in a world of
hurt because of you.

HUGH

Then, one more hurt won't make no goddamn difference. Besides, if you are in a world of hurt, my world is a bottomless pit.

Gomez faces Hugh.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Please, man. All I need is a name, a word, a place, anything. And I promise you, this is the last time you'll ever see me.

Gomez takes a deep breath.

GOMEZ

Old Junk. And you were never here!

HUGH

I don't even know you. Thanks, partner! I owe you one.

Hugh leaves through the office window.

GOMEZ

Lord Almighty!

EXT. FAÇADE OF A VERY LUXURIOUS MANSION - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT shows the front yard of an imposing mansion.

INT. LUXURIOUS MANSION - NIGHT

Senator Jeneuve is sitting on a chair, in front of a fireplace, smoking a cigar. His cell-phone RINGS. He checks the caller and answers it.

SENATOR JENEUVE

What took you so long?

ADVISOR (V.O.)

We have a few problems, sir.

SENATOR JENEUVE

Never mind. Straight to the point!

ADVISOR (V.O.)

We sent the police and even a S.W.A.T. division to the Continental Power Hotel, but...

The advisor silences.

SENATOR JENEUVE

But what?

ADVISOR (V.O.)
They had already gone, sir.

It's the senator's turn to silence for a few seconds.

SENATOR JENEUVE
Come again?

ADVISOR (V.O.)
The... The terrorists, militia or whatever, were no longer there.

SENATOR JENEUVE
What do you mean, they were no longer there? What about the prime minister?

ADVISOR (V.O.)
He and his family are okay. A little shaken, but alright.

SENATOR JENEUVE
But, what the fuck...! What the heck did they want? Did the police speak to the prime minister?

ADVISOR (V.O.)
Yes. He told them that the guy who seemed to be the leader only brought a cell-phone close to his head, as if he was going to take a picture of him. Then, he just said 'thank you for your cooperation' and left, taking the whole bunch with him.

The senator silences again, with the cigar in his mouth and a dumb face.

ADVISOR (V.O.)
Sir?

The senator takes the cigar out of his mouth and speaks while puffing the smoke.

SENATOR JENEUVE
Um, set up an emergency meeting for tomorrow, eight o'clock. Tell Debra we need her there.

ADVISOR (V.O.)
Yes, sir.

The senator clicks off the call. He stands up and nervously walks along the sumptuous place, while puffing the cigar. He grabs the cell-phone again, types, and waits.

SENATOR JENEUVE

Um, Mister Campbell? (...) It appears that the situation is worse than we thought.

EXT. TOUGH NEIGHBORHOOD IN THE OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT

Wearing a thick jacket and with a hood covering his head, Hugh walks around a tough neighborhood, hands in his pockets.

On the sidewalks, homeless people warm themselves up next to an opened trash can in flames.

Hugh takes his hands out of the pockets and blows them to warm them up, while a white breath comes out of his mouth, due to the cold.

Hugh stops by a wasteland. A strange mist hovers a few feet from the floor.

Hugh brings both hands to his head, as if in pain. He looks up. The mist disappeared. He follows his way, as if no longer feeling any pain.

He walks past small buildings and worn-out houses. There are people on the sidewalks, staring at Hugh with unfriendly eyes. He picks up the pace.

Hugh comes to a five-storey building, which certainly saw better days. He comes closer to the construction. Above the broken entrance door, rusty letters proclaim the name of the building, 'Old Junk Towers.'

HUGH (MURMURING)

Good to know this junk was once new.

Hugh enters the building.

INT. OLD JUNK DETERIORATED BUILDING - NIGHT

The place is a collection of dust, spider cobs, insects, rats, water seepage, and mold.

Hugh takes a walk around the place, examining the surroundings. He finds staircases, damaged elevators, worn-out furniture, and exposed electric wires.

HUGH (THINKING ALOUD)

Just an abandoned building. Thank you very much, Gomez. I owe you nothing!

Strong lights penetrate into the building through broken glasses.

Hugh turns around abruptly to the direction of the lights and hides behind a pillar. A diesel engine can be heard in the near distance.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING - NIGHT

Cautiously, Hugh leaves the building and walks around it, following the sound of the engine.

It's a garbage truck.

Hugh checks his wristwatch.

HUGH (MURMURING)
Little late for a collection.

The garbage compartment, in the rear of the truck, opens automatically.

Two men leave the truck cabin. They walk to the opened garbage compartment, and they take out what seems to be crates.

Hugh narrows his eyes, but can't see exactly what the crates are in the darkness.

The two supposedly garbage men wear heavy overalls and caps. One of them knocks three times on a metallic door on the building. Somebody knocks four times on the inside. The garbage man passes his badge over an optical reader attached to the wall and types a password on a virtual numeric pad.

The metallic door gets opened, and the two men enter, carrying inside the crates they took from the truck garbage compartment. A few seconds later, one of them comes back outside, closes the door, and stands guard, like a sentry.

DISSOLVE TO:

The metallic door gets opened again, and the other man returns to the sidewalk. The door closes automatically behind him. He walks to his companion, which is standing guard.

MAN 1
Let's go.

The companion only waves, still with his back on Man 1.

Man 1 opens the door to the truck cabin and his eyes goggle. His real companion is in his underpants and unconscious on the passenger seat.

He turns around immediately, but has no time to do anything. Hugh, wearing the companion's overalls and cap, holds up Man 1 and compresses a gun against his head.

HUGH
Good evening.

MAN 1
What the...?

HUGH
Quiet. I'll make it real simple for you. You tell me the password for that door, and I don't blow your head off. What do you say?

MAN 1
You have no idea who you're messing with.

HUGH
With a headless man, if you don't tell me the password.

Man 1 hesitates. With his free hand, Hugh forces the man to open his mouth and puts the gun barrel down his throat.

HUGH (CONT'D)
There are more than one way for you to spill your guts. You take your pick.

Man 1 grunts loudly. Hugh takes the gun out of his mouth.

HUGH (CONT'D)
I'm listening.

MAN 1
63457890.

HUGH
Thanks.

Hugh knocks him out with a right cross.

He throws the two sleeping men, one at a time, inside a nearby dumpster.

HUGH (MURMURING) (CONT'D)
Your new home.

Hugh goes into the truck cabin and closes the garbage compartment.

He passes the badge of the man whose clothes he now wears over the optical reader and types the password, with certain hesitation.

HUGH (MURMURING) (CONT'D)
Damn memory. Man, I'm getting old.

He finally gets the password right and the metallic door gets opened.

INT. SECRET AREA OF THE BUILDING - NIGHT

The area is only partially illuminated. Hugh studies the place. It's a storage shed shaped like a hangar, with several metallic crates closed with padlocks spreading all around, some of them on top of each other. There are no cameras as far as he can see.

Hugh examines the padlock of one of the crates. It's thick and solid.

HUGH (THINKING ALOUD)
Too bad I left my crowbar at home.

Hugh notices a slightly different kind of light coming from a corner. Slowly, he investigates the corner and finds a door, with a small window protected by glass on it, where the light comes from. Very cautiously, he peeks inside through the glass.

It's a small office, with two men operating computers on tables, with five other men around them, with machine-guns.

HUGH (MURMURING) (CONT'D)
Damn it.

Hugh finds a light switch, but does nothing with it. He walks to one of the crates and draws his gun.

HUGH (THINKING ALOUD) (CONT'D)
I also forgot my silencer.

He turns to the office door and again to the thick padlock in front of him. He takes a deep breath.

HUGH (MURMURING) (CONT'D)
Well, when in Rome...

He shoots the padlock. It still doesn't budge. He shoots the padlock two more times. Finally, it opens.

Hugh runs to the light switch and turns the hangar lights off.

The five armed men leave the office and spread around the hangar, but can't see anything because it's too dark.

One of them goes to the light switch, but Hugh grabs him, knocks him out, and takes his machine-gun.

The other four fire at all directions, ignoring the risk of shooting each other.

GUARD 1
Cease fire! Idiots!

Guard 1 goes to the light switch and turns the lights on. They comb the place and finds Hugh on a corner.

HUGH
Marco...

They fire at Hugh, but he rolls on the floor, dodging the bullets. He returns fire and sends four more to hell.

HUGH (CONT'D)
...Polo.

With the machine-gun now strapped to his shoulder, Hugh gets into the office.

INT. OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

The place looks empty.

HUGH
What the...?

One of the men who was operating the computer leaves his hiding place behind the door, applies a neck grip on Hugh, and stabs his left shoulder with a pen.

Hugh grunts, but the damage is superficial. He throws himself backwards, so his aggressor crashes against the wall behind them.

Hugh now has time to grab the aggressor's collar with one hand and, in a 'tai otoshi' judo attack, Hugh twirls the man around his body and throws him to the floor. The man tries to stand up, but Hugh punches him in the face, knocking him out cold.

Hugh finds the last man hiding under a table, with a weeping face. Hugh pulls him out and points the machine-gun at his cheek. The man sobs.

MAN
P-please, please! I won't tell anybody!

HUGH
What's in those crates?

MAN
E-equipment. I don't know what for. I swear!

HUGH
Equipment from whom? Who's the manufacturer?

MAN
I don't know!

Hugh now compresses the machine-gun against the man's temple.

MAN (CONT'D)
I swear! I swear on the soul of my
son! I'm just a technician! Please,
don't kill me!

The man is now sobbing.

HUGH
That other idiot over there, what
does he do?

MAN
He wires the money.

HUGH
What about you?

The man does not answer and his eyes roll up, in a way that only the white of his eyes is visible. He brings both hands to his head, screaming in unbearable pain.

HUGH (CONT'D)
Ah, not again...!

The man frees himself from Hugh's grip and spins around the office, still screaming in terrible pain. He crashes against a wall and falls on the floor, with blood coming out of his ears. After struggling for a couple of seconds more, he silences.

Hugh goes to the man, kneels down, and tries his neck with two fingers. He's dead.

Hugh walks to the man who attacked him when he entered the office. He is dead too, also with blood on his ears.

HUGH (CONT'D)
What in blazes...?

Hugh checks the computers they were working on.

CLOSE-UP of the screens. There is only a cursor blinking on both screens, below a message that reads, 'Formatting complete.' All information had been erased.

HUGH (CONT'D)
Fuck!

Only then, Hugh notices the pen is still piercing his left shoulder.

Hugh searches the tables. He only finds blank printer papers. He grabs a piece of paper, removes the pen from his shoulder, and wipes his blood off its tip. His shoulder bleeds, but Hugh doesn't care. It's just another graze.

INT. HANGAR - CONTINUOUS

Hugh leaves the office and opens the crate whose padlock he obliterated before.

Inside the crate, there are very peculiar pieces of equipment, which Hugh cannot identify. He finds no logo, nor manufacturer brand in any of the devices, only a serial number. With the pen, Hugh writes down the serial number on the paper he took in the office.

Hugh takes all machine-gun ammunition he can carry, from the men he killed.

On the wall beside the door, Hugh finds the button to exit. He gets rid of the garbage man overalls and presses the button. The door unlocks. Hugh opens the door and destroys the button with machine-gun shots.

EXT. SIDEWALK IN FRONT OF THE BUILDING - NIGHT

Hugh closes the door and, also with machine-gun fire, destroys the optical reader with the numeric pad, to make sure nobody will be able to open that door.

He turns to the night and takes a deep breath of satisfaction.

A volley of bullets fly in his direction, forcing him to jump behind the garbage truck, not to be shot.

Hugh tries to return fire with his new machine-gun, but he can't leave cover due to the huge number of bullets turning the truck hull into Swiss cheese.

The bullets make loud click sounds and sparks when colliding with the metallic surface of the truck hull.

Coming from cars parked a few feet behind the garbage truck, a barrage of men advance to the truck, shooting like crazy.

While they approach, Hugh has a second to roll to the side and return fire with the machine-gun. The aggressors jump to the sides for protection. Hugh does not hit anybody.

He again takes cover behind the truck cabin and reloads the machine-gun.

More vehicles come, this time from all sides, surrounding the garbage truck. Men come out of them, shooting.

Hugh rolls under the truck, but he's hit by a bullet on his left thigh, which bleeds intensely. He grunts in pain.

Under the truck, Hugh fires at the aggressors' legs, being careful not to hit the truck tires. Such action buys him a fraction of seconds, which he uses to drag himself to the fuel tank. With the gun, Hugh shoots the tank. Diesel leaks from the bullet hole.

Hugh fires the machine-gun again and manages to hit a few legs. The hostile men have to jump for cover.

With difficulties, Hugh rolls on the floor, shooting like mad at his enemies. He manages to reach the cabin door, on the driver's side. He enters the vehicle.

INT. GARBAGE TRUCK - NIGHT

Nervously, Hugh searches for the keys. He finds them on the sun-visor.

He has to duck, for bullets shatter glasses and the windshield.

Hugh starts the engine, puts it in gear, and steps on it.

EXT. OLD JUNK BUILDING PERIMETER - NIGHT

The garbage truck goes in circles, hitting whoever is on its way. Men have to jump out of the way, not to be run over by the metal giant.

As the truck goes, it leaves a diesel trail behind it, coming from the hole on the fuel tank.

The garbage truck now drives straight at high speed, toward the cars blocking the building perimeter.

Men by the cars shoot at the truck, but the huge vehicle crashes against the cars, forcing the armed men to jump to the sides.

At high speed, the garbage truck drives very close to the cars surrounding the building, still leaving a diesel trail behind as it goes.

When the truck reaches the last car in the line, it is brought to a halt.

INT. GARBAGE TRUCK - NIGHT

Hugh checks the panel and sees there's still fuel in the tank.

Hugh jumps to the passenger seat and then to the window. As the window glass is totally shattered, he doesn't even have to open it.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - NIGHT

Hugh leaves the truck through the window and climbs to the roof.

He lies down on the truck roof, not to be hit by yet another volley of bullets that fly in his direction.

On the truck roof, Hugh drags himself to the rear, from which he can see the diesel trail left by the vehicle.

He lights up a match and tosses it on the diesel trail.

The trail lights up in flames, and the fire spreads along the trail, hitting all cars very close to the trail. One by one, the cars explode in gigantic bonfires.

Men are tossed everywhere, burning and screaming.

Only problem is the garbage truck, still having some fuel left, also explodes.

Hugh jumps at the last possible second, but even so is tossed far away by the explosion.

He collides violently against a sidewalk, and inertia causes him to roll a few yards.

Injured, partially burnt, with a few broken ribs, and the left thigh bleeding, Hugh follows his way.

Several police cars come, and the entire neighborhood is blocked. Red and blue lights flash, and a buzz of voices can be heard.

Hugh goes into an alley and holds against a wall, tired and breathless.

Strange noises come from above and from the sides.

A group of seven homeless people appear, cornering Hugh.

He immediately raises the machine-gun, but is forced to drop it, because an unbearable pain hammers his head again. Hugh brings both hands to his temples, making faces of pain. He has to kneel down. The migraines are back.

The seven homeless people come closer to Hugh, and one of them takes his machine-gun.

This same guy points the weapon directly at the head of agonizing Hugh. The aggressor only pretends to shoot in a mocking manner and then throws the machine-gun away.

Hugh lies on the hard floor, in terrible pain.

The seven men beat him up with no mercy.

A person comes.

This person hits one of the homeless people in the head with a metal pipe piece. The man who got hit staggers back and forth, stunned.

The person now gets in the middle of the spanking and manages to hit a second man in the face, with the pipe. This man also fumbles to a corner.

The five remaining aggressors approach the mysterious person, who becomes visible. It's Alicia Silver.

She walks backwards slowly, until tripping on Hugh, still on the floor.

HOMELESS PERSON 1

She's cute.

HOMELESS PERSON 2

New fish.

HOMELESS PERSON 3

How about a quick one with this babe before we finish the guy, what do you say?

HOMELESS PERSON 2

Can we, boss? I'm also feeling a little tense.

HOMELESS PERSON 1

Alright. The maggot here is not going anywhere.

They close on Alicia.

ALICIA

Stay away from me!

She lifts the metal pipe, as if it were a sword.

HOMELESS PERSON 2

Playing hard to get. That's how I like it.

The five of them advance to her.

With the corner of her eye, Alicia sees the gun on Hugh's pants. Very quickly, she drops the pipe, leans toward Hugh, grabs the gun, shoots up twice, and finally points the gun at the aggressors.

ALICIA
I know how to use this!

The men hesitate.

Alicia points the gun at them with eyes of furious determination.

HOMELESS PERSON 1
Fuck that. They're not paying us
for this.

Slowly, the five men walk away. The two guys hit by Alicia stagger after them, and the seven disappear in the dark.

Alicia removes the magazine from the gun and throws it in a garbage can. She grabs the machine-gun and straps it to her shoulder.

She drags Hugh to the alley confines.

EXT. FAÇADE OF HUGE MANSION - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT shows the façade of a giant mansion.

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT shows that a big, fancy party is going on in there.

Senator Jeneuve shakes several hands and his smile becomes perennial.

MAN 1
Congratulations, senator!

SENATOR JENEUVE
Thank you, Mister Governor.

MAN 2
Congratulations on your excellent
work in averting this crisis and
arresting the scums responsible for
it.

SENATOR JENEUVE
At your services, Mister House
Chairman.

Men wearing lustrous tuxedos and their covered-in-make-up beautiful trophy wives, with extravagant evening dresses, take glasses of wine and champagne brought by caterers, while stuffing their bellies with tons of food.

One of these men waves at the senator, first with a fist raised in the air, as if celebrating a goal, then with a big thumbs up.

The senator returns all such friendly gestures with a big smile and more thumbs up.

A distinguished gentleman, JUDGE BALSAM (50), savors his wine by the salad bar, only his look toward the senator is not so friendly. He puts the glass on the table and signals Jeneuve to come to him.

The senator walks to him.

SENATOR JENEUVE (CONT'D)

Nice party, huh? What do you say,
Your Honour?

JUDGE BALSAM

Yes, as opposed to your last
progress report.

The smile disappears from Jeneuve's face.

SENATOR JENEUVE

This is neither the time nor the
place.

JUDGE BALSAM

On the contrary, senator.
Especially because FBI cronies are
all over us, and you keep feeding
them with your tomfooleries.

SENATOR JENEUVE

There were no tomfooleries, only
minor setbacks. They have nothing.
As far as they know, we did
everything by the book.

JUDGE BALSAM

You mean, everything according to
the technicalities and loopholes I
found to cover your ass.

SENATOR JENEUVE

I'd mind my tongue if I were you.

The judge faces the senator, who returns the look with a poker face.

JUDGE BALSAM

And how are things with our dear
slanted-eyes prime minister?

SENATOR JENEUVE

Nothing to lose any sleep over. He
harshly criticized the work of our
police force, but he won't stand in
the way.

JUDGE BALSAM
Well, politics is your game,
anyway. And no more setbacks.

SENATOR JENEUVE
Relax, will you? I got this.

JUDGE BALSAM
For the sake of your life, I hope
so.

Balsam comes closer to the senator and fixes threatening eyes on him.

JUDGE BALSAM (CONT'D)
Don't forget you are the weak link
in this little chain.

The judge takes another glass of wine from a caterer, turns his back on the senator, and goes away.

The senator watches the judge go with a serious look.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Hugh walks down a beautiful path, surrounded by a multicolored vegetation. The place would be majestically wonderful, if it wasn't for a strange mist, hovering over the green grass around the path.

Hugh does not seem to be feeling any pain. The slim silhouette of a woman appears on the horizon and floats to Hugh.

The gorgeous silhouette comes near Hugh, but it's still not possible to see the elegant woman's face.

WOMAN
Don't let them get to your head.

INT. DIRTY BASEMENT - DAY (DAYBREAK)

Hugh wakes up from the dream. He looks around.

He's lying on a torn mattress, on an old wooden bed, covered only by a sheet, not the cleanest one. The place is very poorly illuminated.

Hugh tries to stand up, but grunts in pain all over his body.

ALICIA
Hey! Too soon for this.

Alicia comes to the bed and delicately makes him lie down again. She sits down on the floor, beside the bed.

HUGH
What place is this?

ALICIA
My new, temporary home.

HUGH
And you dragged me all the way
here?

ALICIA
It's not far from where we were.

HUGH
What about the police?

ALICIA
Gone. They never hang around too
long in places like this.
Firefighters came and put out the
fire on Old Junk. Then, a couple of
guys wearing white came. I don't
know who they are.

HUGH
How long have I been here?

ALICIA
About six hours.

HUGH
Damn it.

Hugh's eyes goggle.

HUGH (CONT'D)
Wait a minute...

Hugh uncovers his legs. He finds a bandage covering the wound
on his left thigh. He carefully removes it.

ALICIA
Hey! You'll bleed again!

The bullet wound on his left thigh is clean and disinfected.
He puts the bandage back on it.

HUGH
There was a bullet in here last
time I checked.

ALICIA
I took it out.

HUGH
How?

ALICIA
With a couple of pliers and, like,
a thousand towels.

Hugh takes a breath.

HUGH
And where did you learn how to take
out bullets?

ALICIA
Movies and internet.

HUGH
I see.

Hugh puffs.

HUGH (CONT'D)
Basic medical training in the
special forces, and all I needed
was a damn tablet.

ALICIA
Now, you know.

Alicia takes a breath.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
You were so knocked out you didn't
feel a thing. I came to think you
were dead. Except that dead folks
don't bleed.

HUGH
Well, the talk is good, but...

Hugh throws the sheet away and sits up.

ALICIA
Where do you think you're going?
You're in no conditions to do
anything. Just look at you, you're
dead!

HUGH
Let me worry about that.

Hugh finds his shoes and puts them on.

ALICIA
Okay, then. Where are we going?

Hugh turns to her, surprised.

HUGH
'We' are not going anywhere, missy.
Just me.

Alicia shows him a piece of paper.

ALICIA
What were you gonna do with this?

Hugh immediately recognizes the paper, as well as the serial number written on it with his handwriting. He grabs the paper from Alicia's hand with certain violence.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
I found it in your pocket. What is it?

HUGH
Not your business.

Alicia faces him.

Hugh soothes his face expression and takes another deep breath.

HUGH (CONT'D)
Look, I really appreciate what you did for me, but believe me, the more I stay here, the more I endanger your life.

ALICIA
What are those numbers in the paper?

Hugh stares at her with a 'you're not gonna drop it, are ya?' look.

Alicia returns a 'nope' look.

HUGH
It's a serial number. I need to find out what it refers to.

ALICIA
Any idea how you're gonna do that?

Hugh puffs again.

HUGH
I figure something out.

ALICIA
I can do it for you.

HUGH
How?

ALICIA
Let me worry about that. All I need is a laptop, or a tablet, perhaps a cell-phone...

Hugh thinks, hesitates.

Alicia watches him with eyes of anticipation.

He stands up, resolute.

HUGH

Okay, you're coming. I'll get you a cell-phone.

Alicia smiles and confidently walks to the exit. Hugh holds her arm to stop her.

HUGH (CONT'D)

You screw me up, little lady, and I'll dismember you, limb by limb. Got that?

ALICIA

Limb by limb, got it.

They leave the den.

INT. JUDGE BALSAM'S OFFICE - DAY

Sitting by his desk, the judge talks on the phone.

JUDGE BALSAM

Yes, I hope so, too. Can barely wait to come back to those boring cocktails.

He laughs aloud.

JUDGE BALSAM (CONT'D)

That's right. Talk to you later. See you at the party. Bye.

He hangs up.

As the door to his office is opened, DEBRA STEIN (32), beautiful, slender, and elegant, gets in.

The judge can't resist and his eyes run through her body from head to toe.

JUDGE BALSAM (CONT'D)

Hasn't your mommy ever told you to announce yourself to the secretary before coming in, Congresswoman Stein?

DEBRA

Yes, she has, but that would take time, Judge. So, I took the liberty to send your secretary home. She looked tired, anyway.

The judge grins.

JUDGE BALSAM

Should I take this is not a social visit?

DEBRA

That depends. Are we on schedule?

JUDGE BALSAM

Give or take a minor problem or two, I'd say we are.

DEBRA

So, I believe we can skip the amenities, Alex.

JUDGE BALSAM

You know, sometimes I think we could do things differently.

DEBRA

What's that supposed to mean? Are you getting soft on me, Your Honour?

JUDGE BALSAM

A lot of people are going to die, or lose their businesses, or worse.

DEBRA

When did you decide to become a philanthropist?

JUDGE BALSAM

I didn't. Like I said, just thoughts.

DEBRA

There are always casualties in any major undertaking. Those who don't have what it takes to do what is necessary better pack their bags and leave the planet. The meek won't inherit the Earth.

JUDGE BALSAM

Damn, you're a snake.

DEBRA

And my scales scratch way more than they should.

He stares at her as if about to have an orgasm.

JUDGE BALSAM

Champagne?

She sits on his desk, legs on display.

DEBRA
I thought you'd never offer.

EXT. STREETS OF A NEARLY DESERT NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Hugh and Alicia walk discreetly along the neighborhood. Hugh is wearing his thick jacket.

ALICIA
Where are we going?

HUGH
Get you a cell-phone.

ALICIA
It's no good offline. Why don't we just go into a lan-house, and you let me do my magic?

HUGH
Because we would be seen.

A young couple come to them and block their way, both man and woman with happy, smiling faces.

MAN
Um, excuse me, if you could help us, please?

WOMAN
You see, we're kind of new in town, we are a little lost. Do you know how we can find Emporium Street?

Hugh also smiles politely and stands beside the man.

HUGH
Oh, by all means. First, you go...

Hugh twists the man's arm and renders him unconscious with a blow to his nape.

The woman brings a hand to her trousers pocket, but Hugh, with incredible speed, grabs the woman's hand, twists her arm as well, forcing her to kneel down, grunting in pain. Hugh also knocks her out with a blow to the head.

ALICIA
Are you nuts!? Why did you do that for? They are just tourists asking for directions!

Hugh leans toward the unconscious couple, searches them, and reveals to Alicia they are both carrying Glock 9mm revolvers, as well as taser guns, not to mention lots of ammunition.

Alicia lifts an eyebrow.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Very suspicious tourists.

Hugh takes the couple's cell-phones. He throws one of them to the ground and reduces it to pieces by stepping on it several times. He gives Alicia the other cell-phone.

HUGH
There you have it. And it looks online.

Alicia takes the cell-phone.

ALICIA
Can't they track us with this?

HUGH
Not while they think it's still in the hands of its rightful owner. Anyway, we can't hold on to it for very long.

ALICIA
Fine. What now?

Hugh also takes both Glock 9mm, as well as the ammunition, from the unconscious couple. He stores everything on his pants. It's possible to see the machine-gun hidden in his jacket.

HUGH
These streets have ears. We need to get out of them.

INT. BAR - DAY

Sharing an inconspicuous booth on the back, Hugh and Alicia drink coffee and eat flapjacks.

Alicia studies her new cell-phone. She puts it aside and looks at Hugh, who is meditative.

ALICIA
By the way, I'm Alicia.

HUGH
Nice meeting you, Alicia. I'm Hugh.

ALICIA
Hugh Montagnes, yes, I know.

Hugh faces her with very suspicious eyes.

HUGH
And how do you know that?

ALICIA

I watch the news every chance I get. Your face is in most of them. Apparently, you are an armed and dangerous terrorist, wanted everywhere.

Alicia grins.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

I bet that whole 'fourth of July' on Old Junk was your doing, right?

Hugh does not take his eyes off the beautiful, skinny young lady.

HUGH

And yet, you helped me. You've got every chance to ditch me and turn me in, but didn't. May I ask you why?

ALICIA

Well, first because I don't want to be dismembered, limb by limb, just yet.

HUGH

And second?

ALICIA

Let's say that, right now, every enemy of the system is my friend.

HUGH

And you're even smarter than you think for doing so.

It's Alicia's turn to stare at him, frowning.

ALICIA

What do you mean?

HUGH

Looks like I'm not the only one in town to enjoy the benefits of show biz.

Alicia nods negatively.

ALICIA

I don't understand.

HUGH

You are Alicia Silver, college student. You made the news, too.

(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)

Apparently, you killed the mother
of that Japanese boy, the one who's
gone missing.

Alicia stares at him with deep eyes of disbelief.

ALICIA

TV is saying I killed Sushi's mom?

HUGH

Yep.

ALICIA

Bullshit! She was already dead when
I came in!

HUGH

I believe you. But many people
won't.

ALICIA

Man, that's intense.

HUGH

You have no idea.

ALICIA

How do I get out of this one?

HUGH

You may start by finding out what
that serial number refers to.

Alicia works the cell-phone again, this time way more
determined.

HUGH (CONT'D)

So?

ALICIA

Even the serial number is
encrypted, but I found a way
around. Whatever it is that you
found, it was made by one Massive
Industries.

HUGH

I'll be damned!

Two policemen enter the bar, wearing vests, helmets, and
carrying rifles.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Get rid of the cell-phone.

The customers are startled by the policemen's presence, some
of them scream.

ALICIA

Hugh...

HUGH

Let's go to the back exit.

ALICIA

There is no back exit.

Hugh tiptoes to the counter and grabs a stool. He walks back to the booth and throws the stool at a nearby window, shattering its glasses.

HUGH

There is now.

The policemen shoot to kill in the direction of Hugh and Alicia.

Screams of despair explode all around. People jump behind tables and over the counter, seeking cover.

Hugh drops a table, to use it as shield against the bullets. He pulls Alicia behind the table. He grabs the machine-gun from inside his jacket and returns fire.

The two policemen also jump behind tables, for protection.

More bullets fly to Hugh and Alicia. They shrink behind the table.

HUGH (CONT'D)

I cover you. When I count to three...

ALICIA (SHAKING VOICE)

Okay.

HUGH

Ready? One, two... THREE!

Hugh stands up and shoots like crazy at the hostiles.

Alicia jumps out of the broken window. Hugh follows her.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The street is surrounded by policemen, which shoot them.

HUGH

Wrong way.

Hugh pushes Alicia back, and they both jump back to the bar.

INT. BAR - DAY

Hugh now has to return fire coming from both inside and outside the bar.

Alicia grabs one of the Glock 9mm from Hugh's pants and also shoots, to help him.

The machine-gun runs out of ammo. Hugh throws it on the floor.

HUGH

Cover me.

Alicia shoots at the enemies. Hugh runs to the counter, peeks over it, and finds the bartender crouching behind it, scared to death.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Hey friend, does this dump have an attic or something?

With a shaking forefinger, the bartender points at a particular direction.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Hugh jumps behind the table where Alicia is. He draws the other Glock 9mm and, shooting at the hostiles, pulls Alicia to the back.

They both run to a ladder and climb it.

EXT. BAR ROOFTOP - DAY

Hugh studies the place, looking for a place to go. Alicia checks her gun.

ALICIA

I'm out.

HUGH

Me too.

Hugh takes both Glock 9mm and reloads them. He returns one to Alicia.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Where did you learn to shoot...?
Ah, let me guess, movies? Internet?

ALICIA

Hair dryers. The principle is the same.

Policemen burst into the roof. Hugh pushes Alicia behind a maintenance shed and goes for the cops.

Hugh disarms one and throws him to the floor by elbowing his nose. He fires against another, who tumbles down, dead.

More cops come to the roof. With chokehold and elbowing, Hugh nullifies another one. He takes the man's rifle but doesn't have time to shoot, for another aggressor grabs his neck from behind.

Hugh twirls the aggressor around his body in a tai otoshi, throwing him to the floor.

Two other cops jump to Hugh, but are nullified by Hugh's agility and efficient martial arts. The hostiles hit the deck, bleeding and with broken bones, moaning in pain.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Wow!

More cops come, only these ones shoot.

Alicia watches with an anguished look.

Hugh jumps to the floor, grabs his Glock 9mm, and, in a matter of seconds, sends more aggressors to the afterlife.

Alicia looks at the scene, astonished.

Hugh goes to her.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

What the hell are you?

HUGH

I used to be a cop.

ALICIA

One of the good guys?

HUGH

A real candy.

And the policemen keep on coming.

HUGH (CONT'D)

We have to go!

Hugh and Alicia jump to the next roof and run. The cops give them chase.

EXT. CITY - CONTINUOUS

Alicia and Hugh jump from roof to roof.

They have to stop at times, to determine which roofs are at jump reach, causing them to lose time.

Their pursuers on the other hand do not have to lose such time. They only have to follow Hugh's and Alicia's movements, so they gain on them.

In one of these jumps, Alicia's foot slips on the edge of the next roof, leaving her hanging on by her fingertips.

The cops shoot at her.

Hugh pulls her up, but they have to jump behind box-roof-vents not to be hit by the bullets. Hugh and Alicia return fire with their respective Glock 9mm, in an attempt to delay their pursuers. Hugh has to reload his gun again, using his last clip.

HUGH

We gotta move...

Hugh barely finishes the sentence before bringing both hands to his temples. He lies on the floor, moaning, for his head is once again plagued by an unbearable pain.

ALICIA

What's happening? Hugh, are you alright?

With afflicted eyes, Alicia watches their pursuers come with fierce determination.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Hugh, for the love of God!

But the man only struggles on the floor, in dreadful pain.

Alicia looks up and notices a mist hovering not far from them. She also notices that the screen of the cell-phone in her pocket lights by itself.

The policemen close on them.

Alicia looks at the cell-phone and frowns. She presses the screen with her thumb.

Hugh jumps to his feet, draws the gun, and shoots, killing two more bad guys. The others jump for cover.

Hugh takes Alicia's hand, and they run.

They jump to the next roof, only to verify that's the last one. There are no more houses at jump reach.

Hugh looks down.

HUGH

In the kind words of Elvis Presley,
it's now or never.

ALICIA

It's okay. I've done this before.

They both jump off the roof and land inside a dumpster, which
content breaks their fall.

They get out of the dumpster and hide under a scaffolding.

Hugh peeks out and sees the policemen on the roof edge,
searching the area below. They find nothing and retreat.

Alicia and Hugh breathe in relief, but Hugh abruptly turns to
the young lady.

HUGH

Told you to get rid of the cell-
phone!

ALICIA

Good thing I didn't. When you had
the thing on the roof, I did
something on it, and you snapped
out of whatever you were having.

Immediately, Hugh's face changes to one of recollection.

START FLASHBACK

Quick flashback to show Hugh in his basement, remembering the
female silhouette that also cured his migraines by working a
cell-phone.

END FLASHBACK

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Can't be just a coincidence.

Hugh turns to her again.

HUGH

What exactly did you do?

ALICIA

Not much. When you were convulsing
or whatever, the cell-phone screen
lit on its own. I checked it, and
there was a bubble on the screen.

Hugh looks at her with intrigued eyes.

HUGH

A bubble?

ALICIA

More like a drawing that looked like a bubble. Inside of it, there was this message that read, 'signal-test-positive' and a button to 'abort.' I clicked on this button, and, like a second later, you were up and shooting again.

Hugh scratches his chin.

HUGH

Looks like we'll have to keep the cell-phone. It comes in handy.

ALICIA

That couple of tourists you knocked out and stole all the gizmos from... Who are they?

HUGH

I don't know. Mercenaries, perhaps.

ALICIA

But... Hired by whom? And what did they want with us?

HUGH

Alicia, I have no idea.

Alicia's face is the portrait of anguish.

ALICIA

Wow! We are so screwed! Can we really get out of this one?

HUGH

Well, if there's a way out, it's not in this scaffolding. Let's go.

Hugh and Alicia leave the hiding place, but freeze. The place is entirely surrounded by police forces. Around the alley, on the streets, flashing red and blue lights decorate the eerie place.

POLICEMAN 1

Yep, let's go. To jail.

Many weapons point at Hugh and Alicia. They lift their hands, instinctively.

POLICEMAN 1 (CONT'D)

You even breathe funny, and guess what happens next.

Hugh turns to Alicia.

HUGH

Do exactly as I do.

Alicia doesn't even wink, only nods.

Very slowly, Hugh takes his Glock 9mm, raises it above his head, so all cops can see it. Then, he puts it on the floor. He returns to the upright position, hands on the air.

Alicia does exactly as he did with her own Glock 9mm, only way slower and much more scared.

POLICEMAN 1

On your knees both of you, hands
behind your heads, fingers crossed.

Hugh and Alicia obey him.

The policeman draws his cell-phone, types a number, and brings it to his ear.

POLICEMAN 1 (ON THE PHONE) (CONT'D)

The package is finally delivered.

HUGH (WHISPERING TO ALICIA)

It's the first time I ever see a
cop talking on the phone in the
middle of an arrest.

Policeman 1 puts the cell-phone down.

HUGH (TO POLICEMAN 1) (CONT'D)

Let the girl go. She got nothing to
do with all this.

POLICEMAN 1

She's wanted for murder. Besides,
this is police business, so shut
your hole!

The policeman's cell-phone RINGS. He answers it.

POLICEMAN 1 (ON THE PHONE) (CONT'D)

Acknowledged.

Policeman 1 puts the phone down again.

POLICEMAN 1 (CONT'D)

Little change of plans. Kill these
two.

Two other cops approach Hugh and Alicia, pointing guns at their heads.

ALICIA (WITH A WEEPING FACE)

Hugh...!

HUGH

It's alright, sweetheart. It's alright.

The cops cock their respective gun hammers, to finally blow Hugh's and Alicia's heads off.

POLICEMAN 1

Hold it!

Some homeless people walk around the place, watching the whole scene with curious eyes.

The two cops ready to kill Hugh and Alicia uncock their hammers and wait.

POLICEMAN 1 (CONT'D)

Damn it!

The homeless people don't seem willing to walk away anytime soon.

Policeman 1 scratches his chin nervously and studies his surroundings.

POLICEMAN 1 (CONT'D)

Take them to that corner over there and finish the job.

The two cops grab Hugh and Alicia by their arms, forcing them to stand up. They are led by the cops to a narrow corridor, between two small constructions.

The two cops cock their hammers again, to kill Hugh and Alicia.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Gotta a change, boss?

The homeless woman is addressing the cops.

The cell-phone in Alicia's pocket lights on its own.

COP 1

Get out of here!

COP 2

Move!

Alicia takes advantage of the distraction and grabs the cell-phone.

HOMELESS WOMAN

Alright! No need to be rude!

Alicia checks the cell-phone.

HOMELESS WOMAN (CONT'D)

I'm not a freaking dog!

CLOSE-UP of the cell-phone. On the screen, there's a bubble with a message in it, 'signal-test-positive' and a button saying, 'confirm?' The size of the bubble changes.

The cops watch the homeless woman moving away. They turn to Hugh and Alicia again, weapons ready to kill.

Alicia wraps her arms around Hugh's arm, nearly embracing him.

Hugh frowns at her.

CLOSE-UP of the cell-phone. The bubble on the screen grows in size, now occupying the entire screen. With a thumb, Alicia presses the button 'confirm?'

Each and every person in that alley brings hands to their respective heads, except for Hugh and Alicia.

Several cops scream of intense pain in their heads. Many are forced to kneel down, dropping their weapons. Some of them lie on the ground.

HUGH

Well done! Let's get out of here.

Hugh and Alicia run, turn around a corner, and stop. They can't leave the alley. There are more cops on the streets, not all of them engulfed by the headache scope.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Do you know any place in this neighborhood which is neutral?

ALICIA

I might. You're not gonna like it, though.

INT. UNDERGROUND SEWERS - DAY (TWILIGHT)

HUGH

You're right. I don't like it a bit.

ALICIA

Told ya.

They walk through the fetid entrails of underground tunnels, with Alicia leading the way.

HUGH

You seem to know your way around here quite well.

ALICIA

My friends and I get together in these sewers sometimes. You know, we can party down, listen to loud music, nobody complains or calls the cops...

HUGH

Maybe even smoke weed...

ALICIA

I don't do that.

Hugh faces her with a suspicious, angry look.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

I don't do that!

HUGH

Good for you. If it's true.

They walk into a chamber that is, or was, inhabited once. They find torn mattresses and even a table with chairs around it.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Let's take five.

He and Alicia sit down on the chairs around the table.

ALICIA

We lost our guns.

HUGH

But we kept the cell-phone. I'd say it's our best weapon right now.

ALICIA

Welcome to the globalized world.

HUGH

World of globalized crime.

ALICIA

Lucky those cops didn't confiscate the cell-phone.

HUGH

Because they weren't cops. Totally bizarre procedures. They neither talked nor acted like cops.

ALICIA

More mercenaries?

HUGH

I don't think so. Too sophisticated.

(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)

They looked more like a task force especially trained for a specific purpose, or mission.

ALICIA

Trained by whom? Who do they work for?

HUGH

Only the government can afford the gear they were carrying.

ALICIA

And the specific purpose was killing us.

Hugh nods a 'yes.'

Alicia takes a deep breath.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

But it was a real stroke of luck those hobos appearing when they did.

HUGH

That wasn't luck either, not by a long shot. They didn't just appear, and that includes the woman who asked for change. Millions of people on the streets, and she picks two guys with guns, ready to blow our heads off, to ask for change.

ALICIA

But then, who are they? Why did they help us?

HUGH

Beats me.

Noises are heard in the vicinities.

ALICIA

We'd better go.

They stand up and follow their way.

HUGH

We can't stay down here.

ALICIA

And where do you propose we go? Do you know any other place that's even 'neutraller' than here?

HUGH

I might.

He turns to her.

HUGH (CONT'D)

You're not gonna like it, though.

EXT. EXTREMELY TOUGH NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY (TWILIGHT)

ALICIA

You're right. I don't like it a bit.

HUGH

Told ya. And, believe it or not, I grew up in places like this.

ALICIA

And why exactly are we here?

HUGH

The Old Junk Building is also around these parts. Somebody here may know something about what's happening to us.

Hugh scratches his chin.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Take the cell-phone out of your pocket. Keep it on sight.

ALICIA

Are you sure?

HUGH

Trust me.

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - DAY (TWILIGHT)

A meeting is in process in the conference room. Senator Jeneuve shares a rectangular table with seven other participants, including Debra Stein and Judge Balsam.

SENATOR JENEUVE

...This way, with practically all security problems handled, everything points to a smooth and, why not saying, profitable transition. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for coming.

The participants leave the room, little by little, with satisfied faces.

Only the senator, Congresswoman Debra Stein, and Judge Balsam remain in their seats.

JUDGE BALSAM
I gotta hand it to you, senator,
you are a first-class liar!

SENATOR JENEUVE
Thank you, Your Honour. With your
very peculiar interpretation of the
laws, it gets even easier.

The judge gets serious and stands up.

JUDGE BALSAM
With most of the judiciary eating
in my hands, you're gonna thank me
one of these days.

DEBRA
'Most' of the judiciary?

JUDGE BALSAM
I'm working on it. It can't be done
overnight.

DEBRA
Just remind them that whoever is
not onboard, sinks. That includes
you.

The senator adjusts his tie, uncomfortable.

JUDGE BALSAM
Watch and learn!

The judge leaves the room, stepping hard on the floor.

DEBRA
Many people out there are not quite
'smooth' with your transitions,
senator. The vandalized antennas in
the mid-west paint a very clear
picture.

SENATOR JENEUVE
The important is how the media
shows the picture, not how it's
painted.

Debra stands up and walks to the door.

DEBRA
If I had my way, I'd kill those
bastards, old school.

SENATOR JENEUVE
 Speaking which, how's my
 popularity? Give me some numbers.

She stops walking.

DEBRA
 You want the real numbers or the
 fixed ones?

The senator faces her with angry eyes.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
 Just kidding. Your popularity is
 through the roof, as usual. See ya!

She giggles and walks away.

The senator grabs his cell-phone and types.

SENATOR JENEUVE (ON THE PHONE)
 Mister Campbell (...) Yes, just
 finished. Everything's fine. (...)
 Yes, you know Debra, always the
 bloodthirsty one, but loyal anyway.
 The judge worries me, though. That
 big star shining above his noodle
 may cause a few problems. (...)
 Sure, I'll keep an eye on him.

The senator ends the call.

EXT. EXTREMELY TOUGH NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY (TWILIGHT)

WIDE SHOT shows the extreme poverty of the place. Homeless
 people and armed gangs share streets and sidewalks.

On a small, central square, a BLACK MAN (62) speaks on a
 microphone, on top of an improvised podium.

PREACHER
 'Cause the crooks won't get the
 hell out of there on their own!
 Only we can kick them out! And why
 is that? 'Cause we have the power!
 But many of you don't believe it!
 Yes, many of you think 'there is no
 such thing!' Many still believe in
 the politician's jibber jabber sold
 by the media! Are we paranoid? Hell
 yes! Are we liars? Hell no! Time
 for the blind to remove their
 blinders and the speechless speak
 the truth!

A few people, sparsely located, watch the Preacher.

Hugh and Alicia are sitting on a bench, watching the scene from a short distance, each one enjoying a popsicle. Alicia has the cell-phone on her lap.

HUGH

It was a mistake to go to Sushi's house after he hung up on you. You gave the bastards exactly what they wanted.

ALICIA

I was worried, okay! He sends me a message, saying that he was on to something real important, something that could change things. Couple of minutes later, he simply denies everything and acts like he had just snorted a skunk!

HUGH

Yes, looks like the skunks are everywhere. You must have left your fingerprints all over the old lady's corpse when you fell on her.

ALICIA

I know.

Alicia takes a breath and turns to the Preacher.

PREACHER

They lie to you, they scare you and manipulate you. Even so, you act like innocent lambs, gullible and dumbfounded...!

Alicia turns to Hugh.

ALICIA

You said you grew up in places like this.

HUGH

That's right.

ALICIA

But you managed to leave.

HUGH

These parts weren't always like this. There used to be law and order. Then, drugs and gangs spoilt it all. Crime ruined what was once a peaceful neighborhood. Then, I decided I had to do something about it.

ALICIA
And you became a cop.

He nods a 'yes.'

HUGH
But it wasn't enough. Lots of
corruption in there, too.

ALICIA
You said something about special
forces.

HUGH
Oh, even more than that! I had the
honor to command a team that was
the best of the best, among the
best. Me and four other guys. The
best group of crusading suckers
ever conceived by the special
forces!

ALICIA
But something went wrong.

HUGH
One day, we were called to
investigate irregularities in a
conglomerate of companies belonging
to Massive Industries.

ALICIA
The one of the serial number.

HUGH
Precisely. Gigantic multinational
of telecommunications.

ALICIA
What were the irregularities?

HUGH
The usual stuff, at first.
Corruption, illegal diversion of
funds for bellicose purposes,
contracts with suspicious groups...
We turned the company upside down,
but found nothing. So much that the
bosses didn't think twice about
closing the case on us.

ALICIA
But you didn't let go.

HUGH
No. Me and my team were not trained
to let go.

(MORE)

HUGH (CONT'D)

Right from the start, we suspected that something really rotten was going on in there. We kept investigating, off the records.

ALICIA

What did you find out?

HUGH

We had reasons to believe that Massive Industries were involved in nefarious projects related to mind control. Problem was, it appeared that certain political spheres were funding the whole deal. That's why they chose to shut down investigations.

Alicia lifts an eyebrow.

ALICIA

But... mind control? This is serious stuff! Did you report it to your superiors?

HUGH

We came very close to find something, but we couldn't gather all the evidences we needed. In the end, it made no difference.

ALICIA

Why? What do you mean?

HUGH

We were caught in the act conducting unauthorized investigations. Then, shit hit the fan. Me and my team went straight to the defendant bench for insubordination, obstruction of justice, conspiracy, and everything else they could throw at us.

ALICIA

What happened?

HUGH

Dishonorable discharge, but that was not all. One by one, my four friends died in the most absurd circumstances, armed robberies, cars exploding...

ALICIA

Getting beaten up by homeless people in dirty alleys...

HUGH

And so on and so forth. Everything neatly tied up to make it appear all deaths were accidental.

ALICIA

But, if your group was so good, how come they fell in so many traps and were killed so easily?

HUGH

Because some fucked up migraines didn't let them fight back. There was no way out.

ALICIA

Migraines as in... Like the one you had on that roof.

HUGH

I've never had them before! They only started after they kicked me out of the force.

ALICIA

If you don't mind my asking, how come you're not dead?

HUGH

Because you saved my life.

Alicia smiles.

ALICIA

And before that?

HUGH

I only escaped because a friend of mine, who happens to be a lieutenant of police, got me a job in his precinct. But that didn't work as well. I was set up again. I was wrongfully accused of stealing drug money from the evidence locker room, and they kicked me out of there, too.

ALICIA

And there are people trying to kill you ever since.

HUGH

Yes. Until some mysterious woman simply materializes in my basement, works a cell-phone, and the headaches are gone like magic.

ALICIA

A cell-phone like this one we took.

HUGH

That's right.

A small group of people surrounds Hugh and Alicia, with unfriendly faces.

Hugh turns to the Preacher, on his podium made of crates.

PREACHER

And whose fault is it? Yours!
That's right, you heard me! You
voted for the criminals, you gave
them power!

Hugh turns to Alicia.

HUGH

What about you? What's your story?

ALICIA

Not much to tell. My parents died
in a car accident when I was three,
I've been in orphanages till I was
adopted, but my adoptive parents
were out of town most of the time
on business trips. They didn't miss
me too much when I left for
college.

HUGH

Are you a hacker or something?

ALICIA

Try to be, but I'm not nearly as
good as Sushi. That boy is
brilliant. I'm sure he was on to
something, something really big...

The small group of people around Hugh and Alicia comes even closer to them, now in a threatening way.

HUGH

I guess we'd better go.

ALICIA

Go where?

HUGH

Blend in.

They stand up. Alicia puts the cell-phone in her pocket.

HUGH (CONT'D)

If we have to talk to somebody,
remember to never use our real
names.

They don't go far. Two men come and point guns at Hugh's and Alicia' heads.

MAN 1

You're coming with us.

ALICIA

Are we blending in yet?

HUGH

Looks like it.

At gunpoint, Hugh and Alicia are led inside a hovel.

INT. HOVEL - DAY (TWILIGHT)

In there, Hugh is thoroughly searched.

Alicia watches it, worried. A man sitting behind a desk signals to a woman, who was already there. The woman searches Alicia.

She takes the cell-phone from Alicia's pocket and gives it to the man behind the desk. He studies the cell-phone for a few seconds and returns it to the woman, nodding at her.

The woman throws the cell-phone on the floor and steps on it repeatedly, completely destroying the device.

Another man positions Alicia and Hugh in front of OMAR (35), a distinguished and muscular black man, who watches them from behind his desk, while he stretches his body, crossing fingers behind his head.

The woman who searched Alicia and three other men, all carrying semi-automatic rifles, take positions two at each side of the house, behind Hugh and Alicia, their faces petrified in serious expressions.

OMAR

Nobody enters this neighborhood
without the authorization from the
Preacher.

HUGH

We didn't know that. Actually, we
don't even know who this Preacher
is.

Omar nods at a window, from which it's possible to see the man on his improvised podium, delivering his nervous speech.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Oh, alright. It makes sense.

OMAR

Yes, it does. And I'm inclined to believe that, with all agitations and confusions of modern life, you didn't have time to familiarize yourselves with the local rules, right?

HUGH

That's exactly what happened. By all means we'll respect your rules. We don't want any trouble.

Omar studies Alicia and Hugh with his eyes.

OMAR

And you are...?

Hugh hesitates.

ALICIA

My name is Plata and this is Twizzlers.

Hugh turns to her with an eyebrow lifted.

OMAR

I see.

Omar nods at the woman and his three armed goons. They go out of the hovel, leaving Omar alone with his two guests.

OMAR (CONT'D)

Omar is my name, deputy commander of district five. And I welcome you to our humble, otherwise agitated neighborhood.

Hugh and Alicia mildly bow at Omar.

Omar stands up and walks to Hugh.

OMAR (CONT'D)

Alright, Mister Twizzlers and Miss Plata. I assume you are a miss.

Alicia nods affirmatively.

OMAR (CONT'D)

Could you please tell me where did you get that cell-phone?

HUGH

My momma gave it to me for my birthday.

Omar grins sportively.

OMAR

You can cut the shit now, my friend. I know what that cell-phone can do, I also know we won't find it at Walmart. You might as well have fucked us all by bringing...

BOOM!

EXT. EXTREMELY TOUGH NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY (TWILIGHT)

A missile explodes on a nearby street, tossing people, cars, and properties far away. The podium with the Preacher on it flies and crashes against a wall. The Preacher rolls on the floor, bleeding.

Residents run scared to all sides. Women desperately carry their children to protection.

Another missile drops, causing even more damage, turmoil, and panic.

INT. HOVEL - DAY (TWILIGHT)

Omar, Hugh, and Alicia bring hands to their heads and hit the deck, in instinctive gestures of self-preservation.

One of the armed goons opens the hovel door and peeks inside.

GOON 1

Red alert, boss. We're being hit.

OMAR

Yes, we noticed.

GOON 1

The Preacher is hurt.

Omar turns to Hugh.

OMAR

That's what I was talking about.

EXT. EXTREMELY TOUGH NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY (TWILIGHT)

They all leave the hovel, only seconds before the construction is totally obliterated by yet another missile.

The huge explosion throws Hugh, Alicia, Omar, and the goon far away.

Very slowly, they pull themselves together. Hugh goes to Alicia.

HUGH
Are you alright?

ALICIA
I'm alive. I think.

Omar walks to the goon.

OMAR
Sound the alarm. Send everybody
down. And call the Squadron.

The goon nods an acknowledgement and goes.

Omar, Alicia, and Hugh run to the Preacher, and Omar helps
him standing up.

OMAR (CONT'D)
You okay?

PREACHER
This ain't good for my arthritis,
but I'm fine, otherwise.

Helping the Preacher to walk, Omar leads Hugh and Alicia to a
bunker.

More missiles fall, opening more gigantic craters in the
region.

A loud siren goes off. Residents get into basements, tunnels,
and even manholes.

INT. BUNKER - DAY (TWILIGHT)

Omar, Hugh, Alicia, and the Preacher enter the bunker and go
downstairs, to a chamber. They stop to catch their breaths.

OMAR
Analysis, boss?

PREACHER
They're coming down hard on our
asses.

HUGH
Very eloquent.

PREACHER
That's why they call me the
Preacher. And who are you?

OMAR
The ones responsible for all this.

ALICIA

I knew I should have ditched the cell-phone.

OMAR

They would have located us just the same. You shouldn't have come here.

PREACHER

It would have happened sooner or later. Give them a break, Omar.

HUGH

You don't seem very surprised with any of this.

OMAR

Well, lets says that, we just didn't expect so much force.

ALICIA

But, who's doing this?

OMAR

The government, honey. Only they have all this material.

PREACHER

Which bring us to the topic of getting our material.

Hugh and Alicia face the Preacher with interrogative eyes.

Omar goes to a wall that contains a panel and presses a button. The panel opens, revealing an arsenal of weapons, bombs, and grenades.

HUGH

You definitely knew this was gonna happen.

OMAR

If they want to play, we also have the toys.

Hugh takes a M16 rifle and ammunition. He checks the weapon and loads it with fast movements.

The Preacher and Omar exchange looks, then turn to Hugh in amazement.

HUGH

Except that those won't do any good now. They're using artillery. Damn missiles are coming from far away. We can't shoot if we don't have a target.

OMAR

Hey! How do you know all that stuff?

Hugh looks at Alicia with eyes of reproach, then turns back to Omar.

HUGH

Let's just say that people don't call me Twizzlers just because I'm incredibly tasty.

Alicia smiles uncomfortably.

OMAR

Alright. What we do now, wise-ass?

HUGH

We wait.

OMAR

How's that?

HUGH

In all operations of this sort, artillery is just phase 1, to clear the path for phase 2, invasion. Therefore, I suggest you guys to barricade all access points to this neighborhood with all vehicles you can find and position your men.

OMAR

Position how?

HUGH

As I say.

Omar twists his nose.

PREACHER

I like this guy.

They arm themselves.

EXT. EXTREMELY TOUGH NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY (TWILIGHT)

A sepulchral silence now seizes the neighborhood.

HUGH

Told ya they were gonna stop, but the fun is just starting. A division armed to the teeth will be here any minute now.

Omar grabs an old walkie-talkie and speaks on it.

OMAR
Hey Farmer-Boy, bring the
wranglers, we got work to do.

In the blink of an eye, men and women appear, armed to the
teeth.

Trucks and cars are parked in a way to block strategic access
points to the neighborhood.

Armed men and women take positions on rooftops.

HUGH
I hope you have a marksman.

OMAR
We improvise.

A van comes all of a sudden and is brought to an abrupt halt,
burning rubber. Its doors are opened and seven people wearing
bulletproof vests and helmets jump out of it. They wear the
same garments as those who invade the Continental Power Hotel
and took the Chinese family hostage.

Hugh immediately draws a gun and points at them.

Seven soldiers point guns at Hugh, cocking hammers.

ALICIA
Oh boy!

OMAR
Whoa, easy there!

Omar pushes Hugh's arm down.

PREACHER
They are with us. Meet the
Squadron. All their gear, all
stolen. Nice job, huh?

Hugh holsters his gun. The seven soldiers do the same.

HUGH
Good. We need all help we can get.

PREACHER
They're not here to fight this
fight. They're here to take you
away.

ALICIA
Take us where?

PREACHER
To a safe place.

Hugh stares suspiciously at the Preacher. Then, he and Alicia exchange interrogative looks. They face the preacher again.

OMAR
If we wanted to kill you, we'd have
done it long ago.

The Preacher faces them with an almost fatherly look.

PREACHER
If you are to survive this thing,
you're gonna have to trust us.

Hugh still hesitates.

HUGH
What about you?

OMAR
We got this. We'll give them hell!

An armed man ducking on a nearby roof waves a signal to Omar.

OMAR (CONT'D)
Enemies coming.

Hugh signals to Alicia and they go to the van.

PREACHER
Thank you, my friends. And may God
illuminate your journey.

Alicia and Hugh wave their last goodbye at the Preacher.

They get into the van, so do the seven soldiers. They close the doors and the van speeds away.

INT. VAN - DAY (TWILIGHT)

Hugh and Alicia are sitting on a corner.

HUGH
Where are you taking us?

The SQUAD LEADER (37) takes off his helmet. He is the same guy who invaded the suite of the prime minister of China at Continental Power Hotel and tasted his room service.

SQUAD LEADER
Ya'll know when we get there.

HUGH
Is this kidnapping or rescue?

SQUAD LEADER
Rescue.

HUGH
By whose order?

SQUAD LEADER
A friend.

Hugh reacts to that comment as if something had tapped his memory.

EXT. TOUGH NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY (TWILIGHT)

The van arrives at what's left of the Old Junk building.

The vehicle reaches a garage that survived the fire caused by Hugh, and it stops in front of the gate.

INT. VAN - DAY (TWILIGHT)

HUGH
I don't want to rain on your parade, but the people trying to kill us used to operate a depot in this building.

SQUAD LEADER
We know that. That's why we picked this spot. It's the last place they'll be looking for us. By the way, your little pyrotechnic show almost fried us as well.

EXT. FRONT OF THE GATE - DAY (TWILIGHT)

The gate opens on its own by an automatic mechanism activated from the inside, and the van goes into the garage.

INT. GARAGE - DAY (TWILIGHT)

The van goes down to the second pavement and, after a few curves, parks on a spot reserved for loading and unloading.

The squad leader opens the van door, peeks outside, and leaves the van. One by one, the soldiers follow him.

Hugh and Alicia are the last ones out.

HUGH
What now?

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN
Now, you join the party.

Alicia and Hugh turn their heads almost at the same time in the direction of the female voice.

The woman walks to the group, but only her silhouette is visible. She stops under a light, where her image and identity finally become clear.

And she is Debra Stein, congresswoman.

Hugh points his gun straight at Debra's face.

Alicia looks with a frightened face. The seven soldiers just watch.

DEBRA

That's a strange way to thank me
for saving your life in the
basement.

HUGH

You should know this woman works
for the bureaucrats, with little
regard for human life.

DEBRA

Then, pull the trigger. Just bear
in mind that, by doing so, you lose
your only chance to know the truth.

HUGH

What happens if me and Alicia here
just turn around and go away?

DEBRA

Absolutely nothing. You're guests,
not prisoners.

HUGH

In this case, we can find the truth
by ourselves.

DEBRA

Are you sure? Out there, you are
the armed and dangerous terrorists.

Hugh thinks, hesitates.

ALICIA

We're sitting ducks out there,
Hugh.

Hugh lowers the weapon.

HUGH

We're sitting ducks in here, too.

DEBRA

Aren't we all?

Debra smiles.

DEBRA (CONT'D)
If you follow me, please.

Hugh and Alicia, as well as the soldiers, follow Debra.

INT. SECRET CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

They enter an ample hall, with people working in there.

Men and women split tasks, some on tables, operating computers and laptops, others cleaning weapons and organizing a huge arsenal, while others study maps and analyze satellite images on monitors.

The place as a whole resembles a department in a company.

DEBRA
Welcome to our headquarters.

Hugh and Alicia look around. They recognize some faces, as being the homeless people that helped them when they needed. Others are strangers.

The seven soldiers of the Squadron take off their helmets, making their faces known. There's a woman in the group. Alicia stares at them.

Hugh also takes a good look at the group. He and Alicia surely recognize the woman and another man in the Squadron.

HUGH
I know these two.

They are the couple of tourists that Hugh knocked out, so he and Alicia could steal their guns and cell-phone.

TOURIST MAN
My name is Oleg and this is
Natasha.

NATASHA
We were just trying to help you
when we approached you that day.

OLEG
We were trying to take you out of
the streets and bring you here.

HUGH
Sorry, my mistake. You caught me in
a bad day. Too many folks trying to
kill me.

Natasha nods at the Squad Leader.

NATASHA

This is Carlos. As I'm sure you've already guessed, he's the leader.

Carlos nods at Hugh and Alicia, which nod back.

ALICIA

And who and what are you?

DEBRA

I believe you already have a pretty good idea about both.

ALICIA

Okay, you're a resistance of some sort. But, against what?

DEBRA

Ah come on! Don't tell me you didn't figure that one out too.

HUGH

I'd say you're fighting the government.

DEBRA

Part of it, yes. Not to mention a number of huge corporations.

HUGH

I see.

ALICIA

So, these Massive Industries really found a way to control minds.

DEBRA

Not completely, but they're working on it.

Hugh comes near Debra, facing her with furious eyes.

HUGH

And you know that better than anybody else, right?

Alicia also stares at Debra with an angry look.

DEBRA

In the beginning of my political career, I thought it was necessary.

ALICIA

How so?

DEBRA

For a while, I thought that free will hurt the human being more than it helped. People don't exactly use it wisely.

HUGH

And you also thought that it was up to you and a bunch of bureaucrats to decide what everybody should think.

DEBRA

If a carefully selected group of wise people pulled humanity strings, they wouldn't screw up so much, they wouldn't destroy their own world. Nobody would know anything. Everybody would just do the right things, only without realizing it.

HUGH

And who decides what is right and what is wrong? You? The politicians?

ALICIA (SARCASTIC)

Your little 'carefully selected group of wise jerks?'

Debra takes a deep breath.

DEBRA

You gotta point there, my darling. There's no such a thing, only even worse human beings who just want to use this technology to their own gain and not the common good. I cried, I ate myself inside, even seriously considered killing myself. Then, I decided to be a little more constructive.

ALICIA

Alright. Suppose we believe you. How this mind control technology works?

Debra hesitates.

SUSHI

Please, allow me to answer that.

The Japanese-American young man turns around from his console.

ALICIA

AI JESUS!

Alicia runs to Sushi and they hug.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

I thought you were dead!

SUSHI

And everybody else thought you killed my mom!

DEBRA

This boy is a genius. He figured everything out even before I did.

SUSHI

Not so genius. Looks like I didn't cover my tracks very well.

DEBRA

We're dealing with professionals.

SUSHI

And my mother paid the price.

Sushi hangs his head. Alicia comforts him.

HUGH

I hate to spoil the moment, but...
Young man, you were saying...?

SUSHI

Oh, alright. Massive Industries are on the verge of revolutionizing the telecommunication market. And everybody will accept it, especially because nobody will actually have a choice.

ALICIA

They'll turn us all into their mental puppets.

SUSHI

Something like that. The company launched a series of satellites with the purpose of spreading certain electromagnetic waves on Earth atmosphere.

DEBRA

With the help of cartels in other countries, as well as part of their governments.

ALICIA

These electromagnetic waves are, by any chance, this white mist we see sometimes?

SUSHI

Yes. This mist is able to capture specific waves sent by the pineal gland of our brains.

Hugh and Alicia frown.

DEBRA

It's like a brain signature that uniquely identifies us, even more specifically than our fingerprints.

SUSHI

The collected brain signatures are sent to a master satellite, they call the King, which commands smaller satellites, called the Vassals. Then, the Vassals communicate with antennas here on Earth, strategically spread all around the globe.

DEBRA

Through these antennas, our brains are in constant communication with the King, therefore susceptible to commands sent by those who control the King.

HUGH

Like causing strong headaches.

SUSHI

That's all they can do for now, 'cause the whole project is still experimental.

HUGH

No. They can also fry the brain of a person until killing him, with blood coming out of the ears. I saw it happen.

SUSHI

And that's the heart of the matter. If they are not stopped, they'll be able to do a lot more.

ALICIA

End of free will.

CARLOS

The minds of billions controlled by
just a few.

Hugh turns angrily to Debra.

HUGH

Controlled by a few politicians,
bureaucrats, crooks, scumbags...

Debra lowers her eyes.

Sushi turns to Alicia.

SUSHI

That's what I was going to tell you
that day.

DEBRA

Only the crooks found out about
him. When this was brought to my
knowledge, it was almost too late.
We managed to extract Sushi at the
last conceivable second, but we
didn't have time to save his
mother.

HUGH

By the looks of it, you also didn't
have time to save my team from
their 'accidental' deaths.

DEBRA

The information that allowed our
engineers to build the cell-phones
that block the signal was very hard
to come by.

ALICIA

The cell-phone we stole from you
was also able to throw the signal
right back to the face of the cops
who tried to kill us in that alley.

SUSHI

Just a pint of reverse engineering.

DEBRA

One that was very difficult to
obtain. I risk my life just by
being in here.

ALICIA

In your speeches on TV, you get
pretty bloodthirsty.

DEBRA

Part of my disguise. You have no idea how low I had to sink to gain their trust.

HUGH

To gain whose trust?

DEBRA

Senator Jeneuve, your excellency Judge Balsam, some congress people here and there, naturally the CEO of Massive Industries, who I only know by Mister Campbell.

HUGH

The president?

DEBRA

I don't know.

HUGH

Well, what do you know? How far this thing goes?

DEBRA

Many countries, many companies, lots of ramifications, I don't know for sure. Not all entities participate directly.

CARLOS

The prime minister of China, for example, is not directly involved, but he knows it's happening and looks the other way.

HUGH

And how the heck do you know that?

CARLOS

We picked up something like that from the prime minister's brain. Remember those handsome devils that invaded the Continental Power Hotel and took the prime minister and his family hostages?

HUGH

Yes.

Carlos grins with an air of satisfaction.

CARLOS

That was us!

ALICIA

Are you saying you read his mind?

SUSHI

With one of our cell-phones.

ALICIA

More reverse engineering?

SUSHI

That's right!

CARLOS

What Massive created is something really powerful.

DEBRA

That's why I hope you understand how important it is to put an end to their scheme.

HUGH

You betcha. Just tell me who I punch or shoot dead.

SUSHI

We need to focus on the King, the master satellite. All collected brain signatures go there. Without it, the bastards have no means to control a single mind.

HUGH

Piece of cake. You just use your connections to get me a surface-to-air missile. I believe a BGM-109 Tomahawk can do the trick.

DEBRA

I'm afraid it's not that simple.

SUSHI

Debra found out that, among another things, the King contains vital information about the main players in the scheme. Recorded phone calls, exchanged e-mails, a real beauty.

DEBRA

Not to mention each and every setup to frame you and your men, along with all plots to get rid of Sushi and kill his mother.

CARLOS

If we destroy the satellite King, they'll just launch another one. If we really want to nail the crooks and clear your names, we need to expose them.

SUSHI

And to do so, we need to bring such information from the King.

HUGH

Are you saying the perpetrators of this thing just let all their dirty little secrets leak to this satellite?

DEBRA

They didn't leak. They were put in there, as part of a fidelity agreement, pretty much the kind 'one falls, everybody falls.' That's how crooks maintain loyalty. My name is also in that contraption up there. The difference is I'm willing to pay for my sins.

ALICIA

Can't we hack into the satellite and retrieve the information from here?

SUSHI

Not a chance. We've already tried that and almost got caught. The satellite firewalls are impenetrable, and the system is full of traps to catch invaders.

HUGH

Well, what do we do, then?

Debra takes another deep breath.

DEBRA

You two go up there and bring it to us.

Hugh and Alicia swallow hard at the same time.

HUGH

I beg your pardon?

ALICIA

You 'two?'

CARLOS

To be perfectly clear, you two go to the satellite in orbit, copy all compromising info into a memory stick, and bring it back here.

HUGH (SCOFFING)

Okay, no problem. All we have to do now is take the next elevator to orbit. Do you have one?

Debra comes near Hugh and Alicia.

DEBRA

My friends, I believe now is as good a time as any to tell you that you're not here by chance. No siree! You've been chosen! You impressed us for being the last stronghold of everything that is good, high-principle, and honest. In a rotten world, corroded by infamy, you are what is left of human dignity!

ALICIA

And we have to blow up in space because of that?

CARLOS

I read somewhere that chances of you exploding are minimal, only 43% in the space vehicle and 32% in the satellite.

HUGH

Can I at least ask you why Alicia has to come, too?

Alicia agrees with a nervous nod.

DEBRA

She has the computer knowledge, and Sushi is needed here. You obviously have the training and the emotional disposition for the task.

Hugh and Alicia turn very angry eyes to Debra.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

My friends... There's no other way. You'll have to go to the satellite.

HUGH

Now look, lady, you're bat-shit crazy if you really think we're doing this thing.

ALICIA

That's right! You people are total psychos!

All eyes in the hall turn to Hugh and Alicia, full of anticipation.

Hugh and Alicia look at each other and back at Debra.

HUGH
When do we leave?

INT. MONITORING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Debra, Alicia, and Hugh are in a room that contains a workstation on a table, with computer, mouse, and keyboard. The whole set is connected to a big screen, which practically occupies the entire wall.

The screen shows an image of Earth, from a satellite.

There is a chair next to the table, but Debra does not sit down. She works the keyboard.

The image on the screen changes to show a mobile launcher platform, with a multistage space vehicle connected to it.

ALICIA
I suppose that's our ride.

DEBRA
Yes. A routine maintenance is periodically executed on the satellite King. I arranged for a last minute change of personnel. You're going to replace the two regular technicians that normally go.

HUGH
You arranged? I didn't figure you had that much power.

DEBRA
I don't. In theory, I would need approval from the senator and three other ministers, but my signature is enough. I'm going over their heads.

Hugh faces her.

HUGH
They're going to find out what you did, sooner or later. When they do, you're finished, including your disguise.

DEBRA
When you bring the info from the King, I'll be finished anyway. At least, I won't go down alone. One falls, everybody falls.

Debra takes another deep breath.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

Besides, my life and career were over the moment I chose to be part of this mess. Now, it's a matter of saving humanity from mental slavery.

ALICIA

When do we go?

DEBRA

Tomorrow morning, at six. An official vehicle will pick you up.

HUGH

Finally, tax money returning for my benefit. It must be more comfortable than public transportation.

ALICIA

Surely beats walking in the sewer.

DEBRA

Unfortunately, you won't have much time to sleep. You'll have to learn the basics of space vehicle maneuvering, space travel, satellite operation, these things. I got some technical manuals and an experienced astronaut I can trust. The rest is with you.

HUGH

I have some training in flying small air vehicles.

ALICIA

I played some Nintendo fly simulators. Mostly, I crashed.

HUGH

I do the piloting.

EXT. PARADISE SPACE CENTER MAIN ENTRANCE GATES - DAY

An official black van stops by the main gates of Paradise Space Center. The driver shows his credentials and the van is permitted to enter.

EXT. PARADISE SPACE CENTER - DAY

The van parks on its assigned spot. Carlos leaves the vehicle, he was the driver.

He knocks on the van side door. Hugh and Alicia climb out of the vehicle, wearing their due maintenance uniforms and badges.

CARLOS

Well, I'm sure you studied the blueprints of this dump, so you know where to go next.

ALICIA

Yes. Basically, this way.

Alicia points a forefinger up.

CARLOS

Try to remember the technical manuals you read and the words of advice from our trustworthy astronaut.

ALICIA

I believe I still remember how to copy stuff into a memory stick.

CARLOS

And you, make sure that she reaches the satellite and comes back safely.

HUGH

You got it.

CARLOS

You'll be in communication with Sushi all the time. Debra arranged so everybody thinks he's part of the regular ground team.

ALICIA

She seems to arrange a lot of things.

CARLOS

And If anybody here makes contact, remember to say the names on your badges, Fiorentina Plata and Pringle Twizzlers.

HUGH

With names like these, nobody will make contact.

CARLOS

That's it, man.

Carlos hugs Alicia, then shakes hands with Hugh.

CARLOS (CONT'D)
 May God bless your path. Our
 freedom rests in your hands.

HUGH
 You owe me a beer.

EXT. LAUNCHER PLATFORM ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Already dressing their space suits, Alicia and Hugh go up in the platform elevator, with helmets under their armpits.

They arrive at the top and walk a narrow, short corridor straight to the multistage space vehicle.

EXT. SPACE VEHICLE ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The space vehicle door opens automatically.

ALICIA
 Oh Lord! Why am I doing this?

HUGH
 Because it's necessary. And fun.

They enter the space vehicle.

INT. SPACE VEHICLE - DAY

Hugh and Alicia take their due seats and buckle up.

ALICIA
 What now?

HUGH
 We wait.

EXT. PARADISE SPACE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

WIDE SHOT shows from a distance the launcher platform with the space vehicle.

A male voice says the countdown.

VOICE (V.O.)
 10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5...

INT. SPACE VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

Hugh and Alicia are now also wearing their helmets with visors closed. Alicia strongly presses both armrests.

EXT. PARADISE SPACE CENTER - CONTINUOUS

WIDE SHOT shows the launcher platform and space vehicle.

VOICE (V.O.)
...4, 3, 2, 1, ignition.

The rockets at the bottom of the space vehicle explode in flames, and the vehicle goes up.

The platform disconnects automatically from the vehicle and falls down.

The space vehicle is on his way.

WIDE SHOT shows the space vehicle going up toward space.

INT. RESISTANCE SECRET CHAMBER - DAY

Sitting by his workstation, Sushi monitors the screen in front of him, with Debra, Carlos, and a gentleman with grayish hair behind him.

The screen shows the progress of the space vehicle.

The grayish hair gentleman is the experienced ASTRONAUT (55).

ASTRONAUT
They should've made contact by now.

Sushi works the radio console, in order to establish contact with the space vehicle.

SUSHI
Module, this is base, over. Module,
this is base. Answer, please.

There is no answer.

DEBRA
Are you sure that's the frequency?

SUSHI
Yes, of course I'm sure!

ASTRONAUT
Try again.

SUSHI
Module, this is base. Answer,
please. Modulo, this is base, over.

Nobody answers.

SUSHI (CONT'D)
Module, this is base, do you copy?

With afflicted eyes, Sushi follows the space vehicle trajectory on the screen. The vehicle keeps going up, toward a higher orbit.

Carlos scratches his chest nervously.

Debra stares at the screen, impassible.

The Astronaut frowns.

ASTRONAUT

They're almost at the point to ditch the first stage. I must talk to them.

Sushi works the communication console with shaking hands.

SUSHI

Module, this is base, over!

Only silence responds.

CARLOS (MURMURING)

This was a bad idea...

Everybody in the chamber looks at the scene with anguished faces.

Sushi scratches his chin. The Astronaut makes faces. Debra keeps staring at the screen, still impassible.

An uncomfortable silence floods the chamber.

SUSHI

MODULE, THIS IS BASE, OVER! ANSWER, GODDAMNIT!

ALICIA (V.O.)

You don't have to scream, I'm not deaf!

Sushi, Debra, Carlos, and the Astronaut breathe in relief, almost in unison.

Everybody else in the place screams in celebration and relief, with fists in the air.

SUSHI

Damn, you scared the hell out of us! Why you didn't check on schedule? Why you took so long to answer?

ALICIA (V.O.)

Me and Hugh here had a little trouble lifting these damn visors.

CARLOS
I told you to study the manuals!

The Astronaut gets near the communication console.

ASTRONAUT
Get ready to discard the first
stage, on my mark.

HUGH (V.O.)
Got it.

ASTRONAUT
10, 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1,
mark.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The first stage detaches from the vehicle.

INT. RESISTANCE SECRET CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Sushi and the Astronaut watch the vehicle spiral up to a
higher orbit.

ASTRONAUT
Ready to discard the second stage.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The second and last stage detaches from the space vehicle.
What is left is a small spaceship for two people only, shaped
like a space shuttle.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

Alicia and Hugh occupy their seats. The radio maintains
constant communication with the resistance, on Earth.

ASTRONAUT (V.O.)
The directional mechanism is
already programmed to take you to
the King. All you gotta do is wait.
And don't touch anything till I say
so.

Alicia and Hugh unbuckle and float inside the space shuttle.

HUGH
I assume this is your first
experience in zero gravity.

ALICIA

Now I know how a soap bubble feels
like.

Alicia and Hugh play in their no-gravity cabin. They jump,
spin around freely, and dance a waltz.

HUGH

You stepped on my foot a couple of
times.

ALICIA

And for the first time, it made no
difference.

A light on the communication console flashes.

ASTRONAUT (V.O.)

You should have visual on the
satellite.

Hugh and Alicia float to the front of the vehicle, where
their seats are, and they look at the main viewer screen.

The satellite King can be viewed in the distance, imposing
and scaring on space.

ALICIA

Wow, it's big.

HUGH

I guess that's why they call it the
King.

ALICIA

I didn't think it was Elvis.

The satellite gets bigger and more frightening as the space
shuttle approaches it.

Alicia and Hugh sit down again, fastening their seat belts.

HUGH

Okay, this is it. Initiating
coupling procedures.

Hugh works the controls.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

A long tube with a circular coupler attached to it protrudes
out of the ship, extending itself outward, like a snake.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

Hugh deals with the communication console.

HUGH
Ground team, what's next?

ASTRONAUT (V.O.)
You connect the shuttle arm to the satellite, on the correct spot. I strongly suggest you to aim it right. Otherwise, you'll be in a lot of trouble.

ALICIA
Lot of trouble, huh?

HUGH
Did you find this in the manual?

ALICIA
I couldn't find the chapter.

INT/EXT. SPACE SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

HUGH
And where's the goddamn coupler?

The space shuttle approaches the gigantic satellite.

Alicia stares at the viewer screen and scrutinizes the satellite.

ALICIA
Over there!

She points a forefinger ahead.

A hollow, circular construction protruding out of the satellite gets visible and bigger as they approach it.

HUGH
How do we know that's the right spot?

ALICIA
When we try to couple this thing there and see what happens.

Hugh maneuvers the spaceship.

The space shuttle and its cylindrical arm, looking more like an one-tentacle octopus, get near the circular construction on the satellite, which should be the coupler.

HUGH
Very well, time for a seventy-five percent thrust ahead on this baby...

Hugh activates the rocket boosters.

All of a sudden, the ship shakes like crazy. The cylindrical arm loses control, and its coupling end hits the ship hull.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Whoa!

Alicia works the boosters. The space shuttle stabilizes. The cylindrical arm appears undamaged, as well as the hull. Hugh faces her.

ALICIA

Things work differently in space.
In here, you only need a fifty
percent thrust ahead.

Alicia looks at him.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

That was in the manual.

HUGH

I need to play more Nintendo.

The cylindrical arm from the ship moves clumsily towards the satellite coupler.

ALICIA

I guess you have to move this arm
into that thing over there.

HUGH

There's no mechanism to move the
arm. I'll have to couple it by
maneuvering the shuttle.

ALICIA

Nice.

Hugh works the controls.

The cylindrical arm passes far from the satellite coupler.

Hugh tries to correct its position.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Hugh...

HUGH

This is trickier than I thought.

ALICIA

A little more to the right...

HUGH

Steady as she goes...

The cylindrical arm collides against the satellite coupler.

ALICIA

To the right, damn it! I said, to the right!

HUGH

I know!

The shuttle shakes. The coupling end of the cylindrical arm hits the satellite coupler.

HUGH (CONT'D)

That's it, I guess. Piece of cake.

ALICIA

I never doubted you.

A light flashes on the communication console.

ASTRONAUT (V.O.)

A message saying, 'Coupling successful' appeared on our screen.

ALICIA

What now?

HUGH

Now, we get into the satellite.

ALICIA

Oh God! You mean, leave the shuttle, float in space without being connected to anything, all the way to the satellite?

HUGH

That's right.

ALICIA

Cool!

The light on the communication console flashes again.

DEBRA (V.O.)

Hey folks, this is Debra. Now, you'll have to go into the satellite and retrieve the information we need. You will find it on a data processing station, with monitor, keyboard, and mouse, very similar to any PC. You should find it easily, it's the only one in the satellite. The password to access the system is 'Liberty,' with capital 'L.'

HUGH

Those crooks have a talent for cynicism.

INT. RESISTANCE SECRET CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

Sushi and Carlos turn to Debra.

SUSHI

The senator told you the password?

Debra takes a deep breath.

DEBRA

Nope, that was Judge Balsam. The things I had to do to get it will haunt me for as long as I live.

Debra approaches the communication console, to talk to the spaceship.

DEBRA (CONT'D)

Once outside the shuttle, it will no longer be possible for us to communicate. So please, finish this thing as soon as possible and return to the ship. Don't forget to give us a ring when you're back.

SUSHI

And no delays this time!

CARLOS

Godspeed, amigos.

INT. SPACE SHUTTLE - CONTINUOUS

Hugh signals to Alicia, and they both lower the visors on their helmets.

Hugh works a few controls. The space shuttle roof gets opened by parting in two. Hugh and Alicia are now exposed to space.

HUGH

Get ready. We'll have to glide to the satellite main hatch. Good news is there'll be no wind.

ALICIA

Where's the main hatch?

HUGH

There.

ALICIA

Okay.

They disconnect from the seats.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Hugh and Alicia float in space. Alicia turns to face Earth.

ALICIA

Man, this is so awesome! I think I can see my dorm from here. Where's the great wall of China?

HUGH

Hey! We got work to do, missy.

ALICIA

What's the hurry? I finally am where my head has always been.

HUGH

That I believe.

They can also see a row of smaller satellites, spinning around Earth on a inferior orbit, almost perfectly aligned.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Those must be the Vassals.

ALICIA

I knew they were not alien ships.

Hugh and Alicia float to the satellite main hatch. Hugh presses buttons on a panel attached to it. The hatch opens, and they go in.

INT. SATELLITE KING - CONTINUOUS

Hugh closes the hatch. He and Alicia float inside a corridor that resembles a giant cylinder. They come to a bigger structure, where they find three strange modules, similar to huge capsules, only with open doors and one seat each.

ALICIA

What are those?

HUGH

Individual escape pods.

ALICIA

Ha, ha! We already have a transportation.

They keep floating until reaching a chamber, which decoration is more familiar. In it, they find a workstation with screen, keyboard, and mouse.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

That must be it.

HUGH

Then, do your magic.

Alicia places herself in front of the station as best as she can, considering the lack of gravity. Hugh watches her work. Alicia presses a key. On the screen, a field to write the password pops up. Alicia types 'Liberty.' The password is accepted and the system is available.

Alicia unzips a rectangular compartment on her space suit and grabs the memory stick.

ALICIA

Let's see, let's see...

Alicia finds an USB port on a panel below the keyboard. She inserts the memory stick there and watches the screen.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

'New hardware found...,' 'Component successfully installed...' Looks good.

HUGH

How do we find the information we need?

ALICIA

We won't even have to look. I know this system. All I have to do is run a full system backup and copy everything into the memory stick. Easy-peasy.

HUGH

Atta girl!

ALICIA

If I knew missions like this were that easy, I'd have become an astronaut long ago.

INT. RESISTANCE SECRET CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

A strident alarm goes off around the hall. Everybody in there stops what they're doing and looks at all sides.

ASTRONAUT

What's this?

CARLOS

Intruder alert. We've been made.

DEBRA

So soon!

SUSHI

The satellite system is full of traps. Alicia must have entered the password. A general broadcast notification was probably sent when she did it.

Carlos raises the machine-gun that was strapped to his shoulder.

CARLOS

It's over.

DEBRA

At least, we tried it.

BOOM!

A strong explosion echoes around. The main door that separates the chamber from the garage is blasted to pieces.

CARLOS

Take them to the emergency exit.
Go! Go!

The Astronaut takes Debra and Sushi to an anteroom.

A division invades the place, shooting to kill.

Carlos and his Squadron return fire. Men and women from the resistance scream and hide behind tables and chairs. Some cops are shot and tumble to the floor. The same happens with two members of Carlos' squad.

INT. ANTEROOM - CONTINUOUS

In the anteroom, there's a cargo elevator. The Astronaut and Sushi go into it, but not Debra. The shooting at the chamber can be heard loud and clear.

ASTRONAUT

Come on! We have to get out of here!

DEBRA

No. You go. The van is ready. The keys are on the front, left tire.

ASTRONAUT

What good would that do? Anyway, we failed. Hugh and Alicia are going to die.

DEBRA

Take Sushi to safety. I must stop the slaughter.

Debra closes the elevator door without giving the Astronaut any other chance to react. The elevator goes down.

INT. SECRET CHAMBER - CONTINUOUS

The shooting roars out of control. Policemen and civilians are shot. Carlos loses another man.

DEBRA
ENOUGH!

The Squadron stops shooting. The leader of the invading police division raises his right hand.

DIVISION LEADER
CEASE FIRE! CEASE FIRE!

The shooting stops, but the invading policemen keep their guns and rifles ready to kill.

DIVISION LEADER (CONT'D)
All weapons on the floor, hands in the air.

Carlos and his group obey him.

Debra approaches the division leader.

DIVISION LEADER (CONT'D)
Good morning, Congresswoman.

DEBRA
I make you a deal. Let these people go and you can have me. This is all my responsibility.

DIVISION LEADER
I believe that can be arranged. The senator won't like it a bit, though.

DEBRA
With all due respect, education, and cordiality, you can tell your senator to kiss my ass.

The division leader grins and grabs his cell-phone.

DIVISION LEADER (ON THE CELL-PHONE)
Mister Senator? (...) Situation under control. Terrorist cell dismantled. Congresswoman Debra Stein at the site, as expected. Waiting your instructions, sir. (...) Acknowledged, sir.

He puts the cell-phone down.

DIVISION LEADER (CONT'D)
Everybody out, except for the
congresswoman!

Little by little, workers and what's left of the Squadron leave the room. Carlos places a sympathetic hand on Debra's shoulder, and away he goes.

The division leader signals to his men.

They shoot at all pieces of equipment they find, reducing them to a pile of circuits. Two men shoot and obliterate the communication console and screens with satellite images.

A policeman goes into the anteroom, combs the place, and walks back to the chamber.

POLICEMAN 1
Nothing in there, sir, only a cargo
elevator. Somebody escaped for
sure.

The division leader faces Debra and grins.

Debra returns his look.

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - DAY

The senator puts the cell-phone back to his pocket. Judge Balsam comes near him.

JUDGE BALSAM
Your incompetence definitely knows
no limits.

SENATOR JENEUVE
It's just a minor setback.

JUDGE BALSAM
You pompous cretin! You made a
routine out of minor setbacks!

SENATOR JENEUVE
The situation is perfectly under
control, Your Honour. And I would
appreciate if you could please keep
decorum.

JUDGE BALSAM
Decorum my dick!

The judge nervously walks across the room.

The senator grabs his cell-phone and types.

SENATOR JENEUVE (ON THE CELL-PHONE)
 Mister Campbell? (...) Yes, looks like things are a little volatile right now. That's why I must have the codes for Operation Descent. Our replacement satellite is ready to be launched. (...) By all means, sir.

INT. SATELLITE KING, IN ORBIT OF EARTH - CONTINUOUS

Hugh observes the monitor screen.

On the screen, a progress bar increases percentage at a moderate speed.

Alicia is in front of the screen, practically lying down on zero gravity, leisurely crossing fingers behind her head.

ALICIA
 It could be faster.

HUGH
 What are you gonna do when you have your life back?

ALICIA
 I don't know. Get a college diploma, watch a lot of movies, maybe even join the special forces.

He smiles.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
 What about you?

HUGH
 I'll try to come back to my wife, be a more present father to my daughter, Amy. She's about your age.

ALICIA
 Awesome.

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

CRASH, BOOM, BANG!

The two ends of the satellite explode with incredible force. The satellite spins out of control. The space shuttle is forced to follow the satellite movements, also out of control.

INT. SATELLITE KING - CONTINUOUS

Alicia and Hugh are tossed from side to side with extreme violence. They crash against walls, while devices and equipment are also thrown everywhere.

ALICIA (PANTING)
What... what's happening?

She looks at the monitor screen.

On it, a message reads, 'Backup concluded.'

Alicia floats to the screen.

HUGH
Alicia, wait! You are losing...

A bulkhead hits Hugh with violence.

Alicia turns back to him.

ALICIA
Hugh!

He does not answer.

Alicia turns to the screen again. With great difficulties, she manages to approach the workstation and types on the keyboard.

A new progress bar appears on the screen, under a message that reads, 'Copy in progress.' This progress bar increases slower than the backup one.

Hugh puts a hand on Alicia's shoulder, causing her to jump, scared.

HUGH
Sorry about that. Your suit is damaged.

Hugh points a forefinger at a section on the lady's space suit, close to her shoulder. Alicia looks at the section he's pointing at. It's torn.

HUGH (CONT'D)
You're losing oxygen.

ALICIA
What about you? Are you alright?

HUGH
Yes.

ALICIA

The backup is being copied to the memory stick. We need to wait till it's finished.

Hugh looks at the workstation screen. The progress bar shows 20% and increases slowly.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

What the hell happened? Did we hit a meteor or something?

HUGH

No. Whatever happened was deliberate.

ALICIA

What?

HUGH

Something went really wrong down there. My guess is we got caught.

Alicia stares at him with a frightened face.

ALICIA (MURMURING)

Oh fudge...

EXT. SPACE - CONTINUOUS

The satellite spins back to Earth at an incredible speed. The space shuttle connected to it violently collides against the satellite hull, causing a new explosion. The space shuttle is totally reduced to debris.

INT. SATELLITE KING - CONTINUOUS

As a consequence, Alicia and Hugh are once again tossed around, only now with even more violence, the same happening with all equipment onboard, which hits Hugh and Alicia.

Alicia manages to come to Hugh. The satellite won't stop spinning. Hugh makes faces of pain, with an arm embracing his midsection.

ALICIA

Are you okay?

HUGH

Minus a few broken ribs, but okay.

Alicia looks at the monitor, which is now partially damaged.

The monitor screen is shown. Alicia can see the message, 'Copy concluded' on the scratched screen.

ALICIA

I got to...

Alicia jumps to the monitor.

HUGH

Alicia!

The lady puts her best efforts to dodge all devices and equipment that float at random.

Hugh tries to follow her.

She reaches the panel below the workstation and removes the memory stick from the USB port. She puts it in the zipper compartment on her suit.

Hugh manages to come near her.

HUGH (CONT'D)

We lost our ride. Looks like we'll need the escape pods after all.

Alicia looks afflicted at the monitor screen.

ALICIA (WHISPERING)

There's only one left.

The screen is shown. Now, there are drawings of the three escape pods on the screen, informing that two of them are malfunctioning and only one is functional.

Hugh and Alicia float to the adjacent chamber. Dodging bulkheads and crates, they manage to reach the escape pods. Two of them are indeed damaged beyond repair. The third one is functional, but also dented.

HUGH

Get in there.

Alicia faces him.

ALICIA

W... What?

HUGH

I said, get in there!

ALICIA

But, there's only room for one!

HUGH

I know.

Alicia looks at him, now with a weeping face.

ALICIA

No! No way! If we squeeze, we can both fit in there! Let's go!

HUGH

Too risky. Those pods are not made for that. And this thing in your pocket can save us all.

ALICIA

But... What about you? The satellite will crash!

HUGH

Guess I'll stay here for a while, maybe enjoy the scenery. Can't beat this view!

ALICIA

But...

Hugh pushes Alicia inside the functional escape pod and closes the door. There is no turning back.

HUGH

You don't have much time. Your oxygen reserve was in 50% last time I checked your marker.

Alicia looks at him through the pod glass door. It's possible to see that tears well up in her eyes.

HUGH (CONT'D)

Take care of my family.

ALICIA

Sure thing.

Alicia sits down on the only seat in the pod and buckles up.

HUGH

As far as I can tell, these pods are already programmed for a descending orbit until landing on Earth. Things are gonna get hot during atmospheric reentry.

Alicia nods affirmatively.

ALICIA

See you around.

HUGH

I hope in a better humanity. And, Alicia...

She looks at him through the glass.

HUGH (CONT'D)

It's been an honor and a privilege.

ALICIA

Same here.

HUGH

Girl, you're a heck of a soldier!
It would have been a pleasure to
command you on special forces.

Hugh pushes the red button on the pod control panel.

The hatch right above the pod blasts opened and the pod with Alicia is ejected to space.

Amidst the crazy turbulence all around, Hugh returns to the adjacent chamber. Even on zero gravity, he brings himself to a lying position. He places one leg on top of the other and crosses fingers behind his head, as if he were at the beach.

HUGH (CONT'D)

With a little luck, I'll crash on
the Caribbean.

The satellite falls apart around him.

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - DAY

Judge Balsam once again comes near Senator Jeneuve in a threatening manner.

JUDGE BALSAM

You are aware, of course, that our
million dollars satellite is
falling to Earth as we speak.
Whatever doesn't burn will be
destroyed in the crash against the
ocean.

SENATOR JENEUVE

Everything according to plan, then.

JUDGE BALSAM

Are you sure? My contacts told me
that an escape pod left the
satellite, but its directional
mechanism is defective. It's
impossible to tell where it's gonna
land.

SENATOR JENEUVE

Great. If the pod is damaged, then
whoever is inside will either
suffocate or fry during reentry.

The judge comes even closer to the senator.

JUDGE BALSAM

I hope you're still this calm if this whole thing blows up in our faces. Do you know what's at stake here?

SENATOR JENEUVE

Yes, Your Honour, even better than you. The surrogate satellite will soon be launched and we'll be back in business.

JUDGE BALSAM

Yes, assuming you don't fuck things up again. You may be slippery, but I got my own evidences against you. If I fall, you go with me. So, you'd better quit being such a stupid little twerp, 'cause I'm sick and tired of...

With amazing speed, the senator reaches inside his jacket, draws a handgun, holds it against the judge's throat, and pulls the trigger.

The bullet crosses the judge's head and bursts out of his skull. Blood squirts right to the furniture and the wall behind the judge. Balsam tumbles down on the carpet, dead.

SENATOR JENEUVE

And I'm sick and tired of your bad manners.

Easy like Sunday morning, the senator grabs a handkerchief from his jacket pocket, cleans the handgun, puts it on Judge Balsam's dead hand, and closes Balsam's fingers around the gun handle.

The senator adjusts his tie, leaves the room, and closes the door.

INT/EXT. ESCAPE POD - CONTINUOUS

The pod with Alicia spirals down at extraordinary speed. Friction with the atmosphere causes the pod to light up in flames, like a big lit match.

ALICIA

Oh my God! This is hot, hot, hot!
I'm a freaking marshmallow!

The escape pod keeps falling down, towards Earth. The pod is now totally engulfed by the flames. Some parts detach from the main body.

ALICIA (CONT'D)
Oh no! Oh my God! OH MY GOD!
AAAAAHHHHH!!!

INT. CABIN IN THE WOODS - DAY (MORNING)

Alicia wakes up screaming. She's lying on a couch. She pinches her own arm to make sure she's really awake.

ALICIA
Was that only a dream? If it was,
that's some long dream!

The TV is on, showing the newscast.

ANCHORMAN
...in what many already consider
the biggest corporate scandal of
the century, when anonymous sources
revealed with solid evidence that
the gigantic of telecommunications,
Massive Industries, was heading an
international scheme intended to
use the new Smartphone technology
to control people's minds...

MOGUL
Nope, it wasn't a dream, honey.

The old gentleman sets the breakfast table. At the opposite corner of the table, Sushi is focusing on his laptop.

ALICIA
Yes, I can see that. How long have
I slept?

MOGUL
Eight peaceful hours. Not bad for
somebody who's just out of the
hospital.

ALICIA
Yes, I remember now. A few bruises,
some first and second degree burns
here and there. Lucky that escape
pod was made to last.

Alicia turns to the TV.

The TV is shown from a small distance.

ANCHORMAN
The CEO of Massive, together with
its entire Board of Directors, are
in jail, waiting trial...

Alicia walks to Sushi.

ALICIA
How are we doing?

SUSHI
Very promising, I'd say. But we
have a problem.

ALICIA
What is it?

SUSHI
In the memory stick you brought,
there's nothing connecting Senator
Jeneuve to the scheme. Apparently,
the bastard managed to cover all
his tracks, somehow.

ALICIA
And he might as well be the head of
the whole deal.

The TV is shown from a small distance.

ANCHORMAN
A number of public figures,
including ministers, senators,
congressmen, and judges were also
implicated in the mind control
scheme. Many of them have already
been arrested and will answer to
accusations separately. Authorities
from other countries, which may
even include presidents and prime-
ministers, are also being targeted
by Interpol...

Alicia turns to Sushi.

ALICIA
What about me, Hugh, and his team?

Mogul enters the living room, bringing the food.

MOGUL
The data you brought from the
satellite contain recorded phone
calls and e-mails, detailing all
setups to frame Hugh and his team,
along with the identity of those
who really killed Sushi's mom. Now,
it's just a matter of settling a
few things with the lawyers, and
you'll soon be back to college with
a clean record.

SUSHI
Hugh and his men were honored with
a post-mortem commendation.

The TV is shown. A picture of Judge Balsam appears beside the anchorman.

ANCHORMAN

Supreme Court Judge Alexander Balsam, also implicated in the scandal, was found dead in a conference room inside the House of Representatives. All signs point to suicide. The judge would have shot his own throat with a handgun, after learning that his participation in the scheme would be brought to light.

The picture of Balsam, beside the TV anchorman, is replaced by a photo of Debra Stein.

ANCHORMAN (CONT'D)

Another implicated, Congresswoman Debra Stein, was shot dead in a confrontation with police forces. Stein is believed to have joined a terrorist cell also connected to the mind control scheme. A police division raided a compound, where Debra and others from the movement...

Alicia takes a deep breath.

ALICIA

After everything Hugh did, all he got is a commendation? That man deserved a statue.

MOGUL

Yep, like me. After all, I taught him everything he knew when he was a rookie on special forces. Of course, he learnt a few things on his own.

Alicia watches the TV.

The TV is shown.

ANCHORMAN

Due to the scandal, all equipment related to Massive's infamous technology, including antennas, repeaters, and towers all around the world, were deactivated. Several satellites launched to orbit by the company were brought back and dismantled. It's still unclear...

Alicia turns to Mogul.

ALICIA

Any chance Hugh survived?

Mogul hangs his head and does not answer. Sushi makes a funeral face.

SUSHI

Very unlikely, even for him. Rescue teams found what was left of the Satellite King somewhere on the Pacific Ocean. Most of the wreckage was either toasted or horridly twisted. If Hugh didn't burn to a crisp, he probably drowned.

MOGUL

I'll miss good ole Hugh.

Mogul goes back to the kitchen.

The TV is shown. On it, Senator Jeneuve gives a press conference.

SENATOR JENEUVE

...And we'll continue to work hard to bring all involved in this infamous conspiracy to justice.

REPORTER 1

As we know, senator, you are considered the great hero behind bringing this whole mind control conspiracy to light, something that even involves powerful cartels and politicians, here and abroad. How did you achieve such feat?

SENATOR JENEUVE

First of all, it's important to point out that I'm no hero whatsoever. It was a team work. And that's why I'd like to take this opportunity to give my thanks to the always important and decisive work of our police divisions, as well as the special forces.

REPORTER 2 (SMILING)

What about the rumors that you'll run for president in the next elections?

SENATOR JENEUVE (SMILING WIDELY)

Well, this is still something to be...

Sushi and Alicia watch the TV with faces of contempt and concern.

Someone knocks on the cabin door.

MOGUL (FROM THE KITCHEN) (O.S.)
Can you get the door, Alicia? My
hands are all sticky with this damn
jelly.

ALICIA
You got it.

Alicia goes to the door and opens it. There is a delivery guy on the porch, holding a box taped shut.

DELIVERY GUY
I have a package here for one
Alicia Silver. Is she here?

ALICIA
For me? I mean, yes, that's me.

DELIVERY GUY
Could you sign here, please?

He hands a clipboard and a pen to Alicia, who signs the delivery.

The delivery guy gives her the box.

DELIVERY GUY (CONT'D)
Thank you. Have a nice day.

The delivery guy walks back to his van.

Alicia closes the door and examines the box in her hands. She shakes it close to her ear, as if making sure it's not a bomb. She hears paper rustling.

Finally, the young lady builds the nerves to open the box. She places the box on the coffee table in front of the TV and grabs some keys from her pocket.

SUSHI
What is it?

ALICIA
That's what I'm gonna find out.

She cuts the tape with one of the keys and opens the box.

Inside, there are lots of Twizzlers candy packs.

Alicia lifts an eyebrow and turns to the TV.

On TV, Senator Jeneuve shakes hands with several people, with a big smile on his face.

Alicia grins.

ALICIA (CONT'D)

Laugh while you can, asshole. You
have no idea what's coming to you!

FADE TO BLACK.