

GRIFFIN FORCE

written
by

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BLACK

Keyboard *tapping*... brisk, adept... *"Federal System Accessed"*

CCTV MONTAGE

A mass of footage screens popping in... the *tapping* continues... the chaotic collage hones in on ONE ANGLE of...

A CITY BUS interior: some MEN spring up... hijack the bus! People panic, are pushed, beaten down... *"Data Deleted"*

AERIAL DRONE views: the city is surrounded by ruins and post-apocalyptic wasteland... a drone swoops down, others too but...

All have *"Data Deleted"* as they see the bus pull into an alley... passengers corralled off... by armed paramilitaries.

Creeping DRONE view: the leader signals an armored OVERLAND TRAIN (Off-Road Truck + Big Rig + Train) that rolls in and...

He spots the drone, shoots furiously! It shakes, falls...

BLACK

Tapping now nervous... a FACE moves in, it's a vague reflection on a computer screen which f-f-flickers *buzzing* and:

CCTV MONTAGE

A city street... a rolling construction equipment convoy... vans, heavy machines and trucks. The *tapping* is furious now.

Quick shots: a truck cab... another... a third, here the crew wears masks... *"Data Deleted"* As in the fourth and fifth cabs.

The convoy rolls past a newly-built neighborhood into a huge construction site... three trucks peel off... *"Data Deleted"*

The trucks park together. As the doors open: *"Data Deleted"*

WARNING SCREEN

Buzzing! *"ALERT - SYSTEM INTRUSION DETECTED"*

SMASH CUT TO:

TITLE CARD SCREEN: **GRIFFIN FORCE**

Boots *thump*. Equipment *clicks*, *snaps*. An engine *roars!*

ELF (PRE-LAP)
Team Alpha on the move.

EXT. CONSTRUCTION SITE, STREET - EARLY EVENING

Civilians fleeing! From brown BATTLE ROBOTS charging with laser and RPG fire overwhelming the few SOLDIERS present.

From the other side, a *rumbling* builds... closes in...

Everyone jumps aside, a 6-wheeled APC *plows* into the robots! Four pairs of boots hit the ground - this is TEAM ALPHA.

ELF

Sky with me! Wolf, Muff right!

LT. ALVARO "ELF" CUELLAR (Chilean/37) wears battle armor, wields a battle rifle firing streams of yellow lasers. He never rests on the job and is protective of...

SGT. HANEUL "SKY" KANG (Korean/35) who resents this yet stays on task. She also wears battle armor, fires rapid blue lasers in short bursts. Whips a glance to...

WOLF, a gray wolf-headed MUTANT-CYBORG with shades, a combat vest, metal arms and metal boots. He wields a bullpup rifle, fires like Elf but with one hand. Keeping pace by him is...

MUFFIN, a 4.5ft robot with a booster-pack. His rifle is a two-barrel Gast gun firing short blue bolts scary fast.

EXT. STREET, CITY RUINS - CONTINUOUS

The TWO FIRETEAMS proceed with selective, precise fire tearing through robots sending hot brown shards all over.

SKY

Dumb even for drones!

The attacking robots now stumble over their dead kin.

ELF

Hold! Wolf, sit rep!

Above him, in a THIRD FLOOR WINDOW-

WOLF

A cakewalk, Chief. These things only sweep. Muff! Scan ahead.

Above him, on the ROOF, Muffin's pickelhaube-like head has an antenna extend.

MUFFIN

Commencing. 4 dozen up ahead and... something big, it's closing.

WOLF

You smell that, Chief? A charade.

ELF

Yeah. Sky, update Town Hall.

Sky ducks going to her headset. Elf shoots again. Enemy fire thins out but... another wave of robots is closing in.

ELF

Take positions 400 meters up. Sky with me, *vamos po!*

He's let some of his native *Chilean Spanish* slip in. Fireteam Elf/Sky hop from cover to cover along the road as-

I/E. ALONG THIRD FLOORS, CITY RUINS - CONTINUOUS

-Wolf dashes, jumps between buildings, crashes through walls, shoots from windows. He was made for this. Four floors above-

EXT. ROOFTOPS, CITY RUINS - CONTINUOUS

-Muffin boosts grasshopper-like and runs along, scan active. He fires less than Wolf yet more accurately.

EXT. FOUR-WAY INTERSECTION, CITY RUINS - MOMENTS LATER

Wolf leaps down, *hammers* and *shocks* a robot with his left metal arm. Elf and Sky take down the few last ones... quiet...

Strewn about: debris, some wrecked vehicles... fresh bodies.

EXT. ROOFTOPS, CITY RUINS - CONTINUOUS

From behind a torn billboard... Muffin peeks out, scans.

Muffin's HUD: environmental data, highlighted items, *sounds*, coordinates, etc in intricate technical detail.

MUFFIN

Drone swarm, done. The big reading, 53 meters down.

EXT. FOUR-WAY INTERSECTION, CITY RUINS - CONTINUOUS

Wolf's ears, nose twitch. His shades have small lights.

Wolf's HUD: less detailed than Muffin's, still cold and technical. At said 53 meters, an empty T-INTERSECTION.

Nearby, Elf spots a METAL SHARD with part of a RED LOGO.

SKY

Don't tell me that's another
goddamn 'revolutionary' faction.

Elf pockets the shard... *RUMBLE!* At the T-intersection, a building erupts! A large CYCLOPS ROBOT springs up into air.

Elf pulls Sky back through a door. Wolf leaps forward across the street. All just miss debris showering *thudding* all over.

Boosting up above, Muffin hones in on, scans the robot... Sees a simple yet strong structure. The Cyclops spots him!

It emits a laser from a dish-like face. Muffin boosts down. The laser follows slicing into the building.

The Cyclops robot lands-*RUMBLE! QUAKE!*

A street-level doorway, Wolf *flicks* his fire mode switch, fires fanning orange arcs hitting the Cyclops's whole leg.

It *groans*, whips around. Wolf hides. More orange arcs hit it... Elf is firing like Wolf. Sky fires a long blue laser.

SKY

Weak spots! Joints or head!

Sky fires again nailing the Cyclops behind the knee. It staggers turning, laser tearing up the street.

Elf and Sky duck into the building. Dash down a HALLWAY.

Muffin peeks out from the seared cut as the Cyclops searches, its laser has a short heat up between shots... fires!

MUFFIN

Scan shows it's clunky but that
laser is military grade! And-

INT. HALLWAY, RUINED BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Elf and Sky dashing, a laser sears through behind them.

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

-Sky's right about weak points.

EXT. FOUR-WAY INTERSECTION, CITY RUINS - CONTINUOUS

Wolf fires an under slung barrel, an orange slug slams the Cyclops in the back of the head. It staggers *groaning*.

A way down, Elf and Sky pop out from a store front. She dives, shoulder rolling across the street until-

ELF

Go for the head-goddamnit, Sky!

-she hits cover. Elf "huffs" pissed, fires his under-slung barrel: a mini-missile *zips* by the Cyclops head.

On a roof again, Muffin flicks his fire mode switch, both barrels fire at once but slower: v-bolts rock the Cyclops.

Elf, Sky and Wolf's shots pester it all around, up and down.

Down Sky's rifle sights: Cyclops head searching for a shot..

SKY

Got it!

Down Sky's rifle sights: she's spotted, the laser heats up..

Elf hesitates for a half-second: "her or the-"

ELF

Sync shot! *Al tiro!*

SLO MO: Elf fires a mini-missile. Sky, a long blue laser. The latter: *SHATTERS* the Cyclops' facial dish. The former: goes inside the head, a fireball *RIPS OUT*.

The Cyclops staggers... *WHOOMPS* down to its knees... all quiet..

Muffin scans from the roof. The others peek from ruins. The Cyclops is still. Elf signals. They approach weapons up.

MUFFIN

Its core is still active.

The Cyclops's chest opens, out steps... an ARMORED CYBORG with half a human face, a monocle headset on his human eye.

CYBORG JOE

Oof that stung! But you're still on a leash, aren't ya boy?

"*Lupine snarl!*" Wolf aims. Elf jumps in to stop him..

Cyborg Joe spins around, his jetpack *whooshes* smoke! *Zoom!* He's up and away in a beeline.

WOLF

(sniffing)
Oh that's hot...

MUFFIN

The core is cooking!

Muffin boosts away. The others bolt off to an alley... *BLAST!* An infernal wave erupts in all directions and-

EXT. ALLEY, STREET, CITY RUINS - CONTINUOUS

-thunders by as Elf shields - holds - Sky. Dearly.
 Wolf is barely fazed, huffs a "lupine grunt."

SKY
 Chief... I'm ok.

Elf lets her go "sighing" relief, keeps a stern face.

EXT. CRATER, FOUR-WAY INTERSECTION - MOMENTS LATER

Fresh and old wreckage blend together. Muffin lands.

MUFFIN
 He is heading west to the highway.

WOLF
 I can hunt him till he's dead.

ELF
 Steady, half of this was a
 distraction.
 (via headset)
 Rhino One, sit rep.

GF SOLDIER (O.S.)
 Full complement's here, Lieutenant.

ELF
 Send four bikes to our signal.

GF SOLDIER
 Copy, four bikes inbound.

WOLF
 (lupine grin)
 So, we're chasing?

ELF
 With backup.
 (via headset)
 Lt. Falco, come in.

MUFFIN
 I'm getting a distress call.
 Dr. Sherman's just reported
 armed intruders.

FALCO (O.S.)
 (beat... then-)
 Falco here.

ELF
 What? Falco, anything from the Lab?

WOLF
 I smelled a charade but this is
 next level.

Sky has been quietly sizing up the situation, perks up with:

FALCO (O.S.)
...yeah, sounds like serious trouble.

ELF
 Shit... Muff'll send you a signal,
 jetpack bandit, get him. We're off
 to the Lab.

EXT. LARGE WAREHOUSE, GUARDED COMPLEX - SAME TIME

Battle scars, bodies with blue-grey uniforms litter the area. Two shot-pocked armored vehicles and a sturdy 4x4 skid stop.

Nearby, a large VTOL disembarks troops in brown uniforms with red stripes and a tankette drone with a dish-tipped cannon.

Still aboard: a tall, square-jawed COLONEL (48) with part of a tattoo peeking out from his undershirt collar.

A CAPTAIN (Egyptian/40s) holds the perimeter with his unit. A MAJOR (English/40s) orders his unit inside to herd-

INT. LARGE WAREHOUSE, GUARDED COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

-nervous SCIENCE STAFF away from a large egg-like canister. The tankette begins to laze it open... a red glow from inside...

ONE SCIENTIST, bushy face and HAZMAT SUIT, calms his peers.

GUNFIRE rakes the tankette drone! Some troopers by it fall. From the catwalks: some wounded soldiers fire assault rifles.

The troopers wield dual-stage rifles: part-chemical, part-magnetic propellant. Their shots *ping* all over the catwalks.

Science staff crouch in terror, a body *thuds* down in front of the Hazmat Scientist. His face, a nervous twitch.

The Major signals to an armored vehicle with an auto-cannon.

CAPTAIN
 Major! Let take my troops-

MAJOR
Denied, Captain. Up there, fire!

BLAM-BLAM-BLAM-BLAM! The auto-cannon perforates the catwalks, rafters and parts of the roof. The science staff dash out.

A trooper fires a rocket: *Whoosh! BLAST!* Burning debris falls on fleeing science staff behind the Hazmat Scientist.

He looks back distraught for a second, urges the others out.

EXT. HIGHWAY, THE CITY - SAME TIME

One side, a bright city. The other, ruins and wasteland. Team Alpha's bikes speed in the sturdy mostly empty lanes.

Against waning day sky: smoke rises from a BUILDING COMPLEX. Elf signals, they gun it to max speed.

EXT. MAIN DOOR, LARGE WAREHOUSE, GUARDED COMPLEX - SAME TIME

The cannon fumes. Half of the warehouse is a mangled mess. The Captain and Major glare daggers, not the first time.

CAPTAIN

Major Steele! Now every FPF grunt in this sector is alerted.

MAJ. STEELE

And we're leaving. Need I remind you, Bashar, these stripes out-rank yours... check the entry route.

Capt. Bashar grinds his teeth... nods. Looks to his troops.

CAPT. BASHAR

Yes, Sir. Sgt. Kolchak! Two squads, around the side. Cpl. Karim, see to the wounded.

The steely-eyed sergeant, KOLCHAK (Russian/33/M), and the tall medic, KARIM (Haitian/34/F), get to it. She glances to...

The canister's red glow is now strong. The Colonel and Maj. Steele grin as a hexagonal metal crate floats up to it.

COLONEL

(Russian word & accent)

Khoroshiy. Scientists, you have a chance now to ameliorate our scarred world. Join us.

The science staff's gazes twitch to the hexagonal crate, its moving metal swallowing the red glow... a wild beam shoots out!

On a wall, a pulsing RED MASS begins spreading... *WHOOSH!* Two of Maj. Steele's troopers torch it with flamethrowers.

Hazmat Scientist runs off motioning the others to follow. Maj. Steele's troops fire cutting many down. All stop.

Hazmat Scientist sees he's stuck. Barrels smoke. On the wall... a scorched hole. Maj. Steele smiles. The Colonel belies fury.

Capt. Bashar and Cpl. Karim stare cold... don't protest.

EXT. MAIN GATE, GUARDED COMPLEX - SAME TIME

A riddled gatehouse. A rammed gate, track marks run through. Dead FPF soldiers with the blue-gray uniforms all over.

Team Alpha's bikes speed past and up to-

EXT. LARGE BUILDING, GUARDED COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

-a side door cut out by a laser, lock and hinges avoided. They dismount, dash along the track marks... peek around...

See Kolchak's troops by the warehouse rear. Wolf "growls."

MUFFIN

Activity inside. Armored vehicles and a transport-size aircraft on the other side.

SKY

They're stealing something.

WOLF

The Einsteins here research new corn strains and these crooks killed a lot of FPF over that.

ELF

From back in the city.

The shard with the Red Logo half. Muffin scans it.

MUFFIN

Nothing on the image, low-grade metal.

ELF

Figures. Muff, up and over for the flag, we'll sweep on my count.

Muffin boosts up uncoiling a metal whip, it *snaps, sparks*. The troopers look confused for a second... Wolf lunges forward.

Elf is pissed, signals to Sky and they leap into action.

EXT. LARGE WAREHOUSE, GUARDED COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Wolf somersaults, arm blades out, lands dealing sweeping deathblows and arm shocks to the terrified troopers.

KOLCHAK

(Russian word & accent)

Ne veryu! They have a damn chimera!

Elf and Sky aim but Kolchak is quick. Exchange of fire. Ground rolls. Near misses. *R-r-ricochets*.

Sky goes to lunge forward, gets pulled back by Elf! She spins to his other side grinding her teeth, firing.

Above boosting to the ROOF, Muffin's scan shows the VTOL taking in the hexagonal crate and restrained science staff.

Wolf's swinging arms deflect shots that ricochet into walls, troopers legs until... he unslings his rifle. *BOOM!* Headshot.

Now alone, Kolchak retreats inside "*shouting*." Wolf chases. *BLAM-BLAM-BLAM-BLAM!* Shots *punch out* the rear then side wall.

Team Alpha bolt just ahead of the wall-tearing volley... duck! Elf shielding Sky as shots rip out over them.

Muffin lands on the ROOF firing through a crack, hits some troopers below. Takes cover as a VTOL side turret fires back.

The volley tears up more of the roof. Muffin falls in.

By a WAREHOUSE CORNER, Team Alpha peek around... the auto-cannon vehicle spots them, they fire first disabling it.

The VTOL side turret, remaining troopers return fire pinning them down. The 4x4 goes in with the troopers still shooting.

Turret fire hits the tankette. Troopers' smoke grenades *poof!* The VTOL *revs*. Team Alpha bolt through the smoke.

Muffin boosts up higher... spots the VTOL's FULL RED LOGO... takes photos, sees Hazmat Scientist leap out the back!

The VTOL pulls away. Elf, Sky and Wolf see the Scientist *thud* down in pain, roll near corpses. They aim-*BLAST!*

The auto-cannon vehicle *blows!* They tumble seething. The flare clears... the VTOL is a speck in the sky.

Bodies strewn about. The warehouse burning, *creaking*.

Elf eyes Sky, she's ok... at Wolf, "*mumbles*" frustrations in *Spanish* going to his headset and giving a curt order:

ELF
Check the Doctor.

The Hazmat Scientist: DR. J.R. SHERMAN (American/60s), gave his life and gave up a marriage for science. Zero regrets.

He fixes a look on Wolf breathing easier. Sky kneels by him.

SKY
Micheosseoyo! That was crazy,
 Doctor. How do you feel?

Adrenaline calming, her native *Korean* has popped out.

DR. SHERMAN
 You're very quick, my boy.

WOLF
 They weren't shopping for corn
 flakes, were they Doc?

SKY
 (click!)
 ...what did they steal?

DR. SHERMAN
 One thing that made the cost of the
 War worth it.
 (off her look)
 After so much death, that Core was
 a godsend. Where would you be
 without its new life?

Sky looks to Wolf... to Muffin landing. Elf also approaches.

MUFFIN
 I lost the aircraft, Chief. It went
 northwest up the coast real fast.

ELF
 Trajectory and likely destinations.
 (to Dr. Sherman)
 FPF relief has been called in.

Sky spots something... tears off a patch from a dead trooper.

SKY
 And what about this, Chief?

The FULL RED LOGO: a lion head in a scorpion tail ring with
 reptilian wings fanning out. Muffin scans it.

MUFFIN
 Still no matches, the aircraft also
 had one. It alludes to a manticore.

They're all puzzled save for:

DR. SHERMAN
 A mythical flesh-eating beast: part
 lion, part scorpion, part dragon.

WOLF

Manticore? It looks like the
Griffin's finally met its match.

He flicks his shoulder patch: a silver diving griffin in a
wreath of oak leaves.

EXT. THE CITY, AVENUE - LATER, LATE EVENING

A Griffin Force convoy with the 6-wheeled APC, RHINO ONE,
drives past a construction zone into a rebuilt sector.

INT. RHINO ONE, AVENUE - CONTINUOUS

Outside a porthole, the city is sliding by.

SKY

I can still see... pieces of life
from before.

Helmet off, she has a scar down her right cheek from just
under her eye yet keeps a glint of optimism.

Beside her, Wolf in his shades, gothic gargoyle still.

Across from them, Elf looks like a heroic Marine Corps
recruitment poster silent in his own thoughts.

Muffin idles by him, HUD display also on idle.

WOLF

...lucky you... still have your body.
And soul.

Sky feels those sullen words hit. Elf isn't moved one bit.

EXT. NEO AGORA, THE CITY (NEW ROME) - MINUTES LATER

The convoy passes a *bustling* zone: open-air market, bazaar,
covered amphitheater and beyond... apartment blocks loom.

Various screens and posters display information, inspire
citizens with reconstruction campaign goals.

Civil flags - the Federal Earth Administration and City of
New Rome - *flutter* on columned municipal buildings.

Ahead, the main gate to a large installation:

"Federal City 4 - New Rome - Military District"

Military flags and banners - Federal Peacekeeping Force (FPF)
and Griffin Force - abound on it as sails in a breeze.

EXT. FPF COMPLEX (THE CASTLE) - CONTINUOUS

Political and military posters hang in select spots.

The convoy drives through the busy space to a seemingly small yet still busy hangar.

INT. HANGAR (THE NEST), GRIFFIN FORCE HQ - MOMENTS LATER

Team Alpha disembark. Watching them close from a distance...

COMM. PATEL (Indian/47), a model officer: paratrooper boots, side arm, flight jacket, many lapel pins on a perfect shirt. The GF emblem glistens on his peaked cap.

INT. MAIN SQUARE, GF HQ - MINUTES LATER

Elf and Sky, armor off, still with their elite combat boots, walk under LARGE SKYLIGHTS. Soldiers and Staff are all about.

It's lively. For Elf, just a formality. The others enjoy it.

Wolf - shades on, vest off - muscular torso has wolf/man more blended than beast/robot, metal arms attach at the shoulders.

Muffin, sans booster pack, keeps steady by him.

FALCO (PRE-LAP)
Salute, ragazzi. How was the Lab?

TIME CUT:

Now by large doors with LT. LUCIEN FALCO (French-Corsican/40) who drops occasional *Corsican* words in friendly chats.

ELF
The FPF detail and some science staff were killed. Real messy.

Falco, "*goddamn...*" misses his bitterness. Sky doesn't.

SKY
Some new paramilitary group.

WOLF
Crooks, we iced a bunch.

FALCO
Good intel and good news but the jetpack bandit disappeared on me.

ELF
Did you get heat?

FALCO
Not really.

ELF
Heat's for me, it was my call.
Ok *emmano*, Commander's waiting.

FALCO
Roger that, *amicu*. I'm off looking
for *mo amore*, my love, she's out
there, somewhere...

The busy main square... large skylights... Sky also smiles.
Wolf just looks to Elf who's already opening the door.

INT. COMMAND CENTER (TOWN HALL), GF HQ - MOMENTS LATER

Screens abound: maps, current events, training drills, etc.
On one side, a LARGE WINDOW reveals the Nest below.

Comm. Patel - headset, tablet - issues orders, sees it all.
He turns to face Team Alpha approaching, motions them to-

INT. BRIEFING ROOM, CMD CENTER, GF HQ - MINUTES LATER

-more screens and a large central table. The CCTV from
earlier wraps, cuts to Muffin's photos from the warehouse.

COMM. PATEL
The first such coordinated action
in a very long time. These are
undoubtedly the same perpetrators.
Extrapolating your CR unit's data,
that is the VTOL's probable path.
Lt. Cuellar, your input.

ELF
These paramilitaries didn't steal
corn strain research, Commander.

Computers *beep-boop*. Muffin leans in, picks up "*mutters*" in
Punjabi from Comm. Patel belying his iron rigor.

WOLF
...Commander?

COMM. PATEL
Yes, Corporal?

WOLF
The crooks had inside information,
Commander.

COMM. PATEL

That means... we may have a splinter faction. You are the only unit privy to tonight's details, they stay on the down low, understood?

ELF / SKY / WOLF

Yes, Commander.

COMM. PATEL

(checks tablet)

But now, Team Alpha, it's your scheduled off shift. A *silent* 36 hours, enjoy. Dismissed.

They proceed to go.

COMM. PATEL

Lt. Cuellar, a word.

Elf stays, looks to Sky who feels his glance as she leaves...

COMM. PATEL

Would you have been able to obtain actionable intel if you didn't get sloppy?

ELF

Commander, we obtained photos and some equipment.

COMM. PATEL

A logo and some *wrecked* equipment. Due to *unique* and valuable assets, your team is not one to be simply disbanded but your leadership of it *is* being called into question. Remember Lieutenant, your team is two soldiers and two special weapons. Soldiers *can* be reassigned and you *know* what happens to weapons deemed 'unfit.'

(boiling beat)

Your unit's next assignment will seal its fate. Dismissed.

He goes back to his tablet and headset to issue other orders. Elf takes a deep breath... leaves.

EXT. THE CASTLE, NEW ROME - NIGHT

Urban *bustle*. Screens and lights gleam in the city.

INT. COMMAND DOORS, MAIN SQUARE, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Sky is nodding along by a sign - "*Caution: Blast Doors.*"

WOLF

They knew *when* to hack.

Elf exits, deep breath... motions for them to follow.
They know what's coming, head toward "*House Street.*"

INT. TEAM ALPHA QUARTERS, BARRACKS, GF HQ - MOMENTS LATER

Whoomp! The door swings open. They filter into a well-arranged room with a round table, bunks and cabinets.

Last in, Elf whips the door closed-*crack!*

ELF

Team, *attention!*

Boot heels *snap* together. Elf's thoughts simmer.

ELF

We're *unique* in a way, just look at us, but we're still a goddamn unit. I tried running this as a posse, well today that ends. You, no problems, combat robots don't have any real choice anyway. You two... go by field protocol or lose the patch. You're not *that* special. Others could - *might have to* - fill your roster slot. Understood?

SKY / WOLF

Yes, Chief.

ELF

Are you in Griffin Force?

SKY / WOLF

YES, CHIEF!

Elf eyes them close. They stare ahead unwavering.

ELF

Arrange the quarters. Chow in 30.

He leaves, the door *shuts*... the facility *murmurs* beyond.

SKY

Goddamnit! At 23 I was in the 707 and he still thinks I'm a rookie.

WOLF

He doesn't want you dying under his command.

SKY

He thinks I'm afraid. I do this job because *I'm not* afraid.

WOLF

You don't know it but you are. I know am and I died once already.

Muffin gazes at the GF Emblem on the door. He doesn't have one, just a serial ID - CR/AR-700S/35 - on his shoulder.

SKY

Who's up for more war?

WOLF

(Have fun), I need to see Funk and Kit in the Shed.

MUFFIN

(over) Stratego time!

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

Are your systems all right?

Wolf shows his left elbow, a small odd bit protrudes. Muffin goes to scan, Wolf pulls away.

SKY

That's a rifle slug.

WOLF

Not the usual kind *and* we've been hacked. So no offense, little guy but I'll show this to a trusted third party first.

INT. TECH WORKSHOP (THE SHED), GF HQ - MINUTES LATER

Pincers in Wolf's hand pull out the rifle slug. He looks closely at it with blue eyes that could chill a demon.

FUNK (O.S.)

That, *mein Freund*, is a slug from a dual stage rifle. I have seen them-

Wolf is plugged into a large patient's chair. Next to him, PAUL "FUNK" BAUER (Austrian/36), a civilian technician.

FUNK (CONT'D)

-in action before. The only thing that can dent your alloy like that.

WOLF
Military grade.

FUNK
Mhmm, let's just say it is good it did not hit you elsewhere. Do the rest of your mechanics feel okay?
(off his nod)
And your organics?

WOLF
Weary, no pains or anything.

FUNK
Good, soup and sleep will do the rest. Keep your systems on low.
(off his look)
While you are in Town, veg-out. Think back to some good times.

WOLF
(flexes arms)
Gotta be ready so not to lose one.

A flash of worry... ambience... on nearby racks: more metal arms, lots of gizmos and a TUBE DEVICE with a 4-barrel rotary gun.

PETE "KIT" AGER (English/38) enters with a bag and drinks.

KIT
Here you are, mate.

FUNK
(taking drink)
Ah! *Danke!*

KIT (CONT'D)
Big Beast, heard about the heat today. That bus hijack was bad enough, bloody hell.

FUNK
Lunacy. What was even the point?

WOLF
Someone wants decades to happen in the next few weeks. Anyway... how do Austrians and Englishmen 'veg-out?'

FUNK
(raises drink)
Coffee and Mozart.

KIT
(same)
Tea and Handel.

WOLF
And wolves eat... then sleep.

KIT

Then seasonal goodness from the
Agora should make you feel better.

Wolf sniffs. The bag is full of apples... he jabs one with a
pointer claw. It has a brown spot. *Chomp!* Gone.

INT. INTEL SECTION, CMD CENTER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

On a large screen: Dr. Sherman looking stern.

COMM. PATEL

Your secrecy prevented my unit from
a timely response, Doctor.

DR. SHERMAN

*Please take it up with the city's
Chief Executive, Commander, he
signed off on the matter-*

DR. SHERMAN (CONT'D)

*(-but your system let a hack
in.) That doesn't change the
situation. What's your plan?*

COMM. PATEL

(over)
You insisted, I imagine.

COMM. PATEL

Well, Doctor... what don't I know
about this Core?

DR. SHERMAN

*It's a marvel! One of three but
this one can be tapped into which
has led to nano-tech, cutting-edge
medical procedures, advanced A.I.,
the weapons that your best troops
use. Even the troops themselves.*

COMM. PATEL

What else can be done with it? And
what's the danger?

DR. SHERMAN

*Like all power sources, it can be
used to provide or to unleash. The
first would be a significant
increase to city grids and our
research capacity-*

COMM. PATEL

Which the City's Executive Council
strictly forbade.

DR. SHERMAN

*Due to the second option... a sudden
release of the Core's energy.
Absorption... into it...*

Off Comm. Patel belying unease...

EXT. FIELD BASE, WARZONE - DAY - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

A pulsing red mass spreads... absorbing vehicles, soldiers...
mass panic, no escape... the hellish flood creeps... takes all.

Comm. Patel (at 37) yanks a dazed SOLDIER "yelling" to run!
It's the Colonel (at 38) awed by the bizarre carnage, pulled-

-to a truck, he gets his bearings... Comm. Patel revs the
engine, tears out of the doomed base. Some others leap on...

They see the rest in the truck's mirrors... hopeless...

INT. INTEL SECTION, CMD CENTER, GF HQ - PRESENT

Comm. Patel zones in glum and on Dr. Sherman nodding.

DR. SHERMAN

*We must check all facilities even
the old ones. I'll send you scans of
any unusual energy activity soon.
Find that Core, Commander. Or risk
those old war haunts coming back.*

INT. MESS HALL, BARRACKS, GF HQ - MINUTES LATER

Mostly empty at this hour. Makes the posters more obvious.
At one end of a long table, Elf and Sky's spoons are busy.

Muffin picks up data on his HUD. Wolf stares at his food...
several boiled potatoes smothered in a bean and meat sauce.

SKY

Not hungry? That's a first.

WOLF

Just thinking back... poutine. My
aunt made the best one in town...
this looks a bit like poutine.

He's scooped up a bit, starts to eat. Sky smiles.

SKY

It reminds me of *doenjang*, bean
paste best in a stew but for that
we need more veggies.

WOLF

Which are still on ration cards.
And you, Chief? Childhood food?

Elf's been quiet contemplating things far beyond the table.
Sleeves rolled up, his left forearm: a rose tattoo.

He looks over at them, really at Sky.

ELF

Charquicán.

WOLF

A Chilean thing?

Elf nods, eats again. The others try to ignore the buzzkill.

SKY

Guesses on what Patel used to eat?

MUFFIN

I overheard him the other day
wishing for a particular food. No
money to the one who guesses.

WOLF

That old Garud Commando's the only
real mystery around here.

SKY

What's the new intel, Muff?

MUFFIN

Palak nu shaak-

SKY

What's that?

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

-but I don't have files on
cuisine.

WOLF

Each clue gets us closer. Now I
hope you don't mind folks but-
(spoon down, plate up)
-I *am* a wolf.

MUFFIN

In a sense, he's wolfing it down.

SKY

Getting better, Muff. All yours.

Beaming, she slides her saucy plate to Wolf, looks at Elf...
his stone face, a glint of a smile.

EXT. ROCKY VISTA, MOUNTAIN VALLEY - NIGHT

The large VTOL with the Manticore logo *whooshes* by towards... a dark clump of BUILDINGS where lights-

EXT. MANTICORE FACILITY, MOUNTAIN VALLEY - CONTINUOUS

-illuminate. Troopers scramble. The VTOL touches down on one of several landing pads. Its rear door opens...

Maj. Steele's unit guides the hexagonal crate to a hangar. Marching over, Maj. Steele whips a glance to...

Capt. Bashar's unit. Their pilot, VOGEL (Dutch/39/F) still in her flight helmet, joins Karim and Kolchak. They look to...

Capt. Bashar who motions them after him to another building. The rival units trade cold glares.

The Colonel, deep breaths, watches the hexagonal crate enter a HANGAR... doors close... his gaze drifts to... the starry sky.

He's calmed. There! Approaching... a speck... a rocket... *whoomp!* Cyborg Joe lands, shows some fatigue, takes out an e-pipe.

CYBORG JOE

Forty-eight hours to clear the island. And Kaluga is online.

The Colonel nods. Lights turn on at the MAIN GATE. It opens... the overland train - from the CCTV - rolls in.

Maj. Steele marches up, watches with the Colonel. The huge tires on the massive vehicle grind to a halt... doors open...

Troops disembark, open more doors... inside *bustling*, faint "voices..." The Colonel's lip twitches.

COLONEL

We need more. Hit City Three.

Maj. Steele signals, the troops snap to unloading the train. "Screams" bellowing, the Colonel strides off to the hangar.

The desperate sounds drown out. He produces a tablet, types: "Tests commencing." Sends. Exhales a long tired breath.

Cyborg Joe whiffs the e-pipe, his human pupil dilates to a solid oval... reflected: terrified people being herded.

BLACK

EXT. THE CASTLE, NEW ROME - MORNING

The base and city *bustle*. Beyond... post-apocalyptic wasteland.

INT. TRAINING ROOM, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Sky does pull-ups with knee raises. Her shirt front: "707"
Back: a white tiger - South Korean Army Special Forces.

INT. ARMORY (THE BARN), GF HQ - SAME TIME

Elf quick fires his side arm, reloads in a flash.
His full tattoo: a rose-wrapped Corvo dagger "*Love & Death*"

Impressed, Falco quick draws, *bangs* out a full magazine.
Both targets, clean outside of the 7-ring. They share smiles.

INT. QUIET SPACE, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Minimalist with *monastic ambience*. Wolf enters a side carrel.

His feet: like his torso, between human and wolf. He sits
with a headset, a wall screen opens. He speaks some *French*:

WOLF

Trois-Rivières, Québec. 2049.

Onscreen: a small city where a river joins a larger one.
His cold eyes now warm with nostalgia.

WOLF

Change year: 2050

Many pictures are the same however... something isn't right...

WOLF

Add: Event A-A-A

Jets chasing alien aircraft... a reddish mushroom cloud.
Headline: "*Montréal détruit.*" Wolf glares hard.

INTERCUT: WOLF / SKY / ELF & FALCO

The photos ANIMATE into their FLASHBACKS.

Photo: shrouded sky. Soldiers on a street crouch by sandbags,
it ANIMATES: they spring up firing at non-human soldiers.

Sky punches a standing target, furious "*grunts*" building.

Photo: a ruined alien truck on a roadside, it ANIMATES: the
doors open, bodies tumble out. Inside... people alive, barely.

Elf *slaps* in a pistol mag. Falco *racks* his pistol slide.

Photo: an alien truck with caged animals, it ANIMATES: dogs "bark," wildcats "growl," gorillas pound... some already dead.

Wolf's eyes intensify, fists clench.

Photo: a lab with alien tools, it ANIMATES: nearby, bodies... humans, animals... dissected, discarded... or fused together.

Sky spins a kick-SLAM! She's winded staring into infinity. Clenches her shaking fists, knuckles crack.

Footage still frame: a shocked alien figure in the lab, it ANIMATES: the alien starts to run away, is gunned down!

Elf and Falco stop firing, barrels smoke. Wolf bares fangs, "growls." Sweat drips down Sky's scar, her hair-

EXT. BRIDGE, NEAR FRONT LINES, EAST ASIA - DAY - FLASHBACK

-blows in a breeze. Distant gunfire *brrrrrs*, explosions *crack*.

She's 10 years younger, no cheek scar. Yet. Helmet at her side, rifle slung back, she "sighs..." gazes at...

The river flowing out toward untarnished countryside. There! Floating... a coat... a body... another... "Shouts" nearby!

She dashes to the other side... her face glistens with terror... floating mutilated corpses... H U N D R E D S. *WHOOOOOM!*

A kilometer away, a mushroom cloud with wild flashing RED PHENOMENA rises over a city... on the ground, Sky sees...

A tumbling storm *whooshing in*, the blast wind.

Part instinct, part force Sky flies over the rail... a hot shard zips by *cutting* her face... she's falling... *splash!*

She's among the corpses! "Screams!" Thrashes! Gasps-

INT. TRAINING ROOM, BARRACKS, GF HQ - MID-MORNING - PRESENT

-finishes vigorous crunches. Hands up to her face mask a moment of sobbing. In seconds, she's back to a steel gaze.

She gets up and boom: Elf enters. Eyes locked... Sky has a glint of a smile. Elf, cold and dry.

ELF

At ease, *Sergeant*.

SKY

Affirmative, Chief.

Elf gets on an exercise bike, pedals fast. Sky weans over.

SKY
 Feel at ease, Chief?
 (his tattoo)
 Don't forget the first part.

Thunk! He's stopped the bike. Glares at her.

ELF
 That's a memory. If you can't let
 go, find another job. Here we deal
 with the latter, *cachai?*

Beat. Elf pedals again, mind elsewhere. Sky slips away.

INT. TECH WORKSHOP, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Muffin's hud: boots up... *"Diagnostic Complete..."* Various data
 scrolls by until... *"New Skull Unit detected... Integrity: 100%"*

Kit taps out commands... sits back, flicks on *music*, sips tea.
 Muffin stands *beep-booping* to a familiar beat of-

INT. COMMON AREA, BARRACKS, GF HQ - LATE MORNING

-Mozart. Funk enjoys coffee and a book by Schopenhauer.

Wolf plops down. Yanks a carrot from a bag with a unit patch,
 a maple leaf on an arrowhead - Canadian Special Forces.

FUNK
 You keep going back to your pains,
 not to what you love, *Herr Wolf*.

WOLF
 Love can do much but duty more.

FUNK
 Goethe, good words but you also
 know right from wrong so do what is
 right for you... *actually* veg-out...
 even Commander Patel does it.

WOLF
 He's still human.

FUNK
 But who else could be an example
 for you, other than the one who
 sleeps with his boots on?

WOLF
 He's still got a soul.

Wolf *chomps* half the carrot, "*mutters*" in French and English.
Funk "*sighs...*" running his mind... Kit and Muffin enter.

KIT

Ah! We figured you chaps'd be here.

FUNK

Guten Tag. How did it go, Muff?

MUFFIN

Good, I got a new skull unit for my processor.

WOLF

If it were only that easy.

KIT

But then you'd forget your aunt's cooking. Even your native language.

Curveball. Wolf is locked up... more "*mutters...*"

KIT (CONT'D)

Perhaps staying happy-er, is a duty that could count as soul searching.

FUNK

(click!)

A sense of humor... the only divine quality of man. Schopenhauer.

Wolf's ears perk up, a glint of a lupine smile.

EXT. ROOF, GF HQ - NOON

Elf exits an armored door, in uniform, sleeves rolled up. Passes soldiers tweaking CIWS turrets on a *humming* panorama.

At a quiet REAR CORNER... a ladder. Elf's mind churns... he rubs his tattoo: rose, Corvo dagger, "*Love & Death...*" sees a-

EXT. ROOF, URBAN WARZONE - FLASHBACK

-dangling SOLDIER clawing for his left arm, her rifle falling to a street inferno. His sleeve rips showing the tattoo.

She can't find a footrest, sees the ledge by Elf's right arm *crumble*. She's in tears, he's on the verge: "*No! Don't!*"

She shakes her head... let's go! He counters, she shakes loose... plunges, *hits* a jutting pipe, twirls off into the fire.

Elf yanks his terrified gaze to-

EXT. ROOF, GF HQ - PRESENT

-pure self-loathing. He's wandered to the FRONT above the Nest Door. The Castle is a busy sprawl below. There!

Among many others, he spots - *recognizes* - someone walking in civilian clothes. His gaze follows-

EXT. OUTSIDE HANGAR, GF HQ, THE CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

-Sky who greets passing FPF soldiers, heads to a SIDE GATE. She smiles whipping out an ID for scan, exits with a *buzz*-

EXT. NEO AGORA, NEW ROME - MINUTES LATER

-*bustling*, a mix of community and commerce. Sky treks along.

Post-apocalyptic scarcity is easy to forget but all CITIZENS are slender, some underweight. They buy with ration cards.

FPF soldiers, lightly armed, guard these transactions. Otherwise, city-issued bills are flipped back and forth.

In key spots, screens and posters: reconstruction goals, civil service, military recruitment and city information.

Sky weaves through to the far side towards a BAZAAR.

INT. FOOD KIOSK, BAZAAR - MINUTES LATER

A ration card plops down, a salad meal slides up. Sky digs in with a spork "*muttering*" in Korean then:

SKY

Vincenzo, are you ripping me off?

Behind the counter, VINCENZO (Italian/60s), a jovial veteran wearing a GF cap with a unit badge.

VINCENZO

Due to recent unrest, the salad ration is down to four olives.

SKY

...well... market forces are going to *force me* to crush those bastards.

VINCENZO

Speaking of crushes, how's... *pololo*?

Sky ponders the *Spanish* word... stabs her spork into the salad. They both laugh. Sky eats a bite and:

SKY

Where's that war widow you thought you might meet? Be a father to some kids without one?

VINCENZO

You're my kid.

(off her look)

Feed you a fresh meal every few days don't I? Like all my other kids. How's the old mess hall?

SKY

They cook real potatoes now.

Vincenzo reaches to a tall cabinet revealing a prosthetic left forearm - simple, grip only - and opens it.

VINCENZO

And *this* is my war widow.

A neatly stashed flamethrower. Sky laughs, eats again.

VINCENZO (CONT'D)

Hey, show some respect, young lady. She saved an entire company.

SKY

And how's the arm?

VINCENZO

As good as ever. Like it *always* will be.

SKY

Ok, dad.

He shoulder pats her. They share smiles.

INT. TEAM ALPHA QUARTERS, BARRACKS, GF HQ - NEXT MORNING

Elf glares sullen into a mirror. Rubs 2-day stubble. *Splash!* Hot water. *Swish!* Soap. *Swipe!* A straight razor down his jaw.

Behind him, Sky straightens her uniform. Wolf picks his fangs with a metal toothpick, *licks*. Muffin wakes in an idling pod.

The air of readiness weans to... eye contact.

COMM. PATEL (PRE-LAP)

Previously unseen energy activity was discovered on-

INT. BRIEFING ROOM, CMD CENTER, GF HQ - MINUTES LATER

Team Alpha, Falco and Comm. Patel regard maps of the Federal Sector. The "island" is Corsica. Falco is privately off-put.

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)

-this island. It now serves as a trash dump. The cheap metal drones originated here. The hack fits the M.O. of Leon Hex, a cyber and robotics expert.

Main screen: the face at the beginning now clearer - glasses and van Dyke facial hair - on a spy photo.

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)

Cheap metal suggests he was acting quickly so we need to find out why. Our intel was tipped to this point-
(a map point highlights)
-50km southwest of our facility at Point Bastia. And so... they will get an unannounced inspection as Team Alpha inserts from the southeast. You are to recon, prosecute any hostiles but if you find Leon Hex, he is to be *brought in* to talk.

Off Elf's deep breath...

EXT. NEARING FORMER CORSICA - HOUR LATER, MID-MORNING

Falco's VTOL *whooshes* in and out of clouds.

INT. FALCO'S VTOL - CONTINUOUS

In the REAR: Elf, Wolf and Muffin sit geared up, ready.

MUFFIN

The show has started, they torched an incoming trash barge.

WOLF

Because would it burn unless there are contraband chemicals on board?

MUFFIN

Like Stratego, make them think your capture piece is somewhere else.

ELF

And like Stratego, we go by field protocol.

In the FRONT: Sky looks over Falco's shoulder. Corsica comes into view, no greenery. He *"sighs..."*

FALCO

...almost made me give up. On life...
and love. Almost.

SKY

Your mind's in a good place unlike...
some of our friends and...
(shoulder pats him)
...she's out there, somewhere...

EXT. FORMER CORSICA - MINUTES LATER

The VTOL is high above a monstrous patchwork of junk with hints of the past and grey-splotched, newly adapted life.

I/E. FALCO'S VTOL - MINUTES LATER

The rear ramp is open. Team Alpha strap onto metallic frames. Elf and Sky on one each. Wolf and Muffin on a bigger one.

FALCO

Green in three, two, one and go!

The frames slip out, wings unfold. The VTOL turns away as-

EXT. FORMER CORSICA - MOMENTS LATER

-Team Alpha glides. Spot corridors and spaces among the junk. There! A flat stretch. They bank toward it.

TIME CUT:

Wolf touches down. The others are getting bearings.

MUFFIN

Five clicks right along this road.

Wolf's HUD: a red indicator for *"Waypoint - 5.03km"*

WOLF (O.S.)

Too good to be true.

TIME CUT:

They proceed wary down a road. Ahead... *rumble*, dust kicked up... they go weapons ready... a tracked construction drone drives by-

Muffin's HUD: -ignoring them. *"Target signals masked"*

Wolf's HUD: *"Waypoint - 2.02km"* Elf signals them forward.

EXT. TOWN REMAINS, VALLEY, FORMER CORSICA - LATER, NOON

They pass old buildings lurking within the junk.
Unseen by them: a garage door with a lion image... opens...

Wolf's HUD: "Waypoint - 0.17km" He spots a metal mast... then another... and another.

WOLF

Chief, those are *not* old power line
masts.

Six metal masts among the junk make a stadium-sized ring...
right around them... Sky sizes up details all around.

MUFFIN

Even readings all around, Chief, my
scanners are being masked.

Buzzing! Closing in fast, kicking up dust, it's-

ELF

Lances out! Sky with me!

-a mass of CYCLE DRONES and a BIG TRACKED DRONE with a dome.
Team Alpha lunge diving away from rapid laser fire and into...

Motocross and destruction derby meshed with a shootout.
Drones tumble and erupt. Muffin spots a flying shard with-

Muffin's HUD: -the Manticore logo whipping by.

The dome opens to... a ROBOT with two dish-face heads emitting
searing beams and hand cannons firing perforating barrages.

Team Alpha dash, dodge, duck. Fire back. Cycle Drones, easy.
The Tracked Drone, relentless firepower.

A beam separates fireteam Elf/Sky. Elf: eyes wide in terror.
Seconds later: Sky springs up firing.

ELF

On my shoulder! Wolf, Muff! Around!

They maneuver the Tracked Drone into a crossfire while,
unseen by them, the metal masts start to glow blood red...

Elf's mini-missile nails the engine. Sky's long blue laser,
Wolf's orange slug burst heads. Muffin's v-bolt tears an arm.

The tracked drone rolls ablaze... they see the masts, red
energy streams form a hexagonal arena. *Rumbling...*

EXT. NANO ZONE, FORMER CORSICA - CONTINUOUS

ROBOTIC VOICE
 (deep, omnipresent)
 Welcome to the Nano-Zone!

Six hatches near each mast *pop* open. Swarming out... nano-bots, a collective of microscopic robots that forms... one nano-mech.

WOLF
 Permission to add a million to my
 count, if I kill that thing, Chief.

ELF
 Funny. Fire teams, *al tiro!*

Nano-Mech one: a tank-sized LION. Team Alpha evade it in old buildings or seared holes where it can't follow or reach.

Team Alpha's fire DEPLETES the mech... it *BURSTS* into a swarm. They check their weapons, ready. The swarm reforms...

ROBOTIC VOICE
 Power up!

Nano-Mech two: a LION with a SCORPION TAIL waving, punching through junk. Slower but tougher and heavier. And it *roars*.

The Nano-Mech leaps by Muffin, his Metal Whip flings out. *Snap! Spark!* A small NANO CLUMP drops off *fizzing*.

Elf and Sky dashing... the scorpion tail *punches* out! Sends Sky twirling midair. Elf reaches out with a flash of terror.

Wolf and Muffin draw the Nano-Mech away. Sky *thuds* down, shoulder rolls into a kneeling stance.

ELF
 Sky, sit rep!

SKY
 Still here, just angrier.

Blood trickles over her eye down to her scar. Elf feels relief yet still boils. Wolf grins, "*atta girl.*"

Shots tear into the Nano-Mech, it *BURSTS!* Reforms...

ROBOTIC VOICE
 Change alone endures!

Muffin's hud: hones in on a hexagonal box inside the swarm.

MUFFIN

I detect a nerve center.

Nano-Mech three: a lion with a scorpion tail, dragon wings and a jaw laser -- a mantichore!

Team Alpha fire, wear it down. Leap, roll, evade its attacks.

Elf is singed by the laser. Wreckage briefly pins Wolf's arm. A metal slab nearly crushes Muffin. Lightning wits save them.

The Nano-Mech is depleted, faltering. The box, just visible.

ELF

Sync shot! *Al tiro!*

SLO MO: Elf fires a mini-missile. Sky, a long blue laser. The latter: sears through the nano all the way to the box. The former: follows the laser... direct hit! The nano *BURSTS!*

Rains down! Leaves Wolf knee-deep in junked metal, a small clump by his left elbow starts MESHING... *BZZZZ!* Fried.

Nearby, Elf eyes Sky hard as the red energy streams die down.

SKY

(wiping face)

All good, Chief. Really.

MUFFIN

The energy field is down but that nerve center is still act-

BLAST! The energy masts *explode*. *THOOMP!* The ground jolts!

Subsides into a crater. Team Alpha bolt away, Elf and Sky just ahead of the moving CRATER EDGE. Dust settles...

Eyes and guns snap to... hexagonal box... opening... Wolf *sniffs*, sees... a tangled interface rig... a BATTERED MAN choking.

His face, from the spy photo. By him, the Manticore Logo. The man *gulps*, turns seeing Wolf "*growl!*" Panics!

Wolf yanks him out. Elf lunges between them booming.

ELF

He has to *talk!*

WOLF

I'll get him to *spell*.

ELF (CONT'D)

Sky, hold the capture. Muff, call it in. And you, deep breaths.

SKY

Easy, this one isn't buzzing away.

She walks up, Wolf backs off... still glaring at Leon Hex who-

INT. WINDOW, INTERROGATION ROOM, GF HQ - LATER, AFTERNOON

-sits alone behind thick glass. Oddly calm, looking off.

COMM. PATEL

Good job on the capture. This is how I expect Team Alpha to perform.

ELF

Thank you, Commander.

COMM. PATEL

Don't add anything up yet, but keep your com on. Dismissed.

Elf leaves. Comm. Patel sees... Leon Hex staring right at him.

INT. TEAM ALPHA QUARTERS, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Wolf paces back and forth "*muttering.*" At the table, Sky and Muffin play Stratego. Muffin moves a spy, hits a bomb.

Elated, Sky moves a piece next to his flag then droops as Muffin sends a scout down an open row to... her flag.

MUFFIN

I just can't resist beating a woman... in a game.

He plays a "*laugh track.*" Sky fake laughs, balms her scar.

SKY

Your nickname also means 'vagina.'

MUFFIN

No laugh for that.

SKY

Because it's funny all by itself!

MUFFIN

You win that game, I am unable to assess humor. How about you, Wolf?

Wolf zones in with a confused "*grunt.*"

MUFFIN (CONT'D)

What is the human concept of humor?

WOLF

Unexpected senselessness like an easily predictable move. Hex was ready, he *knew* to purge whatever he had hidden there. His hacking was the inside info from the other day.

SKY

And we captured him so Manticore lost this round.

Wolf "*scoffs.*" Elf enters, as the door shuts-

WOLF

Chief, I could crack him open like a walnut.

ELF

That's why the Commander's handling it. Anyway, we're on standby.

WOLF

Oh I'm standing by.

ELF

Good. And we went by field protocol. Mostly.

Tattoo peeking out, he shares a happy glint with Sky. Wolf isn't calmed, gazes at Muffin.

LEON HEX (PRE-LAP)

That big pet and little toy-

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM, GF HQ - MID-AFTERNOON

Hex *drums* his tattooed fingers. Comm. Patel eyes him close.

LEON HEX (CONT'D)

-say otherwise. Even your troops' weapons. All *prove* the Core *can-*no! *Should* be unleashed. Look at the state of the world!

Hex *pounds* the table not fazing Comm. Patel.

LEON HEX (CONT'D)

Torn asunder!

COMM. PATEL

Being rebuilt.

LEON HEX (CONT'D)

More progress is demanded! Those in power these 'ruling veterans...' *ugh!* They only wallow in it.

COMM. PATEL
Their power is subject to laws.

LEON HEX
The power of the core shouldn't!
(eye to eye, smirks)
You're afraid of it.

COMM. PATEL
I'm concerned that someone who's
seen that power *isn't* afraid of it.

LEON HEX
The words of every stubborn fool at
the top. First about electricity.
Then industry. Next computers. In
this world, everything is relative
and so change alone endures. Now-

He puts his hands together... fingers interlock... the tattoos...
make a pattern: the Manticore logo.

LEON HEX (CONT'D)
-we have the Core... a terraformer.
It's a marvel!

Off Comm. Patel's look...

INT. TECH WORKSHOP, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Magnifying glass view: pincers pry open the fried nano clump...
the inside, unburned... moves! Bounces around in a secure jar.

Funk *slaps* a lid onto the jar trapping it. Wolf glares.
The nano calms, remains active like a simple organism.

FUNK
It's a generation or two ahead... of
what is currently available.

WOLF
That facility was a testing ground...
but you *have* seen this before?

FUNK
In an iso-lab. *Isolated*, secure. Or
so we thought. And your arm is-

WOLF
Fine.

By his left elbow where the slug hit, nano attached... a scar.

KIT

He means: that's where your arms
and mechanics are from. This tried
to merge since it recognized that.

Wolf gazes to the other metal arms on the rack... his fists
clench, eyes drift off to-

INT. WOLF'S POV, ALIEN LAB - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

-a haze... metal arms hang... strange figures, alien scientists.

I see my body, human. Arms, mangled. I'm weak... eyes sweaty...
I'm on a medical table... other tables, mutilated bodies.

Red lasers descend! *S-s-slice!* I have no arms! I "*scream!*"
There! A grey wolf, also weak. Eye contact... lasers again...

INT. TECH WORKSHOP, GF HQ - PRESENT

Wolf plops down to the patient's chair... "*lupine whimper...*"
Kit and Funk step up, comfort him with a neck scratch.

FUNK

Relax. Potatoes in the mess hall,
soon they will be cooking poutine.

Off Wolf's glimmer of joy...

DR. SHERMAN (PRE-LAP)

The science is what matters and-

INT. INTEL SECTION, CMD CENTER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

On the large screen: Dr. Sherman with a darker background
than during the previous call.

DR. SHERMAN (CONT'D)

*-that means control or we face
sudden release. This... Hex, what
does he know?*

COMM. PATEL

More than he should. And enough to
be fascinated by this nasty Core.

DR. SHERMAN

*It's a marvel. But we must be
careful with it.*

COMM. PATEL

...we can agree on the latter... but
this Core, it's not just power.
There's more. A lot more.

Dr. Sherman nods, concedes:

DR. SHERMAN
It's a terraformer, meaning it-

INT. DIM OFFICE, UNKNOWN LOCATION - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Sherman is sitting before a small desk screen. It's not clear how big or where - no windows - this room is.

DR. SHERMAN (CONT'D)
-makes a planet suitable for life.
Yes, the aliens' life but they had...
(boiling beat)
...a very adaptable collective. They
were *incorporating* us into it.

CUTAWAY: Comm. Patel takes a deep breath...

I/E. TRUCK, FIELD BASE, WARZONE - DAY - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

The truck escapes the pulsing red mass... ahead, a bomb *hits!*
A red mass begins... Comm. Patel yanks the wheel, spots outside-

-the passenger window, the red mass is *alive* merging with
everything creating a syncretic new matter. Imperfectly.

Horribly imperfectly. Metal-rock-fused soldiers "*shrill!*"
Patel's passenger, the Colonel gazes eyes wide... mesmerized...

INT. INTEL SECTION, CMD CENTER, GF HQ - PRESENT

COMM. PATEL
Transforming us into their assets
like that amounted to mass murder.

DR. SHERMAN
*I reined in that Core, you reaped
its fruits: your best troops and-*

COMM. PATEL
Power subject to laws works as
intended but now this group,
Manticore, a syncretic beast.

He whips out his tablet, shows the scanned Manticore logo.

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)
It's as if it were made by a power
like this Core. And 'Leon,' meaning
our prisoner Leon Hex, is its lion.
So, Doctor, there must also be a
scorpion and a dragon.

INT. DIM OFFICE, UNKNOWN LOCATION - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Sherman stares off... nods *drumming* his fingers.

DR. SHERMAN
 ...you're onto something, Commander.
 Where are you holding Hex? I'd like
 a word about pressing matters.

The desk screen: off Comm. Patel's gaze...

INT. CELL, LOCK UP (THE CELLAR), GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

A door shuts behind Leon Hex, he begins looking around...

COMM. PATEL (O.S.)
 He's in custody for the time being.

Hex takes a deep breath... puts his hand into his mouth, gags...

INT. INTEL SECTION, CMD CENTER, GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

On the large screen: Dr. Sherman glares silent.

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)
 The city's Chief Executive signed
 off on the matter, Doctor.

DR. SHERMAN
*Appropriate security measures. Do
 inform me, Commander, when I'd be
 able to have a word with... Mr. Hex.*

COMM. PATEL
 Of course, Doctor.

The call ends. Comm. Patel glances at... the Manticore logo.

INT. CELL, LOCK UP (THE CELLAR), GF HQ - SAME TIME

Leon Hex gags... he's pulling out a string... with a small bag.
 He breathes easy opening the bag, pulls out... a small device.

He looks around. All quiet. He sits on the cot. Presses a
 button on the device... a small red light starts blinking-

INT. PATEL'S STATEROOM, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

-blinking-beep. A wall safe opens. Comm. Patel yanks out...
 A thumb drive. Deep breath, his eyes drift far off to-

TIME CUT:

-old war photos on a computer. The drive is plugged in, busy cycling many photos... there! In one photo... it's the Colonel-

I/E. TRUCK, COUNTRY ROAD FORK - EVENING - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

-fidgeting in the passenger seat in a heated argument. Wounded soldiers "wail" in the back. The fuel gauge is low.

Comm. Patel pounds the wheel. The truck revs, rolls forward... down the left road past war wreckage and craters.

INT. INTEL SECTION, CMD CENTER, GF HQ - PRESENT

Comm. Patel searches names with ID photos on a screen, looks glum at the parade of MIA and KIA faces.

Adjacent screen: old war photos cycle *beeping-booping* until... one of them matches an ID photo: "*Vladimir Chizhikov, MIA*"

The man from his memory, the young Colonel. His collar has the small tattoo... a dragon head peeking out on-

I/E. TRUCK, COUNTRY ROAD - TWILIGHT - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

-COL. VLAD (now his appellation) airing out his shirt. He's sweaty, tired, whips a glance to-

-a weary Comm. Patel driving, sees lights up ahead, squints. An ARMY CAMP. He's relieved but Col. Vlad stares ahead stern...

COL. VLAD (PRE-LAP)
That future leads nowhere!

INT. LONG TENT, ARMY CAMP - LATER, NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Col. Vlad spins around glaring at an unsure Comm. Patel. Both are standing. Many other weary soldiers lounge around.

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
Every time a strong society met a
weak, it dominated. You are from
India, Patel, you should know.

Comm. Patel breathes deep, stays quiet. Others too. There's a gravity to Col. Vlad's posture. He turns to-

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
No offense on your countrymen's
brutal yet very effective job.

-Maj. Steele whose fascination stands out from tired stares.

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
 Even my motherland did not get so
 big by being nice. You Americans-
 (a few soldiers)
 -too before you switched to Coca-
 Cola and Disney but I do not think
 our current foes are merchants.

COMM. PATEL
 You saw what their weapons do. This
 isn't a conqueror but a virus!

COL. VLAD
 So the future belongs to those who
 adapt and shed those who refuse.

He's dominating the tent now, Comm. Patel sinks back.

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
 Our only chance to ameliorate our
 scarred world. To all those
 willing, I ask you to come with me.

Maj. Steele and others spring up, march with Col. Vlad who
 shoots Comm. Patel a glance on his walk out into the DARK-

COMM. PATEL
 This is (mutiny)!

COL. VLAD (PRE-LAP)
 (over)
 Revolution-

EXT. ROCKY VISTA VIEW, MANTICORE FACILITY - NIGHT - PRESENT

-NESS... MOVING down... in dim lights: idle VTOLs, vehicles but...
 the overland train rolls past under a building window where-

COL. VLAD (V.O.)(CONT'D)
 -is a journey through a hell that
 others have wrought. Consolidation-

INT. HANGAR, MANTICORE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

-a Manticore logo dominates, Col. Vlad orates to his troops.
 His wild gestures now refined. Behind him, Cyborg Joe looms.

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
 -is our means through it. We have
 seen- *felt* -the power of the Core!

In a corner... Capt. Bashar, Vogel, Karim and Kolchak honed in
 yet wary. Karim is rubbing her right forearm.

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
 Many of us were healed by its power
 and next we will *all* join it.

The Manticore logo is a screen, it morphs to show the hexagonal crate in a LARGE ARENA opening to a red glow...

CUTAWAY: a backlit DARK FIGURE listens barely moving as...

The crowd swells with anticipation... on screen: an AI/CGI-generated propaganda reel of a cybernetic utopia appears...

Off Capt. Bashar's troubled stare at-

PROPAGANDA REEL - MONTAGE

-what looks like a commercial for an open-world sci-fi game. But no villains anymore. Just harmony, balance and peace.

"Heal the pains of yesterday..."

COL. VLAD (O.S.)(CONT'D)
A unit can take a hill. An army, a region. But foresight, the horizon!

Compared to the ruins in and around New Rome it's alluring. And if you've survived an apocalypse, downright seductive.

"...to face the challenges of tomorrow."

INT. HANGAR, MANTICORE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

On the large screen: the reel continues, Col. Vlad's gestures seem timed to it stirring the mass of loyal troops.

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
The Federal Earth Administration said the Core was unstable yet...

Off Kolchak remembering-

EXT. LARGE WAREHOUSE, GUARDED COMPLEX - FLASHBACK

-Wolf pummeling and shocking his troopers.

COL. VLAD (O.S.)(CONT'D)
They created new weapons with it!

INT. COCKPIT, VTOL, GUARDED COMPLEX - FLASHBACK

Vogel spots Muffin boosting up from the damaged roof, hears "shouts!" as Dr. Sherman leaps out the back.

COL. VLAD (O.S.)(CONT'D)
To guard their status quo!

Vogel hits the throttle, her eyes glum as-

INT. HANGAR, MANTICORE FACILITY - NIGHT - PRESENT

-she rubs her elbow. "*Cheers*" boom in the hangar with:

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
We shall show them a new one!

Above and behind the crowd... in a window: the Dark Figure. Nods satisfied putting on a beret. Departs promptly.

Vogel plays along, looks to Karim, Kolchak and Capt. Bashar. They all share a glance, a breath... resume playing along.

INT. ROUND HALLWAY, ATOM SECTOR, MANTICORE FACILITY - LATER

A large reinforced GATE with an ATOM LOGO opens... in stride...

Col. Vlad and Capt. Bashar. Karim, Kolchak and Vogel follow. Plodding along in eavesdropping orbit... Cyborg Joe.

Troops with the Atom logo on their shoulder patches right beneath the Manticore logo attend to the area.

COL. VLAD
Most revolutionaries are scorpions,
just want to sting the status quo.
Lions want to know 'why?'

Kolchak, Vogel listen. Incognito, Karim opens a small medkit...

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
But you, Captain, are a dragon. You
demand to know. That is conviction!

Col. Vlad points to Capt. Bashar's unit patch, a BOW & ARROW with WINGS under the Manticore logo. The others also have it.

Off Capt. Bashar's look...

I/E. TRUCK, CONSTRUCTION SITE, NEW ROME - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

One in the construction equipment convoy in the opening CCTV. It peels off from the convoy... two more follow... they ride to...

A building shell... they park... masked troops unload boxes with the robots from Team Alpha's opening street battle.

One trooper inspects them, airs out his mask revealing the familiar face of Capt. Bashar, he nods-

INT. ROUND HALLWAY, ATOM SECTOR - PRESENT

-like Kolchak, Vogel and Karim whose hand is in the medkit.

They stop at thick acrylic WINDOWS, beyond... the large arena and hexagonal crate as seen in the propaganda reel.

COL. VLAD

This is why you are all here. It has *allowed* you all to be here.

Eyes: Capt. Bashar, Kolchak, Vogel, Karim... her open medkit.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HEXAGONAL ARENA - SAME TIME

Gloved hands type... a screen shows the hexagonal arena... it has a large space beneath: "*Containment Area*"

COL. VLAD (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Our scientists made it possible. They made hard decisions.

The gloved hands take a hazmat helmet, whip up to-

INT. CONTAINMENT AREA, UNDER ARENA - SAME TIME

-a touchpad: "*beep...*" a door opens. This space is only seen reflected on the hazmat helmet visor. It's dim, sterile yet...

So much is moving here... unclear... a pulsing mass with many vaguely humanoid shapes. The gloved hand nears a button...

COL. VLAD (V.O.)(CONT'D)

Healing is a struggle... healing the world... especially so.

...presses it. In the visor: bright orange, yellow... fire...

INT. GATE, ROUND HALLWAY, ATOM SECTOR - MINUTES LATER

Col. Vlad stays on the Atom Sector side, the others exit. Kolchak has a TABLET. Karim's medkit is now closed.

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)

Major Steele is doing what is required of him as you, Captain, must do what is required of you. Manticore must be complete.

Kolchak's tablet: a map renders, a point starts blinking-

INT. LOCK UP (THE CELLAR), GF HQ - SAME TIME

-blinking... the light on Leon Hex's small device... in his cupped hand. He's on the cot, takes a deep breath.

EXT. CORNER, HANGAR, MANTICORE FACILITY - LATER, NIGHT

Under a solitary light, Capt. Bashar flexes his fingers, Karim hers. Vogel her elbow. Kolchak taps his knee.

Capt. Bashar sees several VTOLs being loaded by his troops. He turns to Karim about to ask, she just nods.

CUTAWAY: the Round Hallway... on a wall... a small spy drone.

Kolchak sees the drone's footage feed on his tablet. *Whoomp!* A door opens. He switches to the map and blinking point.

CYBORG JOE

(keeps walking)

Are your systems in gear?

CAPT. BASHAR

Just handle that wolf-beast if we bump into it.

Kolchak dreads that.

CYBORG JOE

History shows there are no invincible soldiers.

CAPT. BASHAR

That includes you.

He turns to his team. Nods. They move out. Vogel sees the VTOLs ready and off her look slipping on gloves...

INT. TRAINING ROOM, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME NIGHT

Falco zooms on a treadmill. Elf "*huffs*" with free weights, sweating, his tattoo bobbing.

Funk rides an exercise bike, one eye on a tablet: readings jiggle as Wolf does squats with a huge barbell.

Elf stops exhausted holding the barbells white knuckle tight. Eyes at infinity, he drops the weights...

MEMORY FLASH: the dangling soldier falls *hitting* the pipe...

TH-THUD! Elf's weights hit the floor. He "*sighs...*" walks out.

Wolf watches him go... places the barbell. The tablet readings ease down a bit, still fidget.

Falco finishes a 3k at "*9:15.*" Wolf re-racks the weights. They follow Elf. Funk gathers his tablet, tries to keep up.

INT. ARMORY (THE BARN), GF HQ - MOMENTS LATER

Muffin tracks wildly moving targets, shoots when they stop.

Kit's tablet: "*Tracking-95% Accuracy-99% Total Lag-0.93 sec.*"
He sends the data to Muffin's Hud, they exchange a thumbs up.

Elf strides in. Kit tries to say "*hi...*" **BANG-BANG-BANG!**
A target takes hits. Elf reloads in a flash. More *shooting*.

Wolf and Falco enter. Funk soon after. They gaze at Elf who
fires off a third magazine... has no more... Wolf approaches...

WOLF

Can I be frank, Alvaro...? I lost...
also a lot and my soul. Still
haven't found the latter but...

On Funk's tablet: readings jiggle wild.

WOLF (CONT'D)

...you didn't let go. *She* let go. So
you could live.

ELF

Then she'd be disappointed. If I'm
wearing this-
(Griffin Force patch)
-I should let this grief go.

WOLF

She'd understand. I know I do.

Elf holsters his gun. Looks around, back to Wolf.

ELF

Then you've still got some soul.

FALCO

Hey *amicu*, that first part-
(Elf's tattoo)
-is *first* for a reason. I mean... I'm
afraid I'll get my wish, *what then?*

He laughs. Wolf grins. Curious Muffin takes all this in.
On Funk's tablet: readings ease down... the room cools.

FUNK

How about (coffee and
Mozart?)

KIT

(over)
Some tea and Handel?

Off Elf's glint of a smile...

INT. TEAM ALPHA QUARTERS, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Sky is on a call while fiddling with the Stratego board still set to Muffin's winning move earlier.

SKY

That's exactly what I want but-

INT. FOOD KIOSK, BAZAAR - CONTINUOUS

Vincenzo, phone in his right hand, slides salads to customers with his prosthetic left. Turns back into the kiosk.

SKY (O.S.) (CONT'D)

-duty calls. We're on standby.

VINCENZO

Classic op-sec talk for 'ready in case shit hits the fan.'

INTERCUT: SKY / VINCENZO

SKY

Tell me about it. Keep your lady close. That's op-sec talk, too.

Vincenzo looks over to the tall cabinet.

VINCENZO

Ok, kid. I'll see you presto.

SKY

Ok, dad.

Vincenzo hangs up glancing to his customers, to the cabinet... He opens it revealing his old flamethrower.

INT. TEAM ALPHA QUARTERS, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Sky studies the board... slides the scout down the open rank.

SKY

Boom. Should've seen it coming.

EXT. FLYING POV #1 - NIGHT

Engines hum. Clouds part... city lights glow far off.

INT. COMMAND CENTER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

On one screen: various air traffic... a new group appears.

Comm. Patel receives a "Flight Log Update" on his tablet from his adjutant, call him CATTANEO, a young Italian officer.

CATTANEO
It's a training (flight,
Commander.)

COMM. PATEL
(over)
The aerial drones aren't
picking it up.

INT. COMMON AREA, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Sky enters into commotion. Funk shows a gizmo to Wolf, Kit, Elf and Falco who sip from mugs. Muffin observes all.

FUNK
...you can even swallow it for a real
secret transmission...

This idea stirs Wolf. Elf notices Sky, offers her a mug.

FUNK (O.S.)(CONT'D)
...can get lost in our feelings yet
we don't actually have to get lost...

Hot tea. Sky smiles, sips... suddenly! A concerned voice:

WOLF
Chief! Hex was gagging when
(we nabbed him). He *swallowed*
something.

ELF
(over)
You nearly killed him?

Pause. They see Funk flick on his gizmo that's now blinking-

INT. LOCK UP (THE CELLAR), GF HQ - SAME TIME

-blinking light on Hex's small device, faster now. He smiles.

INT. COMMAND CENTER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

The main screen flickers... The air traffic is now different, elements are missing. All the staff jump onto this issue.

Comm. Patel sees that the "training flight" is gone, turns to Cattaneo as -- *Buzzing!* "ALERT - SYSTEM INTRUSION DETECTED"

He snaps to his walkie Elf's voice already erupting on it.

EXT. MANTICORE VTOLS, ABOVE NEW ROME - SAME TIME

The "training flight" are VTOLs with the Manticore logo. One has pods falling out the rear, plummeting like bombs.

INT. VOGEL'S VTOL, ABOVE NEW ROME - CONTINUOUS

Vogel pilots, sees the "bombing" VTOL finish, turn away.

In the REAR: Capt. Bashar, Karim, Kolchak and their unit set for a parachute jump, tighten straps, take deep breaths.

Cyborg Joe whiffs his e-pipe happy, Capt. Bashar glares acid... turns to his troops. The rear ramp begins to open.

CAPT. BASHAR
Task Force Manticore! Ready!

INT. ARMORY (THE BARN), GF HQ - SAME TIME

Team Alpha and Falco rush in, start suiting up. Elf is on his walkie with Comm. Patel.

COMM. PATEL (O.S.)
*Hold in the Nest. Units have been
dispatched and-*

INT. LOCK UP (THE CELLAR), GF HQ - SAME TIME

A baton *smashes* Hex's small device. GF soldiers cuff him.

COMM. PATEL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
-the prisoner is being secured.

INT. COMMAND CENTER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

On a screen, city CCTV: Battle Robots Mk II - heavier armed than those Team Alpha fought earlier - cause havoc, snap to-

Other screens: -GF APCs roll up firing, soldiers deploying.

Off Comm. Patel's iron rigor belying worry...

INT. HALLWAY, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Team Alpha and Falco all suited up bolt out from the armory. The door bounces back, Muffin just scrapes by last.

They all dash off. But there at the end of the long hallway... a large armored door: "*Emergency Exit.*" Looks tough.

I/E. VOGEL'S VTOL, ABOVE NEW ROME - SAME TIME

VOGEL
Jump in three, two, one, go!

Capt. Bashar and his unit jump. Cyborg Joe... also jumps out. An adjacent VTOL rolls out pods that plummet to the Castle.

Capt. Bashar's unit opens chutes, sees the pods pop open revealing Battle Robots Mk II.

INT. MAIN SQUARE, GF HQ - MOMENTS LATER

Team Alpha dashes hearing *TH-TH-THUD! Gunfire!* A battle on the roof. They see in the skylights... incoming! *CRASH!*

The skylights *shatter!* Battle Robots Mk II drop in, scorch the area with brake rockets, spray laser fire all over.

Team Alpha and Falco dive out through-

INT. HANGAR (THE NEST), GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

-a big door, take cover from the massacre meters away. They're pissed. As Hell. *Lock and load!*

INT. MAIN SQUARE, GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

Amidst carnage, the robots activate shoulder missile packs. Launch at the Command Center door.

CUTAWAY: Comm. Patel lunges, *hits* a big button.

The door catches a missile denting it. Then blast doors slam down-*THUMP!* Get pounded by more missiles.

INT. HANGAR (THE NEST), GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

Rumbling. The large Command Center window shakes.

Team Alpha step into fireteams - Elf/Sky & Wolf/Muffin - nod... lunge back through the big door and into hanging smoke and-

INT. MAIN SQUARE, GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

-strewn debris yet they nail robot headshots one by one, stay ahead of laser fire with lunges and rolls until...

Two robots left... Sky's long blue laser nails a missile pack on a robot's shoulder *blasting* it, knocking out the other.

EXT. ROOF, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Hovering well above... Cyborg Joe sees the roof on fire. Robots have cleared most of it. Wild grin, he rockets down!

EXT. REAR CORNER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

A trooper detaches a parachute, dashes to Kolchak who's using a CUTTING LASER on a large armored door - "*Emergency Exit*"

Kolchak avoids the lock and hinges just like on the door that Team Alpha saw earlier at the Guarded Complex.

Capt. Bashar signals, troopers *ram* the cutout section.

INT. COMMAND CENTER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Comm. Patel sees Staff frantic all over and the city battle on screens. A new warning flashes, he yanks up his walkie.

INT. MAIN SQUARE, GF HQ - MOMENTS LATER

Rumbling above the broken skylights. Elf is on his walkie.

ELF

Copy that. Wolf! Check the Barn!

Wolf bolts off. And *whoosh!* Cyborg Joe *buzzes* in and around in a mad wasp pattern. Muffin tracks him..

Cyborg Joe *zooms* out into the Nest. Sky realizes something.

INT. HANGAR (THE NEST), GF HQ - SAME TIME

Cyborg Joe draws dual Desert Eagle/Uzi hybrids. GF soldiers barely react. Falco quick draws, fires! Hits! Only a scratch.

Cyborg Joe stays on course, blasts the Command Center window in a wild staccato - *RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT!* - *cracking* it.

INT. MAIN SQUARE, GF HQ - SAME TIME

SKY

Like Stratego, down a rank for the flag and Hex had a-

ELF

-tracker! Muff! After him!

Muffin boosts off. And *whoom!* Robots from the roof jump down!

INT. VARIOUS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Three firefights with three methods.

MAIN SQUARE continued: Elf and Sky fire bursts at the robots sparing yet inches away from collateral damage.

COMMAND CENTER: Cyborg Joe blasts a frenzy hitting Staffers and screens, Comm. Patel and Cattaneo dive behind tables.

BARRACKS HALLWAY: Capt. Bashar's unit advance with metal riot shields, shoot disabling GF soldiers... they spot Kit and Funk.

INT. COMMAND CENTER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Behind the table, Comm. Patel draws his sidearm. *RAT-TAT-TAT* shots split it... he aims... last stand... Cyborg Joe is hit!

From the window, Muffin nails a burst into Cyborg Joe who "*groans*" crashing about, out through a door-

INT. INTEL SECTION, CMD CENTER, GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

-shooting anything that moves. Busts through a new door, zips down stairs blasting sentries at the bottom. *RAT-TAT-TAT-*

INT. LOCK UP (THE CELLAR), GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

-TAT-TAT! Leon Hex hears the GF soldier's last screams beyond his door... dead silence. He smiles.

Cyborg Joe holsters his smoking guns stepping over corpses. He *punches* out a lock, *yanks* open the door.

Unseen by them near the stairs: Muffin peeks in...

INT. HALLWAY, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Karim ties bandage knots very fast on confused GF soldiers. Kolchak holds Kit and Funk in the rear.

Capt. Bashar paces, Cyborg Joe erupts on his *walkie*:

CAPT. BASHAR	CYBORG JOE
We're not here for you, allow	(over)
(yourselves to be spared.)	<i>Target in escort.</i>

Down the hall: Wolf - "that wolf-beast" - *snarling*.

Riot shield phalanx! Wolf fires, his shots *r-r-ricochet!*
Funk is freaking out. Kit sees the Armory door open...

INT. COMMAND CENTER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Elf and Sky roll in under the opening blast doors, dash on as Comm. Patel indicates Cyborg Joe's path.

Wounded staff "*wail!*" Cattaneo scrambles calling for medics. Unnoticed on the map screen: an anomalous signal flying in.

INT. VOGEL'S VTOL - SAME TIME

Vogel turns it around noting the same signal on her radar.

VOGEL
Roger, nail the front. Proceeding
to extract in the rear.

INT. LOCK UP (THE CELLAR), GF HQ - SAME TIME

Muffin's rifle sights: Leon Hex exiting to Cyborg Joe.

MUFFIN
Stop. I've got both of your heads.

CYBORG JOE
 ...you know what I've got?

He *tears off* the door, boosts! *Blam!* The angled door deflects a v-bolt. Cyborg Joe pins Muffin, *stomps* mangling the door-

CYBORG JOE (CONT'D)
 I-Got-All-Of-You!

-and Muffin into a mess with *stomp-stomp-stomp-*

INT. HALLWAY, BARRACKS, GF HQ - SAME TIME

-*blam!* Wolf's orange slug dents a shield, flings the trooper back. Wolf lunges, grips a shield-*shocks!* Frying another.

Karim is shaken. Kolchak lunges firing the cutting laser into the phalanx gap. Sears Wolf's left elbow, he staggers back.

Capt. Bashar orders a retreat, snags Funk but Kit is gone. The troopers fire at Wolf who dives behind the Armory door-

-his legs, arms and vest taking hits. He sees some of the wounded GF soldiers and Kit uneasy inside.

INT. COMMAND CENTER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Elf and Sky near a battered door. Cyborg Joe *whooshes* out! Knocks them aside with a door chunk, heaves it and shoots-

-kills more Staff. Elf and Sky roll off behind cover. Comm. Patel fires barely scratching Cyborg Joe's armor.

Leon Hex runs in. Cyborg Joe snags him, boosts out the doors.

	SKY		ELF
Rooftop!		The roof!	

EXT. REAR, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Troopers dash out the cutout door, Kolchak with Funk in tow. Last out, Capt. Bashar drops an incendiary grenade inside.

Cyborg Joe with Leon Hex zips from the roof to Vogel's VTOL landing nearby. Capt. Bashar urges his unit over to it.

INT. COMMAND CENTER, GF HQ - SAME TIME

On the damaged screen, Comm. Patel spots the anomalous signal and it sharply turns away... his eyes widen with realization...

EXT. ROOF, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Elf and Sky *burst* out of the armored door into a ruined mess. They run to the rear. Elf's walkie *crackles*:

COMM. PATEL (O.S.)
Outside personnel! Take cover!

EXT. FLYING POV #2 - SAME TIME

Moving very fast right at the Castle... a huge glide bomb!

I/E. FALCO'S VTOL, HANGAR (THE NEST), GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

Powering his VTOL, Falco hears the same message. *BOOM!*
 Above the main gate, the glide bomb blows into...

An apocalyptic blossom, hundreds of bomblets.

Falco hits the throttle! *Slams* into the Castle wall.
 The crashing wave of bomblets just missing him.

EXT. ROOF, GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

Elf and Sky see *booming* rain creep in perforating everything. They bolt! The mini-blasts reach the roof... there! The ladder!

Blasts close in... Sky jumps to the ladder... Elf too... the blasts stop at the edge... the ladder top is hit! It shakes, Elf sees...

MEMORY FLASH: the dangling soldier, almost like...

Sky now... he reaches to her... the ladder breaks away-

EXT. REAR, GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

-*slams* the ground, mangles up, traps them in the safety cage.

Elf glimpses: on the VTOL taking off... Cyborg Joe aims, fires!
 Some shots impact nearby but Capt. Bashar shoves Cyborg Joe.

I/E. VOGEL'S VTOL, ABOVE NEW ROME - CONTINUOUS

The burning Castle disappears behind the closing rear ramp.

CYBORG JOE
 Still being all noble, eh Bashar?

LEON HEX
 Comrades, mission accomplished. The
 best is yet to come.

He grins. Cyborg Joe and Capt. Bashar, mutual acid glares.

CAPT. BASHAR
 Yes, Joe, I think I am. And my
 unit's mission is accomplished, was
 getting captured yours?

He turns to his unit. Kolchak and Karim hold Funk... he gulps.
 Cyborg Joe smirks, whiffs his e-pipe. Leon Hex "*sighs...*"

EXT. REAR, GF HQ - MINUTES LATER

In the cutout door, flames are extinguished. Wolf limps over
 to help Elf and Sky out of the mangled ladder cage.

The roof burns, the ledge crumbles, alarms *wail-*

INT. BRIEFING ROOM, CMD CENTER, GF HQ - NEXT MORNING

-ding! Comm. Patel's tablet: a photo, a dead trooper with the
 bow & arrow with wings insignia. He reads on... his eyes widen.

This room remains mostly unscathed. Cattaneo taps as screens
 flash on: "*data recovered.*" Comm. Patel now looks to...

Various CCTV: yesterday's street battle ends... Comm. Patel
clicks, glares hard... Cyborg Joe crushes Muffin whose-

INT. TECH WORKSHOP, GF HQ - LATER, MORNING

-remains lay on a table. His pickelhaube-like head with
 antenna is intact. Kit's hands pull it, wires trail out...

Inside: an armored box with a pulsing green light.

Nearby monitor: various readings... "*Ultra low power mode...*
Skull Unit Integrity: 92%... CPU intact..."

Kit leans back with a "*sigh...*"

KIT (PRE-LAP)
 He needs a new suit which is a
 day's work but his brain...

TIME CUT:

Elf, Sky, Wolf (shades off) stand glum at the table.
 Steps away, Comm. Patel looks on.

KIT (CONT'D)
 ...should be the same.
 (off their looks)
 He's advanced AI, as much computer
 as brain. Reconnecting a hard drive
 is easy but a severed head...

Comm. Patel notes Team Alpha's silent shock.

KIT (CONT'D)

...look, he was made for this. That said, I'm bringing him back from a brutal knock out. His computer will be fine, his personality... likely post-shock.

WOLF

Don't worry guys, just look at me.
(metal hand on wolf head)
I still remember my aunt's poutine.

Elf and Sky, small reassuring nods.

ELF

I told him to chase that damn cyborg.

COMM. PATEL

You have a battle bond with this...
him: Combat Robot, Assault & Recon,
series 700, Sentient, unit 35.

Scratched, dented, still visible: *CR/AR-700S/35*

SKY

We call him Muffin, Commander. He's got a warm personality.

COMM. PATEL

And good aim. He did me a solid yesterday, saved my skin.

ELF

In the field, he's an equal.

COMM. PATEL

I've noticed you even eat with him.

ELF

And he overheard you... what was it?

SKY

Palak nu shake?

COMM. PATEL

Now there's something I thought was just a memory. *Palak nu shaak*, by the way, *my* aunt's cooking but why did he log a mutter?

KIT

He doesn't just go by parameters,
Commander. Soldiers have doctrine,
CRs parameters but then both have
personality. It helps with human-
robot camaraderie which then comes
full circle to-

COMM. PATEL

-doctrine and parameters, yes.
Never thought it'd go this far.

Ambience... the computer systems *beep-boop*... suddenly:

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)

Team Alpha, victory makes life
easy, only the mighty can overcome
a defeat. Check your inventory, add
it all up. See me after.

He exits... ambience - *beep-boop* - weans to eye contact. Nods.
Elf and Sky exit. Wolf sits in the chair.

INT. ARMORY (THE BARN), GF HQ - MINUTES LATER

Duffle bags *zip* open. Elf and Sky load folded battle rifles,
combat armor segments, Wolf's vest. And high-tech binoculars.

INT. TECH WORKSHOP, GF HQ - SAME TIME

Kit inserts a new module into Wolf's left arm: "*beeeEEEEP!*"
Wolf puts his shades on, nods to Kit, exits without a limp.

INT. HANGAR, GF HQ - MOMENTS LATER

Elf and Sky enter in non-combat dress. Rhino One waits open.

EXT. REAR, GF HQ - MOMENTS LATER

The cutout door is now guarded, being repaired. Wolf exits,
goes to a construction scaffold. He climbs up to-

EXT. ROOF, GF HQ - CONTINUOUS

-the now debris-strewn REAR CORNER where Elf was earlier.

Wolf's HUD: "*HQ Update: Castle Confinement -> Disabled.*"

In the distance, he spots a familiar VTOL change course...
close in... a WINCH LADDER unfurls... he grips, is whisked away.

INT. RHINO ONE, STREETS, NEW ROME - MINUTES LATER

Outside the porthole, the city slides by. Elf and Sky sit side by side. The front compartment opens...

Comm. Patel enters, sits. His tone belies worry.

COMM. PATEL

Autopsies from the dead attackers revealed cybernetic augmentations... like bodies from the warehouse two days ago but that stayed buried in secondary reports until this morning. This new faction...

ELF

Commander, it's more of a full-scale army.

COMM. PATEL

And it also hit Federal City Three. A mass abduction with that same large vehicle as on the day that Core was stolen here. The manticore-alluding logo was reported just as on the unit that attacked us and took your good friend, Mr. Kit Bauer... said unit also performed first aid on our wounded.

Elf and Sky ponder as Comm. Patel taps at his tablet.

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)

But it seems Mr. Bauer has played Mr. Hex's trick on him. Tech experts and their little gadgets.

His tablet: a map, a point blinks way in the Pyrenees.

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)

Recon and await further orders.

In the small window, the passing scenery slows... stops.

EXT. CRATER, FOUR-WAY INTERSECTION - MOMENTS LATER

Where they met Cyborg Joe. Elf and Sky disembark Rhino One. Inside the crater... Wolf and Falco wait by a familiar VTOL.

EXT. PYRENEES COAST, WEST MEDITERRANEAN - LATER, AFTERNOON

Below Falco's VTOL, the passing sea becomes mountainous land.

INT. FALCO'S VTOL - SAME TIME

Elf rolls down his sleeve, stops... his tattoo: "Love & Death"
 Sky takes out a camo paint roller... locks eyes with Elf.

SKY
 All ok, Chief?

ELF
 Getting there.

A flash of a smile between them. Elf rolls down the sleeve.
 Sky paints a camo line down her face covering her scar.

Falco has been eavesdropping from the front:

FALCO
 That's right, *amichi*. Love and
 death, we'll all have time for
 both. But now, drop zone ahead.

Elf and Sky gear up. Wolf gazes into his left elbow scar and
 laser sear, perks up as the rear ramp starts opening, *brrRR-*

EXT. PYRENEES MOUNTAINS - MINUTES LATER

-*SCREeee!* An eagle *call* over serene post-apocalyptic flora.

A gray-splotched golden eagle soars by as three parachutes
 steer to a flat section... touch down.

Wolf's HUD: "Waypoint - 14.73km"

They move out hardly visible in the vast stretch of wild.

EXT. FORESTED SLOPE, PYRENEES MOUNTAINS - LATER

Wolf's HUD: "Waypoint - 0.41km" A distant eagle *call*.

They see a path... faint boot tracks to... a ROCKY VISTA.
 Elf signals, they proceed, guns ready.

EXT. ROCKY VISTA, MOUNTAIN VALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

They peek over... see the MANTICORE FACILITY in the valley.
 Even in day it blends into the landscape.

They whip out the binoculars, look closer, take recon photos...
 Heavy double fence all around. Troopers all over.

One main gate. One for a FOREST ACCESS ROAD that disappears
 down a RAMP. Landing pads are covered, look occupied.

WOLF

Funk's signal is in there.

SKY

Those buildings are not military.
Could be science.

WOLF

Who'd be playing Einstein out here?

Sudden *activity!* The main gate... the overland train rolls in.
On the tractor: the Manticore logo and the Atom logo.

From the front, battle-weary troops disembark, among them..
Maj. Steele snapping orders. The rear cars are opened.

Over 100 CIVILIANS are led off. Some remain onboard... dead.

SKY

Freaking hell.

ELF

What the hell?

From the rear, cages with wolves, big cats, apes and bears
are wheeled out. A dark epiphany hits Wolf... he ducks back.

Elf and Sky too. They've put some of it together.

WOLF

Kidnapped people, caged animals,
hidden science, alien tech... you're
looking at it right now. I don't
tire like you, can eat anything, am
halfway to bulletproof and got way
more wits than a drone. Imagine an
army of me. Programmed to not care
about killing humans or to hate
them, maybe only certain groups.
What do you have then?

ELF

Each city's executive council voted
unanimously against-

WOLF

So what, Chief? People scoured all
over for that junk after the war.
Remember Hex's toys? But there are
also the three Cores including-

ELF

The stolen Core!

SKY

How could they use it? Dr. Sherman
is the only authority on them.

WOLF

Authority has two major problems.
One: it can overstep its limits.
But two: people just don't care.
Has '*thou shalt not kill*' ever
stopped anybody? Like those
slaughtering Canaan?

ELF

Three books later, yeah I read it
in Catholic school.

WOLF

A pessimist says such things are
inevitable, an optimist that
they're impossible. But a realist
says they're inevitable unless *made*
impossible. And now the last decade
could be undone in a week.

Thoughts pound each brain. Elf nods at Wolf who's already
activating his new module's shoulder antenna.

ELF

Update Town Hall, we're taking a
closer look. But *no* rushing in.

EXT. FOREST, REAR, MANTICORE FACILITY - HALF HOUR LATER

Wolf *sniffs*, stalks forward. Elf and Sky creep next to him to
a quiet side of the Facility with a CLEARING and SMALL GATE.

They proceed... the area remains quiet...

EXT. CLEARING, REAR, MANTICORE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

CLANK! Six corner hatches open! It's a HEXAGONAL clearing!
Nano-bots swarm out, form shackles on arms, ankles, necks...

BZZZ! Shocks! Weapons drop. More nano-bots encase them.
CLANK! Battle Robots Mk II pop out guns aimed.

Wolf struggles, stretches his nano-shackles-*BZZZZZ!*
"Guttural lupine expletive" from the longer shock.

WHOOMP! Cyborg Joe lands, dual guns drawn. Capt. Bashar,
Kolchak, Karim and some troopers enter via the gate.

Elf recognizes Capt. Bashar, they share a glance until... a
familiar hazmat suit approaches, helmet off, it's...

DR. SHERMAN

Griffin Force's finest caught
without a fight.

WOLF

Doc? What the hell is this?!

DR. SHERMAN

The making of the future, my good boy. Get their side arms.

Troopers take Elf and Sky's pistols, drop them to be absorbed into the nano-boxes. They belie unease by Wolf... "growl..."

Elf gazes cold at Dr. Sherman. Sky quietly sizes up details.

DR. SHERMAN (CONT'D)

You see, he's fierce as a wolf, but-
(square at Wolf)
-loyal like a dog.

WOLF

I'm loyal to my friends! And you're off the shortlist!

Wolf struggles more. BZZZ-BZZZZZ! Stops pained... seething.

DR. SHERMAN

I'm still your master and creator. Soon you'll be merely obedient.

CYBORG JOE

Nice pet.

Wolf leans in baring fangs. Cyborg Joe, a flash of worry. The troopers, pure fear. Capt. Bashar stays steely.

DR. SHERMAN

Just a prototype.

He taps a tablet. Wolf's neck brace morphs to a snout muzzle. Cyborg Joe steps in safely amused. Wolf seethes to all Hell.

CYBORG JOE

Bad dog. You see, our first meeting could be called a tragedy. But the second is just a joke.

ELF

Learn to count, this is the third.

Cyborg Joe jolts a gun to Elf's face.

CYBORG JOE

If I want your opinion, (I'll put it in myself.)

CAPT. BASHAR

(over, stepping up)
Take the prisoners in!

Sky spots Capt. Bashar's bow & arrow with wings unit patch.
Dr. Sherman taps at his tablet irked.

DR. SHERMAN
Enough! Joe, grab the wolf.
Captain, take the others.

Cyborg Joe holsters his guns, seemingly changes moods.

INT. HANGAR, MANTICORE FACILITY - MOMENTS LATER

Elf, Sky and Wolf are led through where Col. Vlad spoke.
Above, the window where the Dark Figure was... empty.

Ahead of them, a freight elevator opens *hum-*

INT. FREIGHT ELEVATOR, MANTICORE FACILITY - MOMENTS LATER

-ming. Going down. Elf's peripherals take in the space...
Cyborg Joe, idle... Capt. Bashar's unit, calm...

Dr. Sherman is tapping his busy tablet.

ELF
Hey Doc, tell me what this place is
and I won't snap your fingers off.
(off Cyborg Joe's glare)
You're on a leash, rusty nuts.
(to Dr. Sherman)
Nice toy.

Dr. Sherman taps more, Cyborg Joe goes idle again.
Elf winks at Wolf. Sky downplays her amusement.

DR. SHERMAN
Those federal fools think their
'rule of law' and bureaucracy will
solve everything. It's the science
that matters.

ELF
And that's playing Einstein in
secret labs?

DR. SHERMAN
I've always preferred Oppenheimer.

The elevator stops, doors open. They disembark into-

INT. TUNNELS, MANTICORE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

-a cold, sleek, high-tech place... Maj. Steele approaches with
troops from powered carts nearby.

ELF
Should've played Mendel. The world
still needs better corn.

Dr. Sherman ignores him, preempts Capt. Bashar:

DR. SHERMAN
Yes, it's another science detail.

Capt. Bashar grinds his teeth, exchanges an acid glare with Maj. Steele... Sky spots the Major's Atom logo unit patch.

INT. TUNNELS, MANTICORE FACILITY - MINUTES LATER

This place is BIG... the carts ride along. Elf and Sky spy with peripherals. Wolf sniffs, listens... only the carts *hum*.

Troopers in each cart. Maj. Steele with the encased weapons. Cyborg Joe idles. Dr. Sherman eyes his tablet, smiles.

At an INTERSECTION, they see Capt. Bashar's cart behind them take a turn and vanish.

INT. REAR RAMP AREA, MANTICORE FACILITY - MOMENTS LATER

Kolchak's tablet, spy drone view: the Atom Sector gate opens... carts ride in. The view zips, nests under Dr. Sherman's cart.

Kolchak "*whews...*" Karim and Vogel give him a thumbs up. Capt. Bashar pulls up. All troops look to him, belie worry.

The unit's kit including the 4x4 are stored here, waiting. Capt. Bashar takes a deep breath, nods and a plan begins...

Vogel heads to an elevator. Other troops ready some vehicles by a LARGE RAMP going up to... a big door that begins opening.

Capt. Bashar and Kolchak snap back to the tablet: the cart is stopped, the drone view moves out, sees a closing door and-

INT. SHERMAN'S CONTROL ROOM, HEXAGONAL ARENA - CONTINUOUS

-the spy drone slips in unnoticed, nests up on the ceiling.

Dr. Sherman "*snaps*" at STAFFERS scrambling to computers. Cyborg Joe idles aside, whiffs his e-pipe... his pupil dilates.

Dr. Sherman taps at his main console - the same gloved hands seen typing here earlier - a blast window opens, reveals...

The large arena, a hexagon, with an ARTIFICIAL BLOOD RED SUN with yellow spots in a clear bubble - the ALIEN CORE.

On the far wall beyond the Core, a blast window opens to-

INT. HEX'S CONTROL ROOM, HEXAGONAL ARENA - CONTINUOUS

-Leon Hex and Col. Vlad in a similar room with some troopers.

COL. VLAD
Today will show who is right.

INTERCUT: SHERMAN'S CONTROL ROOM / HEX'S CONTROL ROOM

DR. SHERMAN
I still gave us the Core while Hex
lost a facility.

LEON HEX	DR. SHERMAN
You raised a stray dog! I	(over)
made (us an army!)	A litter of drones!

COL. VLAD
Comrades, orders from the top.
Let's not waste time. And now-

Dr. Sherman, Leon Hex each see the Dark Figure on a monitor, stop mid-breath. Col. Vlad points to the arena where-

INT. HEXAGONAL ARENA, ATOM SECTOR - CONTINUOUS

-Elf, Sky and Wolf still shackled, look around... nearby, a table with three simple rifles, nothing like their usual kit.

COL. VLAD (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*-Project Chimera! And Team Alpha,
Griffin Force's finest, your little-*

The Core is above dead center. Four cylindrical canisters are in one half, a big one in the other. *Humming* starts...

Faint red energy streams flow from the Core to the canisters. The nano-shackles morph, flow to the table with the rifles.

INTERCUT: BOTH CONTROL ROOMS / HEXAGONAL ARENA

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
-trinity will prove that even the
best soldiers are no match for the
New Man molded and breathed with
the power of the Core!

In the arena are two SALLY PORT GATES, the far one opens... Maj. Steele enters with troopers and a hovering monolith...

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
And to make sure you do your best.

It opens... out falls Funk. Bruised, patched up. Wolf "growls."
Sky swoops down, sees he's unconscious. Elf snags a rifle...

Aims... it's locked! Maj. Steele smirks, marches back out.

COL. VLAD

Let's begin. Doctor, two subjects!
Hex, steady it at 80%.

Leon Hex and Dr. Sherman work their consoles. Sky and Wolf
snap up the rifles, still locked. Behind them... *rumbling*...

Two of the smaller canisters... in one, a MAN appears via lift.
In the other, a LEOPARD. The red energy streams intensify.

Wolf's MEMORY FLASH: the red laser beams descend at him.

The man and leopard are in sheer terror, they DEMATERIALIZE...
flow along the energy streams to the larger canister where...

CHIMERA 1: a human-leopard materializes with mechanics and a
monocle but is not as advanced as Wolf. It bears fangs.

Elf, Sky and Wolf shelter Funk. The large canister opens.
The Chimera "growls" glaring, standing...

Col. Vlad masks shock. Hex offers a "just a second" finger,
tweaks settings: 'aggression' -- 'idle' -> 'medium.'

The chimera's monocle turns red. It "roars!" Lunges out!

Rifles UNLOCK, they fire! Red lasers hit the Chimera mid-air.
It lands wounded, staggering. The rifles lock.

Sky "cusses" in Korean, makes sure Funk is safe.

WOLF

I still got my blades, Chief.

ELF

Don't show all your moves too fast.

The Chimera... wounds glow red... regenerate, leave scarring.
Col. Vlad, Leon Hex and Dr. Sherman are very pleased.

ELF

Can you do that?

WOLF

Did you ever see me do that?!

The Chimera lunges! Wolf blocks! The Chimera's salivating
jaws bite his arm. He "roars" back, battle of the beasts.

Rifles unlock, Elf and Sky fire carefully to not hit Wolf.

Wolf jams his rifle into the Chimera's jaws. Fires FULL AUTO yanking his arm out! Blasts the Chimera until it drops.

Regeneration splutters... Col. Vlad seethes "*muttering*" curses.

COL. VLAD

Doctor, two more but with armor.

Hex, bring it to 90%.

Dr. Sherman's console: controls for the "*Containment Area*"

Leon Hex's console: the Core's "*Energy Level: "80%... 90%"*"

Looming in their peripherals... the Dark Figure on the monitor.

Funk "*grumbles*" waking. Elf, Sky and Wolf hold tight. Three canisters *rumble*... a woman, a gorilla and a nano-box appear.

Terrified, they dematerialize flowing to the large canister...

CHIMERA 2: an armored human-gorilla with forearm gauntlets. The canister opens. The Chimera leaps out. Rifles unlock.

Lasers flash, *r-r-ricochet* from swinging gauntlets and armor. One *DENTS* the window in front of Dr. Sherman, he winces.

Leon Hex taps some keys: the rifles lock, the Chimera stops... regenerates quicker using the dead one, gets mix-pattern fur. It also absorbs some mechanics to repair its own.

COL. VLAD

History's first invincible army!

Leon Hex shares in that pleasure more than Dr. Sherman. Elf, Sky and Wolf look for options... not many. Rifles unlock.

The Chimera charges, a mad rugby player, shoves Elf and Sky. Their armor saves them. In a flash, the Chimera goes for...

The barely conscious Funk. Wolf lunges. The Chimera reaches... snags Wolf's arm then the other. Two beasts, snout to snout.

Rifles lock. "*Expletives!*" Elf and Sky run-*BZZZ!* Get shocks! Col. Vlad, Leon Hex and Dr. Sherman gaze fascinated.

Wolf's arm: *BLADES OUT!* He shreds the Chimera fingers off! Punches its face in! Kicks and stomps it to Hell!

Funk zones in, jolts at the carnage. Elf and Sky huddle by him. Wolf makes a total mess of Chimera 2 then "*growls!*" at...

A disappointed Col. Vlad who looks to Dr. Sherman...

DR. SHERMAN
 My *dog* is much better than
 any drone. (More power,
 Colonel, we *can* control it.)

LEON HEX
 (over)
 You *salvaged* that dog! Those
 things *made* it. And like them
 I made tech that works!

DR. SHERMAN (CONT'D)
 We *could* see another one of your
 'armies' get destroyed, Leon. In
 the streets, on the island, even-

INT. CONTAINMENT AREA, UNDER ARENA - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

The hazmat scientist - it's Dr. Sherman - watches the fire.

DR. SHERMAN (O.S.)(CONT'D)
 -here your last planned procedure
 required... clean up shall we say.

INT. HEX'S CONTROL ROOM, HEXAGONAL ARENA - PRESENT

Leon Hex is cornered, stung. The Dark Figure... still watching...
 Col. Vlad glares at Hex who is not backing down.

LEON HEX
 Transformation is an art. And like
 all arts has its own laws. Now you-
 (Dr. Sherman)
 -J.R., risk losing *this* facility.

INTERCUT: HEX'S CONTROL ROOM / SHERMAN'S CONTROL ROOM

Leon Hex, Dr. Sherman stare each other down across the arena.
 Cyborg Joe idles. Troopers and staff too. And the spy drone.

Col. Vlad glances at the monitor, the Dark Figure nods.

COL. VLAD
 The only way to see who's right.
 Max it now. No! 1-0-5. *Davay!*

Hex grinds his teeth... *tap-tap-taps* careful commands...
 "Energy Level: 95%... 100%... 105%" An arena-wide *r-r-rumble*...

INTERCUT: BOTH CONTROL ROOMS / HEXAGONAL ARENA

All four smaller canisters are at work... their floors rise...
 reveal a man, a woman, a brown bear and a nano box.

Terror... dematerialization begins... a louder *r-r-rumble*... the
 energy transmission components shoot off sparks... *R-R-RUMBLE*...

The red beams misfire! An alarm *BLARES!* A pulsing red mass
 absorbs the containers. Elf, Sky, Wolf and Funk seek a move.

The pulsing red mass creeps exploring the arena. A primitive, powerful life-form absorbing shapes yet itself shapeless.

Dr. Sherman, Leon Hex scramble at their consoles. Col. Vlad sees the Dark Figure gone on the monitor. His lip twitches.

Elf, Sky, Wolf and Funk see both sally port gates closed. Dr. Sherman's Staff look at Hex's Control Room.

COL. VLAD	DR. SHERMAN
Cut the power and evac!	Initiating cool down-

DR. SHERMAN (CONT'D)
The reaction won't be contained!

COL. VLAD
We just saw who was right. Hex,
evac the Core! *You*, take the files!

The "you" is Dr. Sherman's Staff who snatch up equipment. Spy drone view: Dr. Sherman yells useless protests.

Leon Hex sets a command but it wildly toggles between "Exec..." and "Extr..." stops on "Execute." He smiles, is then shocked-

Cyborg Joe's HUD: -the aim changes to Dr. Sherman's leg. *BANG!* The Staff dash out. The spy drone follows unseen.

Dr. Sherman begs Cyborg Joe not to shoot. Cyborg Joe just steps to the window. They both see the Core dimming.

The near sally port gate is blocked off by the red mass. Wolf, Funk, Elf and Sky dash for the far one, it opens...

Maj. Steele and his Troopers guard it. ABOVE! A nano-swarm encases the idle Core in a hexagonal crate with a faint aura.

Cyborg Joe *crashes* out the window, guides the crate out the far gate just as the pulsing red mass creeps to it...

LEON HEX (O.S.)
All personnel, evac to Kaluga!

With that, Maj. Steele and his troops dash off leaving Wolf, Funk, Elf and Sky with moments to make it out...

INT. HEX'S CONTROL ROOM, HEXAGONAL ARENA - SAME TIME

Col. Vlad and Leon Hex are leaving. *BUZZING!* They see a screen: "MAX ALERT - LAST RESORT CONTAINMENT INITIATED"

Col. Vlad turns furious, hears gunfire *murmuring*.

INT. GATE, ROUND HALLWAY, ATOM SECTOR - SAME TIME

Through the open gate, *gunfire* rakes Atom Sector troopers. Maj. Steele shouts to his remaining troops, they dash away.

The spy drone *whizzes* by, out the gate to Capt. Bashar's 4x4. In the distance, Capt. Bashar's unit is evacuating.

INT. HEX'S CONTROL ROOM, HEXAGONAL ARENA - SAME TIME

COL. VLAD
Chertova krysa! Just evac Atom Sector! Infiltrate the Cyborg.

Leon Hex, pissed at something, enters some last commands.

INT. HEXAGONAL ARENA, ATOM SECTOR - SAME TIME

The red mass opens a gap in the floor. Wolf's ears twitch... he shoots a look. Elf, Sky, Funk also and they see...

The containment area! The people and animals are absorbed by the pulsing red mass in a sanity (and life)-ending nightmare.

A section of floor BREAKS AWAY! Sky tumbles, Elf grabs her! Sees a churning red Hell below Sky.

MEMORY FLASH: the dangling soldier falls away...

Wolf yanks Elf back. He and Sky stumble to the floor, eyes lock... no time now. Up! They dash to the sally port gate.

Squeeze, lunge by the pulsing red mass and out to see-

INT. ROUND HALLWAY, ATOM SECTOR - CONTINUOUS

-an empty security room, a large gate... the carts with their nano-encased weapons. Wolf slams a case, it's brittle.

The red mass creeps into the hallway, blocks the large gate. Wolf starts tearing off their shackles, they grab their guns.

The spy drone flies in... moves off, back. Again. Flies off.

ELF
 Nothing else makes sense, let's go.

They dash after the drone. *R-R-RUMBLING* all over.

Unseen by them in the Arena... SOMETHING is moving... big, shapeless, pulsing, coming out from the floor...

INT. GATE, ROUND HALLWAY, ATOM SECTOR - MOMENTS LATER

They rush up, see strewn corpses with the Atom insignia. Three stacked metal crates hold up the gate.

WOLF

Incoming message, 'drive the way you came in. Left at the fork and out. Three minutes or you're dead.'

SKY

Your guardian angel?

The drone flies through the gate to... the idling 4x4, its bow & arrow with wings logo now obvious.

ELF

Better than running, let's g-

Frantic "yelling!" Dr. Sherman limps from the other end. The red mass creeping after him. The stacked crates *creak*..

ELF

Funk, wheels! Wolf, gate! Sky, eyes out!

Wolf braces the gate. Funk dashes to the 4x4, sees Kolchak's tablet with a highlighted route.

Dr. Sherman falls, the red mass nears... Elf yanks him up. The top crate cleaves... Elf hauls Dr. Sherman back.

The arena door! The red mass 'soaks in' from the other side. A hellish mass of a thousand uncanny shapes, a maelstrom.

SKY

Is that your *goddamn future, Doc?!*

She fires a burst into it. Dr. Sherman is in a terror trance.

The gate *cleaves* the second crate, forces Wolf into a nasty barbell squat... Sky slips under yanking Dr. Sherman.

The gate inches lower... Elf ducks under... Wolf gets out as-

INT. TUNNEL, MANTICORE FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

-the gate *WHOOMPS* down! A spare tire slid by Funk saves Wolf's left arm by mere centimeters. A tentacle grips!

Wolf struggles... red mass seeping in... Sky powers up her rifle... the tire is absorbed...

SKY
Sorry, Big Beast.

BLAM! A long blue laser sears off Wolf's arm at the elbow. Elf pulls him away just as the pulsing red mess creeps in.

I/E. 4X4, TUNNELS, MANTICORE FACILITY - MOMENTS LATER

The 4x4's engine *revs*, tires grip, they zoom off.

WOLF
Friendly reminder, we're supposed
to be dead in a minute.

Side view mirror: the red mass speeding up, convulsing.

FUNK
Wahnsinn! Lieutenant! Behind us!

Backseat, Elf sees the nearing red mass sprout tentacles.

ELF
Sky, take the top! Wolf, watch him.

Sky goes to the sunroof. Elf, into the covered truck bed. Wolf's eyes and fangs give Dr. Sherman a big chill.

Elf and Sky fire searing the tentacles. Funk swerves around crates, slams past carts, follows the map to an intersection.

FUNK
Hard turn!

Screech, slide... inches to spare. There's a light ahead! Pedal to the metal. The entire facility *sh-sh-shakes-*

-R-R-RUMBLES... behind the 4x4, fire shoots down the tunnel, diverts at the intersection making an infernal wall.

Everyone braces. Fire consumes the red mass. The 4x4 roars into the LARGE RAMP AREA, the light is coming from the top.

White knuckles on the wheel. *Fire gaining*. Up the ramp-

I/E. 4X4, ACCESS ROAD, FOREST - CONTINUOUS

-the 4x4 is airborne. Chasing flames scorch nearby branches, singe Elf in the truck bed, ignite the cover.

Heavy tires tear into ground, swerve, straighten. Elf kicks away the burning truck bed cover, it tumbles off.

Well behind: building-size plumes of flame mushroom up.

Funk slows it down. They all catch their breath. Sky sees the mushroom clouds in the side view mirror, "*sighs...*" then:

SKY
How's that arm?

WOLF
Could have been worse.

Sky still hates herself for it. Wolf belies inner writhing, the crudely cauterized arm fidgets.

Elf and Sky lock eyes in a calm moment... then back on task. Dr. Sherman is still in a state of shock, charade or not.

ELF
Ok Sherman, you have *exactly* five minutes to finish whatever shit you're taking and then you tell me everything. Every. *Goddamn*. Thing.

WOLF
I'll crack him open like a walnut.

Elf nods glaring at Dr. Sherman who sinks back sulking. On the tablet, Funk sees a waypoint pop up.

FUNK
Lieutenant, something is up ahead.

They round the bend... Funk slams the brakes! Just ahead... Troops, vehicles, an entire unit... and the Manticore logo.

WOLF
Looks like we're outnumbered again.
And I'm down an arm.

Careful eyes scan... no guns are aimed... the bow & arrow with wings logo on the vehicles.

SKY
It's our unexpected guardian angels... this *is* their vehicle.

ELF
Time to be... diplomatic. If anything goes wrong, don't go down easy.

Funk grips the wheel. Sky and Wolf check their rifles then Dr. Sherman, he's quiet. Elf slips out the tailgate-

EXT. ACCESS ROAD, FOREST - CONTINUOUS

-keeps his rifle lowered. An OFFICER approaches him likewise. Elf finds his face familiar, it's:

CAPT. BASHAR

I see you got my message. And staff vehicle.

ELF

Thanks. And for holding the door. Is the rest also your work?

CAPT. BASHAR

Yes it was but the heavy lifting was by your own FPF's air wing.

ELF

You called that strike in?

CAPT. BASHAR

And fried the reactor.

ELF

Good job but only yesterday you had a different target list.

CAPT. BASHAR

Like you, I saw limits crossed today, did what I could to stop it.

ELF

We've a lot to talk about then.

CAPT. BASHAR

Captain Bashar Marwan, Special Ops Unit Commander, formerly attached to Task Force Manticore.

His hand is extended. Elf returns the gesture.

ELF

1st Lieutenant Alvaro Cuellar, Team Alpha Leader, Griffin Force.

I/E. 4X4, ACCESS ROAD, FOREST - MOMENTS LATER

Inside, everyone is still tense. Outside, Elf is calm.

ELF

The best way to kill us would have been to just leave us underground.

SKY
Or shoot us to pieces a minute ago.

WOLF
And how many Griffin Force and FPF
did they kill? A lot more than the
roster reductions I gave them.

Hard to argue that but...

ELF
...that Core's still missing. And we
can't find it alone.

They all swallow the bitter pill.

FUNK
It was this unit that took me but-

KARIM (O.S.)
(French accent)
Excuse me-

FUNK (CONT'D)
-they didn't give me this
look.

They turn to see Karim with Kolchak and two squad members.
The spy drone flies out to Kolchak's hand.

KARIM (CONT'D)
-I'm looking for an injured beast.

KOLCHAK
And I'm also looking for my tablet.

Funk unlatches the tablet, holds it up.

EXT. ROADSIDE, ACCESS ROAD, FOREST - MINUTES LATER

Karim focuses on Wolf's injury, "mumbles" adjusting wires.
Expertise hides her nerves. Sky munches hard tack.

SKY
I still miss *tteok*.

KARIM
...*voilà*, reconnect your neurals.

Wolf "sighs..." gulps water, devours hard tack. Karim packs her
gear with one eye on... this beast. Like her squad members.

WOLF
Where'd you learn this tech?

KARIM
Experience. Just keep your aug
levels on low for the time.

WOLF

Yeah, I get that a lot.

KARIM

If the doctor keeps giving the same advice, you really should take it.

WOLF

You speak French, don't you?

KARIM

All this and also a mind reader?

SKY

(ruffles Wolf's ears)

These things caught your mumbles.

WOLF

Am I wrong, Miss perfectly accented 'voilà?'

KARIM

...oui, je parle français.

WOLF

Je le parle aussi. Lou Beaufort, Corporal. And this my big sister and sergeant.

Wolf extends his hand... Karim returns the gesture.

KARIM

...très bien. Josephine Karim, also Corporal.

SKY

Haneul Kang, *bangapseumnida.*

Another handshake. Sky feels a very firm grip.

EXT. 4X4, ACCESS ROAD, FOREST - SAME TIME

Inside, Dr. Sherman sulks "*mumbling...*"

Capt. Bashar pulls off his right glove, has THREE MECHANICAL FINGERS fully integrated into his hand and forearm.

CAPT. BASHAR

Bigger means more energy and maintenance. We have our field generator but the power plant for that just went up in flames.

Karim shows Wolf and Sky a mechanical right hand and forearm. The squad members indicate a knee and a foot.

ELF

Why'd you turn only today?

Ambience... Capt. Bashar starts slowly:

CAPT. BASHAR

Blind faith. I was healed, like others. Reassurances the Core was for a more just City State. That Hex was key since he managed a revolutionary new freeware... I just... didn't want to see the big picture.

ELF

Not to be condescending but did you miss what they were doing?

CAPT. BASHAR

I don't expect you to just believe me but that wasn't my unit.

(shows unit insignia)

The other one is Atom Sector, the Colonel's guard. I've been keeping tabs to the extent that I could but of all things, *your unit* confirmed my deepest concerns. Sherman reassured me it-

(Wolf)

-sorry, your fellow there, was a product of the war, not his work.

ELF

That's mostly true.

CAPT. BASHAR

He was also used as a prototype for what we saw today. But my unit, we were able only a few days ago to access the FPF network. Hex was busy scrambling and deleting data but we nabbed the alert codes which just cleaned up here.

ELF

Hell of a story, Captain. But right now I need to tell my HQ where that Core went.

CAPT. BASHAR

I don't know but he does. How about it, Doctor?

Sherman stares ahead blank.

DR. SHERMAN

I would have made a peaceful reset
but now expect sheer terror. Soon
you'll be in a newly healed world
under the banner of the Manticore.

Elf scoffs at him.

CAPT. BASHAR

He's nuts but Vlad *will* use that
Core and we may not be able to
contain it next time.

ELF

He needs a facility and time. That
gives *us* time to regroup. Thanks to
you the FPF is on alert and ready.
But now, where's your com?

Capt. Bashar points... steps away Funk and Kolchak tweak a
damaged field radio, "*sigh*" realizing it won't work.

Elf looks to Wolf and gets an idea...

TIME CUT:

Elf, Sky, Karim, Capt. Bashar and Kolchak watch as Funk
connects the radio to Wolf's antenna: "*beeeeEEEEP!*"

WOLF

Très bien.

ELF

Find Falco.

Kolchak, calm considering yesterday, sees Wolf's wounded arm.

WOLF

Finding at least some peace here
won't be easy.

KOLCHAK

...enough or not, it will have to do.
Tolstoy.

EXT. LARGE CLEARING, FOREST - LATER, AFTERNOON

Falco's and Vogel's VTOLs touchdown. In the trees, soldiers
leave behind tarp-covered vehicles, board the VTOLs.

INT. FALCO'S VTOL - HALF HOUR LATER

Level flight. Fully loaded. Tired soldiers chat, snooze, etc.

Dr. Sherman is restrained, guarded by Sky. She turns to a chat between Funk, Wolf and Karim.

FUNK

Thank you, Cpl. Karim, for peer reviewing my diagnosis. You see, Big Beast? Veg-out on low.

WOLF

Touché, Funk.
(off Karim's look)
He's an Austrian electrician.

FUNK

Paul Bauer. In town you'll meet our English friend, Pete Ager aka Kit.

WOLF

Kit will tell you that I look mean but really, I'm *'armless*.

FUNK

Now *that* must be some soul. Humor! Schopenhauer, remember?

Wolf's writhing eases. Karim smiles. Sky beams.

INT. VOGEL'S VTOL - LATER, MID-AFTERNOON

Bigger than Falco's VTOL, still a full house.

In the FRONT: Elf and Capt. Bashar stand behind Vogel. She sees a red light appear, speaks into her radio:

VOGEL

ADIZ, they're painting us.

FALCO

Copy. Steady on my wing.

ELF

How'd you get past them before?

CAPT. BASHAR

Hacked codes. And Vogel's flying.

VOGEL

Especially my flying, a real skill not some stab in the back hack.

CAPT. BASHAR

In one ear and out the other.

VOGEL
Natuurlijk! But she's handling
 funny... must be the load.

A hint of her native *Dutch*. The cockpit radio *blurts*:

FPF PILOT
*Defecting aircraft, proceed under
 escort.*

FPF aircraft take positions: two in back, two flank.

VOGEL
 Understood. And... they're still
 painting us.

ELF
 That bit of getting attacked *by air*
 yesterday.

EXT. GUARDED COMPLEX, NEW ROME - LATE AFTERNOON

Acting as a forward operating base, battle scars remain.
 The VTOLs touch down by the large warehouse, next door...

Comm. Patel exits from the LARGE BUILDING, sees the arrivals.

INT. VOGEL'S VTOL, LANDING ZONE - MOMENTS LATER

The red light goes out. Vogel scoffs.

VOGEL
 Been painting my ass so long I look
 like a pheasant ready to fuck.

CAPT. BASHAR
 Very classy, Lieutenant but we're
 here to make good. Lock it down.

Vogel takes off her helmet, reveals a stunning blonde bulb.
 Taps buttons. The instrument panel dims.

EXT. VTOLS, LANDING ZONE - MOMENTS LATER

Falco sees Elf introduce Capt. Bashar to Comm. Patel.
 But here: Vogel disembarks, inspects her VTOL. Falco beams.

FALCO
 Vogel, good name, where'd you learn
 to fly?

VOGEL
 With the Royal Dutch. You?

FALCO
Out of Ajaccio, Corsica.

VOGEL
Civilian.

FALCO
Back then yes.

VOGEL
Royal Dutch... Air Force.

FALCO
Army lady, nice.

VOGEL
Oooh, strike one, Falco. I said
'air force.'

FALCO
Ok, air force, how fast is your 3k?

VOGEL
Nine minutes fifty.

FALCO
Maybe someday you'll catch me at
nine minutes fif-teen. If you can.

VOGEL
Nine fifteen. Ok flash, you better
deliver the goods... if you want the
goods.

EXT. LARGE BUILDING (HQ BUILDING) - MOMENTS LATER

Two GF Soldiers take Dr. Sherman away. Capt. Bashar directs his unit to a LONG BUILDING. Kolchak hustles them along.

Vogel looks back, gives Falco a casual salute. He returns it.

KARIM
New wingman?

Vogel gives her the "haha you funny" look. They walk off. Still here: Elf, Sky and Wolf who holds his wounded arm.

WOLF
Their medic patched it up good.

COMM. PATEL
Mr. Ager has something for you,
Corporal.

(MORE)

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)

After the full team debrief for which, Mr. Bauer and Lt. Falco, your presence is also required.

WOLF

Our team's not full, Commander.

Unusual for him, Comm. Patel smiles indicating..

An incoming vehicle pulls up. Out pops Kit followed by... Muffin looking leveled up in a new suit.

MUFFIN

Team Alpha CR reporting, Chief.

Elf, Sky and Wolf feel good having a friend back. Steps away, Capt. Bashar has a flash of wonder.

INT. WINDOWLESS ROOM, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Behind Dr. Sherman, the door closes leaves him with a table and two chairs. He sits. His leg wound has been dressed.

He *gulps*, rubs his throat. Begins *drumming* his fingers.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING - LATER, EVENING

On screens: Team Alpha's recon photos and air strike footage. Around an operations table, a long debriefing wraps up.

COMM. PATEL

All that leaves us with 'Kaluga?'

CAPT. BASHAR

Yes but Hex said 'to Kaluga,' so it's a place. The doctor could spell out the rest.

COMM. PATEL

Ok. For now, I think we're done. Corporal, see Mr. Ager. Team Alpha, dismissed. And Captain, your unit's in the adjacent building.

He motions to a GF Staff NCO who leaves with Capt. Bashar. The others also go.

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)

Lt. Cuellar, Lt. Falco, a word.

The two stay. Elf shares a glance with Sky as she leaves.

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)
 These defectors saved my best unit,
 I want to be optimistic but for now
 they're mere guests. *Not* friends.

ELF FALCO
 Understood, Commander. Yes, Commander.

COMM. PATEL
 That said, show them the mess hall.
 Tent seven outside. Dismissed.

Elf, Falco leave as Cattaneo enters reporting to Comm. Patel.

INT. LARGE ROOM, LONG BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

A make-shift barracks. Karim and medics check augmentations,
 Capt. Bashar's hand, Vogel's elbow, Kolchak's knee, etc...

Soldiers sip water, munch hard tack. Elf and Falco enter.

ELF
 Captain, could your unit use a real
 dinner?

FALCO
 Well, as real as it gets.

Heads turn. Falco doesn't miss a chance to smile at Vogel.

EXT. TENT SEVEN, GUARDED COMPLEX - MINUTES LATER

A field kitchen is going strong. Everyone files inside.
 Nearby, the VTOLs sit. Vogel takes a look... all quiet.

INT. TECH WORKSHOP, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Wolf lays hazy... breathes deep. Kit pulls out his wounded arm.
 In the socket... flesh meets machine, cybernetics.

DR. SHERMAN (PRE-LAP)
 Cybernetics... the way to improve us-

INT. WINDOWLESS ROOM, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Dr. Sherman sits confident across from a steely Comm. Patel.

DR. SHERMAN (CONT'D)
 -therefore the world. Leon, that
 fool! Thinks the world should be
 improved first.

COMM. PATEL

By unleashing that Core and making masses of drones?

DR. SHERMAN

Leon wants drones, mass automation. My creations do not abide by mere parameters, Commander. They're your best weapons. In fact, where would your Griffin Force be without me?

COMM. PATEL

If you'd like any chance at more science work, I need to know where the Core is. We can start by figuring out 'Kaluga.'

DR. SHERMAN

We can start with a better place. In fact, my office is right in this complex, let's head over there.
(off Comm. Patel's look)
You must give, if you want to get.

He *drums* his fingers. Comm. Patel turns a hidden dial.

INT. TECH WORKSHOP, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Wolf sees Kit prepare a new arm. Funk works a busy console. *Beep-boop...* the new arm moves in... *beep-boop...*

Sweat flows in to Wolf's eyes. He squints blinking-

INT. WOLF'S POV, ALIEN LAB - FLASHBACK

-swirling red clears. I hear... distant *humming*. Close *boops*. My own deep *breaths*. My vision, stifled. Suddenly it's sharp!

There! My reflection... I am... Wolf. "*Growl!*" Fangs out.

INT. WINDOWLESS ROOM, HQ BUILDING - PRESENT

Dr. Sherman's fingers *drum* the table. The room is hotter.

Comm. Patel swigs a water bottle, puts a second on the table... Dr. Sherman can't help but stare...

COMM. PATEL

You must give, if you want to get.
Details are preferred.

...and *pounds* the table, leans in almost hovering.

DR. SHERMAN

You would have gotten good use out of that Core - that *marvel* - if I could have gone about my work!

COMM. PATEL

Mr. Hex reacted all the same. He even called the Core a 'marvel.'

DR. SHERMAN

Mr. Hex. *Mister*. I am a doctor! I reined in the Core! I can control-

COMM. PATEL

Didn't the max alert containment sound familiar? You can rein it in but never quite use it.

DR. SHERMAN

It takes time! The Manhattan Project took time, Apollo took time, this needs time!

He calms into a steady eye-to-eye... a small smile...

DR. SHERMAN (CONT'D)

Ever since we saw the Core's potential, we knew-

Off Comm. Patel's gaze...

I/E. VARIOUS - FLASHBACK MONTAGE

FIELD BASE: metal-rock-fused soldiers "*shrill!*" Comm. Patel drives the truck terrified... Col. Vlad gazes fascinated...

DR. SHERMAN (V.O.)(CONT'D)

-we *knew* the world wouldn't be the same. A few laughed, a few cried-

ROOF: Elf sees the soldier hit the pipe, twirl off into fire...
RIVER: Sky swims from the flowing corpses, gasps ashore.

DR. SHERMAN (V.O.)(CONT'D)

-most were silent... but some welcomed a new epoch of man.

ALIEN LAB: Wolf exits a chimera canister into a test arena. Scared humans aim guns... Wolf pounces them!

COMM. PATEL (V.O.)

The worst of Kali Yuga.

INT. WINDOWLESS ROOM, HQ BUILDING - PRESENT

DR. SHERMAN

Then you concede it's inevitable, a
cosmic cycle. Fate! For Manticore
it's a healing of the world, a
singularity of shards torn asunder.

COMM. PATEL

Almost poetic, (now what's
Kaluga?)

DR. SHERMAN

(over)
Cultish mumbo-jumbo.

DR. SHERMAN (CONT'D)

Where it all starts.

He receives the bottle, gulps down pure content.

COMM. PATEL

'Where' is a place.

Dr. Sherman pauses... drinks again. Noted by Comm. Patel.

DR. SHERMAN

I wasn't privy to everything in
Manticore but I can give you all I
have from my office-

COMM. PATEL

Given the situation, Doctor, I can
search all your property if I deem
necessary not that I'll enjoy it.

DR. SHERMAN

Then search away. Stifling the
science when we saw its potential
moved a lot of people to Manticore,
made their ideas inevitable.

COMM. PATEL

You too concede it's inevitable so
it shouldn't matter if you tell me.

Curveball... Dr. Sherman gives a little laugh.

COMM. PATEL

And if I knew maybe it wouldn't be
inevitable. Ok.

(stands)

No real change in the world has
ever been achieved by discussions.
Enjoy the water.

Dr. Sherman is left with a flash of worry as the door *slams*.

INT. TECH WORKSHOP, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Wolf's eyes shoot open! Intense, steely blue.

TIME CUT:

The tube device with a 4-barrel rotary gun seen earlier. Wolf slides his new left arm in, makes his forearm huge.

FUNK

The Vulcan Gauntlet tuned to your biometrics. Over four times the firepower of the Vulcan Rifle. Two hundred fifty shots and it must be cooled. Switch next to the trigger.

Flick! Various small hatches open on the weapon.

KIT

You've a new energy cell to accommodate its power mode, a charged volley.

FUNK

Four seconds, once charged it must fire. The rifle's still yours but top brass wants a field test of this thing. It also has blades.

Clank! Blades pop out. And under the barrels, a gladius. Wolf ponders the weapon. The phone *rings*, Funk answers.

FUNK

Bauer... Yes, Commander, he's awake.

EXT. TENT SEVEN, GUARDED COMPLEX - SAME TIME, EVENING

Karim flexes her mechanical fingers. Sky gazes curious.

KARIM

Every trigger's a hair trigger... but handshakes aren't the same.

The others head back to the barracks. Vogel peels off, looks bugged at her VTOL. Falco joins her.

VOGEL

It... handled weird on the way over.

FALCO

We were both nearly overloaded.

Off Vogel's look...

INT. DOOR, WINDOWLESS HALLWAY, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Comm. Patel stands face belying nothing. Behind the door... muffled "*screams*." He takes a deep breath. The door opens...

Wolf steps out, licks blood off his fangs and lips. He hands Comm. Patel a small recording device.

WOLF

Walnut's been cracked, Commander.

COMM. PATEL

Thank you, Corporal. Dismissed.

Wolf glances back inside, leaves to a hallway with WINDOWS. Comm. Patel goes to his radio looking into the room...

Dr. Sherman is out cold, one hand is missing some fingers... they're lying neatly on the table.

COMM. PATEL (O.S.)

Emergency care in the cellar. On the double.

INT. HALLWAY WITH WINDOWS, HQ BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

A door opens. Dr. Sherman is on a gurney with an IV. He sees... the passing windows... smiles...

BLACK - CYBORG HUD

"Priority Target Signal Acquired... Autonomy Restored."

"Parameters Set..." Toggles wildly between "*Exec-*" and "*Extr-*" soon settles on: "*Parameters Set: Extraction.*"

EXT. VOGEL'S VTOL, LANDING ZONE - LATE EVENING

Camouflaged on the VTOL is a NANO-BOX... Cyborg Joe emerges, *whiffs* his pipe. Leaps down. The nano follows as a cloud.

INT. SMALL BARRACKS ROOM, LONG BUILDING - SAME TIME

Quiet. Wolf sits gazing at a crescent moon. Muffin idles. On floor mats: Falco, Sky sleep. Elf stares up to infinity...

He looks to Sky... her eyes open. For the first time they're both not thinking of duty. Sky begins to smile...

Suddenly Wolf's ears twitch. *Boop!* Muffin comes too. Outside: *RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT!* Elf, Sky and Falco spring up-

MUFFIN

90 meters, by the LZ!

-dash out the door. Wolf and Muffin lunge out the window-

EXT. LONG BUILDING, GUARDED COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

-down two stories. Wolf shoulder rolls. Muffin break boosts.

Wolf's HUD: spots FPF and GF Soldiers shooting at Cyborg Joe who beelines into a first floor window. An *alarm* sounds.

WOLF

Chief, it's that cyborg! He just hit the HQ!

INT. HALLWAY, LONG BUILDING - SAME TIME

Elf, Sky and Falco "*cuss*" passing a door with Capt. Bashar.

ELF

It's not protocol, Captain but we could use some fireteams!

Capt. Bashar whips around to the room:

CAPT. BASHAR

Sgt. Kolchak, MG squad outside!

Kolchak's squad is already gearing up. Vogel also.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Comm. Patel turns back to a video conference with New Rome's Executive Council, a mix of suits and uniforms.

COMM. PATEL

Council Members, there's an emergency here.

EXT. LONG BUILDING, GUARDED COMPLEX - SAME TIME

Elf, Sky and Falco sprint along... pass fresh corpses.

INT. HALLWAY, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Cyborg HUD: "*Target Signal: 19m... 17m...*" Guns aim, RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT! Soldiers, Staffers shot down on sight.

INT. MED BAY, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Anxious Staffers hold tight. Dr. Sherman is on a cot, smiles. RAT-TAT-TAT-TAT-TAT! Punches through the door, a Staffer is hit.

WHOOM! The door breaks in. Cyborg Joe sees hiding Staffers, hones in on... Dr. Sherman. The nano morphs to a holding pod.

Cyborg HUD: The "Exec-" and "Extr-" toggling again. One command is from a controller, the other from a hacker.

After a few seconds: "Vitals Low. Void Transport. Execute."

CYBORG JOE

No worth in leaving you alive nor
ramification for discarding you-

BLAM! Sky's long blue laser sears the holding pod, nails Cyborg Joe spinning him. Elf's yellow lasers fly in.

WHOOSH! The jetpack scorches Dr. Sherman's cot, he "screams!" Cyborg Joe *smashes* out a rear door.

Falco grabs a fire extinguisher, runs to Dr. Sherman. Elf and Sky bolt out the burning doorframe.

EXT. LONG BUILDING, GUARDED COMPLEX - SAME TIME

Kolchak bolts along with a squad and Vogel. Ahead, Wolf and Muffin reach the landing zone. From around the corner, *WHOO-*

EXT. LANDING ZONE, GUARDED COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

Wolf's HUD: *-OOSH!* Cyborg Joe, a mad wasp firing on soldiers.

Wolf aims the Vulcan gauntlet- *BRRRRR!* 1500 rounds per minute pester, *whizz* by the maneuvering Cyborg Joe who-

Muffin's HUD: *-is evading being tracked.*

Wolf charges his weapon, four seconds:

4, Kolchak's squad joins in. The gauntlet barrels spin...

3, Elf and Sky appear around the building, fire bursts...

2, Cyborg Joe weaves between shots from many weapons...

1, Some of Kolchak's soldiers get hit. Wolf zeroes in- *BL-BL-*

-BL-BLAM! Cyborg Joe is hit! Spots a final move: down to the cockpit of Vogel's VTOL-*CRASH!* Vogel realizes something and-

From by the building: *-Falco* sees her dash into the VTOL.

MUFFIN

His core's cooking!

INT. VTOL, LANDING ZONE, GUARDED COMPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

Vogel yanks open the cockpit door, sees a mangled Cyborg Joe grinning wild. Behind, Wolf bursts in.

WOLF

That bastard's going to blow!

VOGEL

Toss him in the back! He'll destroy the transponder! We'll need it to get close to Vlad, it's how we got close to you before.

Wolf yanks Cyborg Joe's legs, a budge. Again, almost loose...
Cyborg Joe with his chest smoking, burning:

CYBORG JOE

They'll breed you for hotdog meat.

Wolf is about to pound his face...

WOLF

Nice try, rusty nuts.

He flings Cyborg Joe over Vogel to the back. They lunge out-

EXT. LANDING ZONE, GUARDED COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

-dash off... the VTOL's tail *ERUPTS!* The front lurches forward.
Wolf body shields Vogel from the blast wave.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

On a screen: "*Signal lost.*"

Leon Hex shakes his head. Maj. Steele is unbothered.
Col. Vlad "*mumbles*" dreading something...

COL. VLAD

Nothing changes... Hex, deep battle.
Major, secure the base and Core.

Buzzing! The main screen flickers, the Dark Figure appears.

DARK FIGURE

Vladimir, Manticore is a syncretic idea. Leon's way suits us now but J.R.'s may be useful later.

COL. VLAD

It nearly killed my best people!

DARK FIGURE

And you nearly killed him, twice. And this Team Alpha proved very capable, twice. They've recruited your former special ops unit. All will be forgiven if you prove that your trust in Leon was apt.

The screen *buzzes*, flickers back to normal.

Tense ambience... Col. Vlad motions to the others, leaves.

Maj. Steele also leaves, turns the other way out the door.
Leon Hex turns to his brimming console screens...

CCTV and data from Federal City 3. On a map, he zooms in on...
a huge stash of battle robots.

EXT. LANDING ZONE, GUARDED COMPLEX - SAME TIME

Comm. Patel and Capt. Bashar eye firefighters dousing the
wreck, Kolchak taking dogtags, Karim doing first aid.

COMM. PATEL

Captain? Not protocol... and I really
hate to say it... I need a favor.

Capt. Bashar is ready to listen.
Nearby, Vogel pats Wolf's metal arm.

VOGEL

Bedankt, big guy. Thanks.

Wolf nods... walks off. Vogel sees a real sad glint.

FALCO

A flash of a dash. Might catch me
one day.

Vogel gives him the "*haha you funny*" look then back to Wolf.

FALCO

He's a good soldier but a loner.
Lucky you, I'm not. You ok?

Trudging away, Wolf hears more "*flirting*," sees Kolchak hug
the wounded soldier getting final first aid from Karim who-

-sees Wolf. Medic instincts tell her to act but he melts into
darkness between buildings.

Now unseen, Wolf gazes... ears twitching, mind churning...

ELF

Forget I ever said you'll lose the
patch.

SKY

Thanks, Chief.

Wolf sees them go to help the others. Painful carnage yet
heart to heart warmth. Wolf backs into the darkness.

EXT. ALLEY, GUARDED COMPLEX - MINUTES LATER

A hint of moonlight... crates, equipment... a slight stir... a terrifying shape: large, lupine... Wolf sitting in a corner.

Wolf's HUD: cold technical readings not for human eyes.

MEMORY FLASH: in Rhino One, he looks to a glum Sky.

WOLF (V.O.)
...still have your body. And soul.

He flips up his shades... steely blue eyes... a tear seeps out.

MEMORY FLASH: in the clearing, Dr. Sherman turns to him.

DR. SHERMAN (V.O.)
...making of the future, my good boy.

He releases the gauntlet, puts his left hand on his heart.

Wolf's HUD: only vital readings. They're strong, healthy.

MEMORY FLASH: in the VTOL, Funk turns to him, Karim looks on.

FUNK (V.O.)
Humor! Schopenhauer, remember?

Wolf stands, steps into the light looking up to... the silvery crescent moon with a beautiful aura.

INT. MED BAY, HQ BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

Yellow lights shine. Many wounded lay on cots as well as... a heavily bandaged Dr. Sherman "mumbling."

WOLF (O.S.)
The pain of your-

Dr. Sherman jerks his head shocked, a shadowy shape looms...

WOLF (CONT'D)
-new birth is one you don't forget.
We've that much to thank you for.

Nearby, GF Medics apply bandages. Karim checks augmentations.

WOLF (CONT'D)
Whether it's a new beginning or a
painful continuation is up to you.

Dr. Sherman stares unblinking. Behind his bushy facial hair... lips curl into a smile.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - NEXT MORNING

Leon Hex taps an array of commands, sees activity unfold on...

Screen group 1: a lot of cycling battle robot HUDs in
"Federal City 3: New Hamburg" in various vantage points.

Screen group 2: Maj. Steele's unit preps Battle Robots Mk II...
Col. Vlad steps into an armored suit, a nano cloud gathers...

Screen group 3: a swarm of WASP DRONES with spinning blades...
a huge tunnel-like place, robots load canisters onto racks.

Deep breath, Leon Hex sits back... he also has an armored suit.

EXT. GUARDED COMPLEX, NEW ROME - SAME TIME

Activity all over. Two new VTOLs are at the landing zone.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Comm. Patel clicks past satellite photos, CCTV and maps. Team
Alpha, Falco, Capt. Bashar and Vogel listen, nerves on edge.

COMM. PATEL

Kaluga: a region in former Russia
well beyond any Federal Zone. The
site of an old missile base thus
feasible Manticore has a facility
there. And an hour ago, Federal
City Three reported a massive drone
attack. I have Executive Council
orders to dispatch help.

ELF

Commander, that's a undoubtedly
distraction.

COMM. PATEL

And so Team Alpha, you are going to
Kaluga to prosecute any Manticore
forces with deadly precision, Capt.
Bashar's unit will join you.

Deep breaths wean to eye contact: "Let's do this."

INT. ARMORY, GUARDED COMPLEX - MINUTES LATER

COMM. PATEL (V.O.)

Mr. Chief Executive and Council
Members, as required, I have sent a
Griffin Force Team to Federal City
Three. A contingent of FPF regulars
will follow. However-

Over the above dialog, a SERIES OF SHOTS:

- 1) The armory door and various lockers open.
- 2) Boots, armor, helmets are slid, *clicked*, strapped on.
- 3) Weapons are *locked* and *loaded*.
- 4) Familiar and new boots march outside.

EXT. LANDING ZONE, GUARDED COMPLEX - CONTINUOUS

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)(V.O.)
 -as Griffin Force Commander, my
 best unit, Team Alpha, remains at
 my discretion. I dispatched them on
 what I believe is a vital lead.

Over the above dialog, a SERIES OF SHOTS:

- 1) The Griffin Force and New Rome flags flutter.
- 2) Team Alpha and Capt. Bashar's unit walk armed and ready.
- 3) The new GF VTOLs are fueled.
- 4) Elf and Sky, epic handshake-*CLASP!*
- 5) Funk hands an SMG to Wolf who holsters it.
- 6) Kolchak slings on the cutting laser, Karim her medkit.
- 7) Falco and Vogel casual salute/point at each other.
- 8) VTOL engines roar. *Whoosh!* Past the shining Sun.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

COMM. PATEL (CONT'D)
 (belying no worries)
 Expect my resignation if this turns
 out to be a waste of time.

On a screen: the Executive Council members show agreement.

EXT. NEO AGORA, NEW ROME - MOMENTS LATER

Morning commotion including Vincenzo walking with a coffee, sees the VTOLs *whoosh* over. He ponders a moment, proceeds.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING - LATER

Comm. Patel pours over satellite photos. Cattaneo indicates news ones popping up on a screen.

CATTANEO
 Latest from the target area,
 Commander.

Nothing new except... something catches Comm. Patel's eye.

EXT. THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS - LATER, DAY

Morbid grey splotches on the landscape. Above, two GF VTOLs.

INT. FALCO'S VTOL - CONTINUOUS

Falco's panel, a small light. He sets his radio. Eyes widen.

INT. VOGEL'S VTOL - CONTINUOUS

Vogel too. She flicks on the speakers to a familiar "voice."

COL. VLAD
*...federal system holds you down and
 keeps from you the greatest gift
 our planet has ever received.*

EXT. NEO AGORA, NEW ROME - SAME TIME

Public screens: the Alien Core gleaming in a facility...

All around, a sea of reactions - civilians & soldiers, buyers
 & sellers, families - *murmurs* of praise and condemnation.

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
*Behold! The answer to our mutual
 stagnation! The Alien Core! A
 source of free energy that could be
 for the people. They told you it
 was dangerous! Unstable! They lied!*

Public screens: the propaganda reel plays...

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
*Arise you prisoners of privation!
 Under the Crimson Banner of the
 Manticore, we'll bring down these
 old bureaucratic temples and take
 mankind into a new chapter!*

All around, reactions are swelling but near the bazaar...

Vincenzo is haunted. He takes off his GF cap, gazes deep into
 the unit badge then to his food kiosk some meters away...

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Staffers are *scrambling* with the hack as the Manticore logo dominates the main screens:

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)
*Citizens of the Federal Cities of
 New Rome and New Hamburg, seek out
 the Manticore. We are the future.*

Now just *bustling*... the screens are back including...

Conference screen: the shocked Executive Council Members wait for Comm. Patel to say something, anything, find relief with:

COMM. PATEL
 Our systems are back and... we have a
 trace. My unit is on course.

Various screens: the warzone in "Federal City 3" where GF and FPF units engage an army of Battle Robots in the streets.

Map screen: a point blinks "Broadcast Origin - Kaluga" with the VTOLs heading toward it.

Cattaneo indicates new photos coming onto a screen...

Comm. Patel looks close... an OLD TOWN... nearby, buildings and a runway in a forest. The converted old missile base.

The photos 'fall onto' their location on the map, make a live battlefield satellite feed with the VTOLs closing in fast.

INT. FALCO'S VTOL - LATER, DAY

Wolf arms the Vulcan gauntlet, barrels spin. Elf, Sky and Muffin and others prep their weapons, field kit *clicking-*

INT. VOGEL'S VTOL - SAME TIME

-snapping armor into place, tightening straps. Kolchak, Karim and Capt. Bashar take deep breaths...

Buzzing! RED LIGHT! Vogel's eye widen.

VOGEL
 Falco, I got paint! Hold on, boys
 and girls!

She pushes the control yoke-

EXT. VTOLS, KALUGA REGION - CONTINUOUS

-the VTOLs swoop down, buzz old farmland, kick up dust-

EXT. OLD TOWN, KALUGA REGION - MOMENTS LATER

-maneuver between dilapidated buildings, land on a SQUARE next to a RED BRICK CHURCH.

Rear ramps open, soldiers rush out, Wolf in the lead.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Comm. Patel and Cattaneo watch live satellite feed adjust.

On screen: the attack heads toward a forest clump on the way to the complex where activity is now buzzing.

EXT. HEATH, OLD TOWN - MOMENTS LATER

Wolf's HUD: "Waypoint - 1.88km" Kolchak hits the dirt by him.

KOLCHAK

It's good we have a wolf leading us through wild country.

WOLF

Isn't this your neck of the woods?

A road sign: Ульяново ("Ulyanovo") The others trickle in.

KOLCHAK

I'm from St. Petersburg but Tolstoy lived 130 clicks that way. 'The two most powerful warriors are patience and time.' Tolstoy.

WOLF

We may not have much of the latter, so how can we risk the former?

Elf scans with binoculars, sees just the forest clump.

ELF

Lances out. Forward in hops.
(to Sky)
Shoulder to shoulder.

SKY

Affirmative, Chief.

They spring into fire teams, advance in battle lines.

EXT. FLYING POV - SAME TIME

AIR DRONES heading toward the forest clump over which-

INT. CONTROL ROOM, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

One screen: -the old town and church appear in the distance.

Leon Hex gladly conducts a computerized war symphony.

Screen group 1: the POV battle robot footage of all out war. *Click*. An area map graphic showing the whole battle appears.

Screen group 2: battle robot HUDs near the forest clump. Above them, the flying air drones proceed faster.

Screen group 3: Maj. Steele with his unit somewhere outside in the base. In another spot, Col. Vlad with his armor suit.

Leon Hex *taps* commands... the battle robots' HUDs in screen group 2 show "*weapons hot.*"

EXT. FOREST CLUMP - SAME TIME

At the tree line: Team Alpha hit the dirt... far off buildings. Closer, advancing ranks of Battle Robots Mk II.

Muffin's HUD: zooms in... the Robots prime their weapons. "*Incendiary ordinance detected.*" Rockets launch!

Behind Team Alpha in the trees, Capt. Bashar's unit lays low. Elf "*shouts!*" Missiles *WHOOSH* in and over and...

The forest *ERUPTS* into an INFERNO!

Capt. Bashar, Kolchak and Karim lunge to avoid the blasts. Some soldiers are swallowed whole by fiery curtains.

Well above the trees, air drones fly over rising plumes toward the old town.

EXT. FIELD, COUNTRYSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Team Alpha roll from the inferno, spring up, fan out firing! Yellow and blue laser streams. Orange fanning arcs.

Team Alpha LEAP, DIVE, ROLL and BOOST through the warzone. Muffin avoids going under anything afraid of being crushed.

Lasers rip into robots, metal shards fly. Unfired missiles *explode*, shake up other robots that fire clumsy shots back.

EXT. FAR SIDE, FOREST CLUMP - SAME TIME

Capt. Bashar, Kolchak, Karim and others scramble out patting down burning uniforms. Capt. Bashar's radio *crackles*.

ELF

Captain, are you there?

CAPT. BASHAR

Mostly. We're going up the road.

(to Kolchak)

Grab that, Sergeant.

Kolchak and two soldiers snag a LOG. They all move out.

EXT. FIELD, COUNTRYSIDE - SAME TIME

Team Alpha shred the last Battle Robots, see up ahead...

The buildings are the old base acting as an old curtain for an ATOM SECTOR FACILITY in the forest behind it.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

Leon Hex glares hard at the destruction in the field, speaks to a screen.

LEON HEX

Outer perimeter.

On the screen: Col. Vlad, in his armor suit, floats with a nano cloud that looks higher grade than Cyborg Joe's.

COL. VLAD

*Shed what can't adapt. Draw them
into the base, send the Messenger
to FC4, double down in FC3.*

The call ends. Leon Hex activates even more robots in the city battle, mid-game Stratego, the full board is buzzing.

Leon Hex looks close at a screen, heads out in a rush... on that very screen: the flying POV nearing the old town as-

EXT. SQUARE, OLD TOWN - CONTINUOUS

-the air drones zero into where... a lone transponder sits.

WHIRRRRR! Fusillades zip out of windows and from the Church. Soldiers shooting! The air drones barely react, take hits.

Falco's and Vogel's VTOLs rise from behind houses firing.

Air drones fire back wild getting torn to pieces. The last one fires a missile... nails a church tower, it leans...

INT. VOGEL'S VTOL - CONTINUOUS

VOGEL
 Good sh- ah stront!

"Shit!" Vogel yanks the yoke and-

I/E. RED BRICK CHURCH, SQUARE, OLD TOWN - CONTINUOUS

-her VTOL jinks away as the church tower tilts over...
 all around, soldiers brace, hide, lunge away...

WHOOM! The tower crashes down in the middle of the square.
 Vogel's VTOL hooks around a power mast, *PLOWS* into a garage.

FALCO (O.S.)
 Vogel! Do you read?

Dust settles. Soldiers get their bearings.

INT. FALCO'S VTOL - CONTINUOUS

VOGEL (O.S.) FALCO
 Yeah, had worse before but (over)
 verdomme (that was stupid.) You crazy bird...

He sees something big on his radar.

FALCO (CONT'D)
 New reading, 7.9 clicks, east by
 northeast.

INT. VOGEL'S VTOL - CONTINUOUS

Vogel straightens her helmet, snaps to her radar.

VOGEL
 Intel put a runway there.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

On a screen: a huge plane approaches the complex's runway.

Comm. Patel yanks up his radio.

EXT. ROAD, COUNTRYSIDE - SAME TIME

Capt. Bashar's unit double times it with the log. See ahead...
 Team Alpha stops at the edge of the old base -- BUT THEN --

Rumbling! Somewhere behind the base...

EXT. EDGE, OLD BASE - CONTINUOUS

Team Alpha hears *rumbling* rising... Wolf's ears twitch.

WOLF
Jet engines.

MUFFIN
HQ confirms a large aircraft taking
off, they want a close scan.

SKY
Well then!

Elf peeks into the old base... a mix of derelict buildings.
There! Far down, movement... battle robots lurking...

Above! The huge plane - an AN-225 fused with a TU-160 via a
whiff of alien science - banks, *WHOOSHES* southwest.

Muffin's HUD: Manticore Logo, check. Atom Sector logo, check.

WOLF
There's only one place it'd be
heading.

ELF
(via radio)
Falco, you see that?

FALCO
Heading your way now.

Falco's VTOL is incoming, the winch ladder unfurls. Wolf and
Muffin run back into the field. Muffin boosts up to the VTOL.

EXT. ROAD, COUNTRYSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Capt. Bashar sees Wolf climb into the VTOL, it *WHOOSHES* away.

CAPT. BASHAR
(via radio)
Lieutenant, we're going for the
reactor. Keep them busy out front.

EXT. EDGE, OLD BASE - CONTINUOUS

Elf and Sky see Capt. Bashar direct Karim and some soldiers
to them. He leads Kolchak and his brawniest around the side.

I/E. FALCO'S VTOL CHASING HUGE PLANE - SAME TIME

The huge plane comes into view, releases small JET DRONES.

FALCO

This just keeps getting better.

VTOL auto-cannons: *WHIRRRRR!* One nicked drone spirals off.

In the REAR: Wolf and Muffin climb out, metal grips metal. The jet drones swarm around. They fire at them.

Falco goes evasive, still chasing. It's a mad vortex. Lasers stream in, out. Drones spiral away with smoke.

A fusillade zips by Wolf, he slides, grips the tail firing. Muffin tracks, nails the last drone. Scans the plane, sees-

-a tail turret open fire! Falco avoids its laser stream. Wolf swings back on, aims for the turret.

EXT. OLD BASE - SAME TIME

Elf and Sky are in positions ready for battle. Karim and the others too. They glance into middle of the old base..

Part grid, part maze, part wasteland... battle robots approach from various routes... closing... closer...

ELF

Lances out!

War erupts. Elf, Sky leap and roll in and out of cover, weave around the battlefield, fire with precision.

Karim runs support, medkit ready, her rifle too. She dashes between fighting positions checking on fellow soldiers.

The Battle Robots, armed for a close battle, sweep the grid with flamethrowers, rockets and shotgun-like laser blasts.

From a far roof, Col. Vlad watches in his armored suit with an orbiting nano cloud that hasn't yet formed a shape.

EXT. PERIMETER, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

The log rests on a sagged metal fence. The last soldiers sneak over it into the grounds, weapons ready.

Parked nearby: armed motorcycles, non-drones.

Kolchak's map device scans the layout, it's like the Pyrenees facility: tunnels, a central chamber and control rooms.

CAPT. BASHAR

Stay by the cycles, Sergeant.

With a few soldiers, Capt. Bashar advances steady... stops!

Just ahead... a T-junction. He looks peripherals only "...yep."
Jumps back to a kneeling stance.

They all rake the windows ahead. Glass shatters and rains.
A launcher fires, *BLASTS OUT* two rooms... silence.

MAJ. STEELE (O.S.)
Not bad but there's a reason you're
not one of us, you mad Arab!

A few of them could take that as a direct insult.

CAPT. BASHAR
Atom Sector, I never liked them.

KOLCHAK
They didn't like us either,
Captain.

Ahead, figures appear on rooftops... in windows... on the ground.

Barrels flash. Fusillades rake. Grenades *crack*. Soldiers and
troopers dash. The third engagement of this battle begins.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

On several screens, Comm. Patel and Cattaneo see the action
in FC3, in and around the old base, and the huge plane where-

-a message pops up: a schematic of the aircraft with "*Core
Energy levels detected.*"

CATTANEO
We can't confirm how much but a
crash could unleash it, Commander.

Off Comm. Patel getting a wild idea...

I/E. FALCO'S VTOL CHASING HUGE PLANE - SAME TIME

4, lasers flash by Wolf charging his gauntlet...
3, gauntlet barrels spin, his reticle closing...
2, the VTOL evades a laser stream, Wolf corrects aim...
1, Muffin's and Wolf's reticles zero in on target- *BL-BL-*

-BL-BLAM! Hits the turret on one side. A blue v-bolt slams
the other, it falls out, zips past the VTOL.

Falco finishes his maneuvers wide-eyed on the radio.

FALCO
Say again, Commander.

COMM. PATEL
The Corporal and the CR, uh Muffin,
need to board that aircraft.

Falco takes a deep breath...

TIME CUT:

Falco nears the huge plane as close as his nerves allow.

Just behind the wings, an ACCESS DOOR. Wolf with the gauntlet slung on his back, jumps... grips metal, tears out the door.

Muffin boosts into the plane. Wolf swings in after him.

EXT. OLD BASE - SAME TIME

Fireteam Elf/Sky fire shredding robots to the left and right, lunge into a building, sweep the floor of robots, leap out to-

-the street, duck! A missile flies by them, *explodes* in the building collapsing it as Elf and Sky dash away firing.

Karim dashes off from a busy machine gun crew. Fires bursts pestering, damaging robots. Sees a soldier hit! Heads to him.

Robots close in on soldiers, torch them with flamethrowers. Hit others with rockets, more buildings crumble, collapse.

Karim recovers from the blast, finishes patching up a wounded soldier. She drags him to better cover as he fires on robots.

Elf and Sky "*huff*" off a blast, see more robots pouring in all around. They proceed with power shots, rip and tear!

From the far roof, Col. Vlad is impressed seeing the old base blown to pieces bit by bit. His gaze finds Elf and Sky...

EXT. PERIMETER, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

Capt. Bashar's unit is losing ground... hits get ever closer... Back by the cycles, Kolchak gives a thumbs up.

Kolchak's map device scan has revealed two tunnel entrances. In a WAREHOUSE within the fence and nearby woods.

TIME CUT:

VROOM! They take the cycles in two wide arcs weaving, firing, converging on the warehouse. Troops are closing the doors.

The cycles gun them down, zip in launching onto the ramp. Maj. Steele's unit is mauled but he just smiles.

EXT. SQUARE, OLD TOWN - SAME TIME

Soldiers pull the power mast off the VTOL's tail.

INT. VOGEL'S VTOL - CONTINUOUS

Vogel sees two signals disappear off the edge of her radar. She tries the throttle, *REV-splutter!* She pounds the yoke.

EXT. FALCO'S VTOL CHASING HUGE PLANE - SAME TIME

Falco is tight on the controls, speed nearly maxed.

INT. CARGO HOLD, HUGE PLANE - SAME TIME

Muffin is scanning racks of canisters lining the sides. This is the 'tunnel-like' place Leon Hex saw on a screen.

Muffin's HUD: "*Core Energy*" on all racks. Wolf's ears twitch...

MUFFIN

One shot could set these off.

They see Leon Hex up front in his armored suit. The nano-cloud is an Atom Sector logo, morphs into six scorpion tails.

Each tail is autonomous. Each stinger, a small cutting laser. *FLICK!* Wolf's gauntlet: blades out. Muffin readies his whip.

Leon Hex lunges, the tails shoot out at Wolf and Muffin who dodge weaving among them, inches from being seared.

Wolf slices and shocks. Muffin *snaps* his whip. Tails wear down, reform. Parts drop, scamper back to the main cloud.

Leon Hex sees his victory, he's pushing Wolf and Muffin back... close... closer... to the rear ramp... it begins to open...

EXT. OLD BASE - SAME TIME

Elf and Sky lunge out of a crumbling building, it tilts... leans into another collapsing both.

The old base is rubble, sporadic fires and blasted robots. Soldiers have damaged metal limbs. Many others are dead.

A painful victory... suddenly! A powerful voice:

COL. VLAD (O.S.)

Griffin Force! Most impressive.

He's hovering inside a large nano-manticore, its jaws and claws are cutting lasers. His position, a drop on them all.

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)

Most troops are scorpions, they
just sting. Lions want a reason.
But you're a step above, a griffin.
Manticore is a syncretic idea, it
has room for you.

His gaze is right at Elf and Sky who lower their weapons.
In the rubble all around, they've no place to truly hide.

COL. VLAD (CONT'D)

Kill the traitors. They betrayed me
and traitors don't discriminate. Do
it and I'll call off the plane.

Elf, Sky look to Karim and the remaining others... it's their
home city and two friends for these people they just met.

Elf and Sky wean into eye contact... nod, snap to Col. Vlad:

ELF

They followed their conscience.
Like us.

Col. Vlad glares disappointed. Elf, Sky, Karim and the others
lunge to any limited covered...

The nano-manticore swoops down lasers tearing, scorching.

INT. TUNNELS, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

Capt. Bashar's unit zooms along on cycles. Kolchak's map
device takes them past some turns until they wind up by...

An ALCOVE with DOORS. Kolchak and some others stop.
Capt. Bashar continues with the rest, they gun it- *LOUD*.

One of Kolchak's soldiers hacks an electronic door pad.
Kolchak readies his cycle. Others are rifles ready.

Before a TUNNEL CORNER, Capt. Bashar's team stops. Around it...

A way down... the REACTOR DOOR guarded by Maj. Steele's unit.
Battle robots, soldiers, they have this side locked down.

MAJ. STEELE

Bashar, Bashar, Bashar... who's got
more firepower?

Two cycles round the corner going slow. Maj. Steele smirks.

Capt. Bashar gets a message: "1/3." Nods at two soldiers with
small remotes linked to...

Receiving devices on the two cycles that *r-r-REV! ZOOM!*
Guns blaze! Shooting the cycles to pieces -- *while at the-*

-same time -- the hacked door *opens*. Kolchak launches his
cycle into Atom Sector troops that were waiting in ambush.

The cycle *explodes*. Kolchak's other soldiers toss grenades
and fire scorching, raking the doorway... silence...

Smoke hangs thick in the ALCOVE and before the REACTOR DOOR.
Maj. Steele gets a message: "*Control Section Breach.*"

MAJ. STEELE

Bashar! Heroism's for madmen!

CAPT. BASHAR (O.S.)

You always considered me mad!

Maj. Steele *snap*-signals. Battle robots advance. He taps at a
tablet: "*Wasp Drones Activated*"

CUTAWAYS: POVs in rooms start moving with a piercing *buzzing*.

INT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING - SAME TIME

Comm. Patel and Cattaneo snap to a screen with a "*predicted
route*" leading to New Rome. And Muffin's latest scan data.

CATTANEO

If that ordnance is released we'll
have a last resort containment...
mass firebombing of our own city.

INT. CARGO HOLD, HUGE PLANE - SAME TIME

The rear ramp is open. Outside, Falco's VTOL keeps pace.

Edge of the ramp... Wolf dodges, slices the jabbing scorpion
tails. Muffin boosts up onto the racks, snapping his whip.

Wolf somersaults closer to a surprised Leon Hex then he spins
slicing four scorpion tails. They reform just as fast.

Up in the racks, Muffin dodges, whips, aims to cover Wolf...
a scorpion tail surrounds him, ready to constrict...

Muffin freezes. The last scorpion tail snags Wolf's gauntlet.
BZZZZZ! Brings him in. Another tail grabs his other arm.

LEON HEX

He remembers being crushed. And you
remember being shocked.

Leon Hex grins with victory... Wolf releases his gauntlet!

And draws his SMG. Leon Hex snaps to a glare at fate... forty point blank shots *slam* his armored chest. Muffin drops free.

Leon Hex falls battered... slumps grinning... dies... *RUMBLE!*
The plane *JOLTS* speeding up...

INT. FALCO'S VTOL - CONTINUOUS

Falco sees the plane flying faster and faster... *sonic BOOM!*

EXT. OLD BASE - SAME TIME

The nano-manticore circles over scorched earth.

Among charred ruins: Elf, Sky and Karim duck away from scorching lasers beams... not many places left to hide.

Sky fires a long blue laser. Elf, a mini-missile. Hits! And... regeneration. They have many wounded, are low on ammo.

Karim cares for a soldier, scorch wounds show body augs.

Elf has one mini-missile left. Looks to Sky... they *can't* accept hopelessness... Karim's radio *crackles*:

VOGEL
Captain? You there?

KARIM
Am I glad to hear your voice,
Lieutenant and sister! Captain's
gone for the reactor and-

I/E. VOGEL'S VTOL, SQUARE, OLD TOWN - CONTINUOUS

KARIM (CONT'D)
-we're pinned outside.

VOGEL
Coming your way in a flash, K!
Brace yourselves, boys and girls!

In the rear, soldiers hold on. Engines rev kicking up dust, the VTOL backs out of the GARAGE, twirls around...

Whooshes toward the battle zone's rising smoke.

INT. TUNNELS, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

Smoke and flames. Shots *whizz*... hit a wall. The advancing battle robots push aside wrecked bikes... nothing.

Around the CORNER... Capt. Bashar's squad waits in ambush.

INT. HALLWAYS, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

Kolchak leads rifle up, the cutting laser slung on his back. Map check, a marked point: braced double doors just ahead.

He unslings the cutting laser. Soldiers cover the hallway.

INT. TUNNELS, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

Capt. Bashar gets a message: "2/3." Nods. The squad tosses grenades around the corner.

Robots barely react. *BOOM!* Cycles and soldiers round the corner firing ripping through the last robots.

INT. HALLWAYS, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

Kolchak uses the cutting laser. The *hum* of the laser makes a growing *buzzing* unnoticed... behind them, the doors *burst open!*

The wasp drones! Gunfire erupts! Kolchak cuts the lock... *buzzing* closing... he cuts the bracing bars. Drones hit them.

A soldier kicks open the double doors, is hit by gunfire!

INT. REACTOR CONTROL, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Sherman's former Staff fire handguns. Kolchak's squad gun them down storming inside. The LAST SOLDIERS are cut up by-

-the wasp drones that detonate as a final move. Kolchak *slams* the door. Others brace it, the first one in dead right by it.

In here... beyond the window... the Core-powered reactor.

Kolchak goes to the control console, taps in commands.
"Set Power: Conventional." "Set Level: 110%." "Coolant OFF."

INT. TUNNELS, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

Capt. Bashar's squad shoot and cover in switching fireteams.

Maj. Steele's unit is pinned. He opens an INSET in the REACTOR DOOR. Orders his unit inside.

INT. REACTOR CONTROL, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

A soldier fires through the door crack. Some drones detonate but too many are still out there. The metal door is strained.

Kolchak at the console: "Evacuate Core." Sees the Core dim.

A hexagonal crate forms, goes to the REACTOR DOOR but stops... floats up to... the window with a parasitic device attached.

INT. REACTOR CHAMBER, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Maj. Steele stands proud. The remains of his unit have the chamber secure. He speaks via the sound system.

MAJ. STEELE

Looks like *I'm* a step ahead.

INT. REACTOR DOOR, TUNNELS, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

Capt. Bashar reaches it, locked. His radio *buzzes*.

KOLCHAK

He's got the Core and door braced.

INT. REACTOR CONTROL, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Kolchak sees the reactor levels nearing critical. He taps some commands: "*Coolant ON... INVALID.*"

The door is being sliced through. A laugh *reverberates*.

MAJ. STEELE

I'll bring this whole place down on you!

INT. FALCO'S VTOL - SAME TIME

Radar: "*Federal Air Space. No Transponder Signal Detected.*"

Falco fights a short headache, guns it to max speed, white knuckles on the yoke. The VTOL begins shaking.

INT. HUGE PLANE - SAME TIME

In the CARGO HOLD: bomb racks and Leon Hex's corpse tremble.

In the COCKPIT: Muffin calculates the heading in his HUD, sees they're heading straight for New Rome.

In the CARGO HOLD: The bombs start arming. *Tick-tick-*

-tick-tick! Wolf and Muffin see the ordnance status change. Muffin starts to hack the console.

EXT. CONTROL ROOM, HQ BUILDING

Comm. Patel and Cattaneo watch the screens, see the ordnance is armed. The plane is at the edge of the city.

CATTANEO

We need to incinerate that thing in mid-air.

COMM. PATEL
SAMs don't fire napalm.

INT. HUGE PLANE, EDGE OF NEW ROME - SAME TIME

Slowing from supersonic speed... console: "*ordnance release.*"
Muffin continues the hack... bomb racks *open-close-open-close...*

Wolf sees they're rocketing for the Castle and then beyond...
the Agora, municipal buildings, apartment blocks.

EXT. NEO AGORA, NEW ROME - CONTINUOUS

Alarms *wail*. Citizens scramble following a previously (once
or twice) rehearsed drill. Off to the side... Vincenzo.

He sees the plane, deep breath... he runs to the bazaar.

EXT. OLD BASE - SAME TIME

Infernal flames lick all over. The manticore swoops down to
scorch targets. Soldiers duck away, some are fried.

Elf, Sky, Karim, few others... on their last legs -- BUT THEN --
WHIRRRRR! Rapid shots riddle, thin out the manticore.

INT. VOGEL'S VTOL - CONTINUOUS

Vogel grips the yoke hard glaring through the aiming reticle.

In the REAR: soldiers aim out the ramp.

I/E. VOGEL'S VTOL / OLD BASE - CONTINUOUS

Vogel flies into the thinned manticore... passes Col. Vlad in
his armored suit, he's furious, shocked... soldiers fire out
the ramp... the nano-swarm goes wild... the VTOL flies out.

VOGEL

In one ear, out the other.

The manticore's scorpion tail whips out, tears the VTOL's
tail off, a soldier falls out... Vogel wrestles with the yoke...
she sees the runway! Elf and Sky see Col. Vlad now exposed.

ELF

Sync shot! *Al tiro!*

SLO MO: Elf's last mini-missile and Sky's long blue laser.
The latter: *sears* through the thin nano into Vlad's suit.
The former: follows the laser, gives a killer double *tap*.

Col. Vlad is flung off into burning ruins... *WHOOM!*
SMASH! Vogel crash lands scraping along the runway.

INT. REACTOR CONTROL, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

The door is pierced. The reactor nears critical.

INT. OUTSIDE REACTOR DOOR, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - SAME TIME

Capt. Bashar is... calm. Nods. Goes to his radio.

CAPT. BASHAR

Sergeant, initiate the last resort.

INT. REACTOR CONTROL, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

Kolchak lunges with the cutting laser, melts through the window, *sears* off the parasitic device. The crate spins wild!

Slams into the wide-eyed Maj. Steele, flings him and his unit all around the chamber.

Kolchak sends a message: "3/3" The spinning crate *crashes* into the room as the wasp drones cut their way in but are-

INT. HALLWAYS, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - CONTINUOUS

-obliterated by the crate squeezing through. Kolchak and his squad dash after it. The facility begins *r-r-rumbling!*

INT. TUNNELS, ATOM SECTOR FACILITY - MOMENTS LATER

The squads meet at the ALCOVE, mount cycles, *ZOOM* off. Lights and electric systems are sparking, *blowing* out.

Capt. Bashar and Kolchak's cycles haul the crate, swerve on turns to... the ACCESS TUNNEL. The facility *sh-sh-shakes-*

-r-r-rumBLES! Behind them, fire shoots down the tunnel, diverts at the fork making an infernal wall. Max speed.

Up the ramp. White knuckles steer. *Fire gaining.* Into the WAREHOUSE and outside-

EXT. ERUPTING CAULDRON, FACILITY / OLD BASE - CONTINUOUS

-flames blow the warehouse apart singeing the last cycles. The grounds *shake*. Fires erupt from buildings.

Elf, Sky, Karim and the others bolt through burning rubble. *THOOMP!* The ground jolts! A huge crater begins subsiding...

I/E. HUGE PLANE / NEO AGORA - SAME TIME

"Ordnance release... *OPEN.*" Muffin can't close it... bombs begin rolling down the racks... out of the plane...

Muffin begins to close the main cargo hold door... stops the bombs but five are falling to the Castle and one to...

The Agora. Vincenzo appears wearing an old GF helmet, he's not afraid even as people run terrified past him...

The cargo door is closed, bombs have clustered by it... Muffin sets the plane out to sea... Wolf yanks him up, runs...

Above Vincenzo, the plane rockets by. In front of him... *BOOM!* The Agora bomb hits. The pulsing red mass begins...

But Vincenzo... has got... his old flamethrower!

EXT. ERUPTING CAULDRON, FACILITY / OLD BASE - SAME TIME

Cycles shoot through the fence by the log just ahead of the expanding crater swallowing everything.

Vogel and her squad dash down the runway. Well behind, the VTOL drops away into the creeping crater. Fiery debris rains-

-slowing down Elf and Sky. The crater edge... overtaking them... Elf lunges, twists midair... snags Sky's arm... hits the dirt...

On the STOPPED CRATER EDGE... it crumbles more, Sky hangs down... Elf sees below her, no steps and a Hell of cinders.

MEMORY FLASH: the dangling soldier falls away...

SKY

It can't be both of us, Chief.

I/E. CARGO HOLD, HUGE PLANE - SAME TIME

Wolf, Muffin clinging on his back, climbs to the access door... a bomb blows! Red mass spreading up the hold! Wolf lunges up-

-out onto the top. From the tail, the red mass consumes the plane. Wolf runs down the wing... leaps off! Behind them...

The whole plane is transformed into a flying red spray.

EXT. NEO AGORA, NEW ROME - SAME TIME

Vincenzo runs shooting flame plumes, cordons off the red mass in a circle of fire.

Well behind him, the Castle is being torched by the military.

EXT. OPEN WATER - SAME TIME

Whoosh! Muffin fires his booster as a brake rocket. Wolf goes boots first, *splashes* into the Tyrrhenian Sea.

EXT. ERUPTING CAULDRON, FACILITY / OLD BASE - SAME TIME

Sky's grip is slipping, by Elf the edge crumbles more...

An arm grabs Elf's ankle! It's a strong grip from Karim!
She and the others in a line pull them up into a FIELD.

EXT. NEO AGORA, NEW ROME - SAME TIME

Vincenzo cheers with his weapon as soldiers arrive seeing
their work done yet looking around to be extra sure.

VINCENZO

She saved the day again!

All fire, no red. Like the Castle. Now firefighters start.

EXT. FIELD, COUNTRYSIDE - SAME TIME

Elf manages a faint "*gracias.*" Karim flexes her mechanical
forearm, mouths "*de rien.*"

Elf and Sky lock eyes. Epic handshake. His tattoo is showing.

ELF

SKY

I wasn't going (to let go.) (...*pololo.*)

Deep breaths... they hug! Karim smiles, sees the others coming.
Capt. Bashar, Kolchak, Vogel, the rest... tired, worn. Glad.

The Core crate is quiet... the crater's smoke begins to clear.

EXT. OPEN WATER - SAME TIME

Wolf floats with Muffin. Can't see land, waves to the face...
Ears twitch! There! Falco's VTOL... the winch ladder unfurls.

Wolf grips it, begins to rise, sees aircraft napalming the
sea far out where the red mass splashed down.

EXT. BEACH, NEW ROME - MINUTES LATER

Wolf hits the sand, places Muffin who's silent. Nearby, Falco
touches down. Wolf hears *b-b-beeps*... Morse Code!

WOLF

Ultra-low power, eh? Is that you or
some automated response?

(listens... smiles)

Dead tired minus the dead, eh?

Getting better at humor, Muff.

Nearby sign: "*Isola Sacra - District of New Rome (FC4)*"
Falco walks up... further down, FPF vehicles approach.

EXT. THE CASTLE - NOON, FEW DAYS LATER

Ranks of flags - military and civil - flutter.
Beneath them, battle scars and a large banner:

"Provisional Earth Administration. A New Dawn. A New Era."

COMM. PATEL (V.O.)

For exceptional bravery while
providing essential service to the
Federal City of New Rome and the
Provisional Earth Administration-

EXT. OUTDOOR STAGE, THE CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

Ranks of soldiers stand in pristine dress uniforms.
Comm. Patel pins awards and a magnetized one for Muffin.

Capt. Bashar's unit has a NEW INSIGNIA: a Winged Sword.
Funk gets a higher order than Kit. He drove, remember?

COMM. PATEL (V.O.)(CONT'D)

-I present you with the Cross of
Valor in Silver Wreath. And for the
efforts of our best civilians, the
Order of Merit of the Federation.

EXT. RHINO ONE AND APCS, THE CASTLE - LATER, DAY

Elf, Sky, Capt. Bashar and Kolchak admire their new uniforms.

CAPT. BASHAR

A first day as a Captain isn't bad.

ELF

I'll get used to it but you need
nicknames, Team Bravo. I'm Elf.
Alvaro, Elf, close cool, it's me.

While Capt. Bashar and Kolchak think:

SKY

Sky, that's what 'Haneul' means.
And Comm. Patel used to go by
'Garuda' during his days of action.

KOLCHAK

Hmm... needs to be epic and badass.

ELF

You'll figure it out.

Sky notices some GF veterans mingling, including Vincenzo
who's wearing his old GF uniform.

SKY

Vincenzo! Sorry, I forgot all about you but a lot has happened-

VINCENZO

You finally, you know, with-

SKY

Don't say it!

VINCENZO (CONT'D)

-your *pololo*.

ELF

Oh, I see...

Vincenzo reveals his former rank insignia: Major.

VINCENZO

I've been keeping her on mission. Good soldiers need healthy hearts.

ELF

That's a major yes, Major.

Vincenzo gives Elf and Sky healthy shoulder pats.

EXT. VTOLS, THE CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

Vogel looks over some new aircraft.

VOGEL

Can't wait to fly this bird.

FALCO (O.S.)

Then you better deliver the goods...

Vogel turns smiling.

FALCO (CONT'D)

...if you want the goods. If there's no call, then 6am ought to be the perfect early bird time.

VOGEL

3k, 6am. You're on, Lieutenant.

FALCO

Lucien.

VOGEL

Stella.

Handshake. Brief, firm, fiery.

EXT. NEST DOOR, THE CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

Wolf stands alone, arms crossed, shades on. Half on duty.

Funk, Kit, Muffin and some new GF members practice saluting. Muffin's body shape makes the gesture and posture awkward. He gives a thumbs up. Everyone shares a laugh.

Karim notices Wolf, walks over. They exchange nods. She runs her medic mind... smiles with a new idea.

KARIM

Lou le Loup. That's you in French.

"*Lou the Wolf*" lifts his shades, raises his eyebrows.

WOLF

Actually... I'm *half-wolf*, half-hockey player and completely Canadian.

KARIM

I'm Haitian-Algerian, completely *Marseillaise*, raised there.

WOLF

Me in what's left of Trois-Rivières, Québec.

KARIM

You're what's left of it. Make it shine more. Eh? *Canadian*.

Wolf smiles... weans into a full lupine grin until... a long overdue *LAUGH* bursts out. A proud medic moment for Karim.

They walk over to join the others while on the other side... business as usual for a military base.

Beyond the Castle, the city of New Rome hums. On the horizon... a thunderstorm closes. Lightning flashes.

CREDITS MONTAGE

Main characters with actors' names. Top production credits.

INT. HANGAR, GF HQ - LATE AFTERNOON (MID-CREDITS SCENE)

The door is open. Rain pours outside, thunder still distant. Comm. Patel, Elf and Capt. Bashar huddle out of earshot.

COMM. PATEL

Dr. Sherman didn't just recover, he was recovered.

Comm. Patel shows his tablet: nighttime CCTV of the Med Bay...
a small group takes Dr. Sherman off his cot, their faces...

Unclear until... a freeze frame stirs Capt. Bashar's nerve.

CAPT. BASHAR
I know that face.

BLACK - CREDITS SCROLL

INT. DARK ROOM, UNKNOWN LOCATION (POST-CREDITS SCENE)

A hint of light... on a cot awakes... Dr. Sherman. The door opens
revealing the DARK FIGURE seen like on the monitors before.

Lights *buzz*, flicker on revealing a SLEEK MEDICAL CLINIC.

And the Dark Figure from behind: a near super-human frame.
Red-striped, brown uniform. Manticore logo. Atom Sector logo.

DR. SHERMAN
Roth!

ROTH (now his appellation) turns taking off a red beret and...
a bald head with an eye patch loom over Dr. Sherman.

Roth stabs a console button, a shielded window opens to...

A robotics facility with ranks of idle battle robots and
cyborgs. Part of this was seen in Vlad's propaganda film.

ROTH
Vladimir was a costly mistake but
also a next-level charade. And now,
the world is ready to see the true
face of the Manticore.

Off his skull grin...

BLACK - END