

"ICON OF THE DEFENDER"

Written by

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Based on the novel of the same name by

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OPENING TITLE SEQUENCE

FADE IN:

INT. ABANDONED BASE – AFTERNOON

SUPER: "SOMEWHERE IN THE URAL MOUNTAINS – 2019"

A door is laser-welded open – as the door falls to the floor with a metallic THUD!, a tall man with short jet-black hair, dark skin and a rugged physique carrying an AK-74M with a grenade launcher enters, clad in red – Afro-Russian NIKOLAI ROSTAVILI. He is accompanied by a slightly shorter man with dark hair brandishing a CZ Scorpion EVO 3 A1 submachine gun, dressed in blue – Japanese man DAISUKE KASAI. Nikolai is wearing a woolly hat.

NIKOLAI

What the fuck is this place?

DAISUKE

I don't know, but there don't appear to be any hostiles. Vincenzo, are you seeing this OK?

A third voice – that of Italian VINCENZO CORBUCCI – is audible on the guys' radio.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Yes, I am, but the quality's terrible – it's like watching Spanish television.

The transmission ends as Nikolai and Daisuke exchange glances between each other before heading into the base, raising their weapons.

INT. CRYOGENIC LABORATORY – DAY – CONTINUOUS

As they continue deeper into the complex/facility, they encounter a cryo-lab complete with working computer terminals... and a single cryogenic tube lying upright in a prominent corner of the chamber. The air is thick with tension.

DAISUKE

Nikolai, look at that.

Daisuke indicates a strange symbol – a multicolour pentagram in a black circle, each point a different colour with a white centre – the emblem of the 5 Elements.

NIKOLAI

I see it.

They approach it carefully. Daisuke's attention is caught by a still active computer terminal, its monitor blinking a seductive jade green.

DAISUKE

Come and take a look at this,
Nikolai.

Nikolai does as he is told as he approaches a terminal curiously, illuminated by the light mounted to his AK, his eyes falling on the computer monitor so he can see what Daisuke sees.

NIKOLAI

What's that?

DAISUKE

I don't know; it's in Cyrillic. Maybe
you can work it out.

Nikolai nods in acquiescence before replying in the affirmative in Russian as he turns to face the screen showing his native alphabet.

NIKOLAI

(Reading and
translating into
English)

"Name: Alejandro Rojas. Age at time
of death: 26. Sex: Male. Date of
birth: 1965/2/27. Date of death:
1991/7/1. Date of hologram
activation: 1991/8/1. Date of
deactivation: 1994/8/16. Country of
origin: Peru. Blood type: Formerly
O - ex-human hard-light hologram. A
former agent of the 5 Elements, *Señor*
Rojas is an unfortunate loss due to
his extensive contributions to
Project Athena."

(Exchanges a look
with Daisuke, then
activates his radio)

Vincenzo, come in, please.

Vincenzo's voice is heard on the other end of the line.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

I'm right here, Nikolai. What's
wrong?

NIKOLAI
Take note of something called Project
Athena.

Nikolai copies the data to a small blue USB flash drive and
nods at Daisuke in acquiescence.

DAISUKE
Let's keep going.

The peerless pair head deeper into the abandoned base.
Nikolai hesitates for a moment, removing his woolly hat to
massage what little hair he has left on his half-bald sweaty
head before replacing it and following Daisuke.

INT. OBSERVATION DOME OF THE ABANDONED BASE – DAY

Entering the base's observation dome above the main lab
area, Nikolai and Daisuke look at the sub-zero graveyard
around them, the technology still working despite the
absence of human activity. Something catches Daisuke's eye
as he indicates its general direction complete with a tap on
Nikolai's shoulder.

DAISUKE
Nikolai, look at that.

It's the same colourful pentagram they encountered back in
the lab.

NIKOLAI
I see it. Be careful.

They approach it carefully with their guns drawn.

DAISUKE
(Nervously)
It's the same logo on the computer's
boot-up screen.

Nikolai reaches into his pocket and produces the USB flash
drive he used just minutes earlier as he and Daisuke
exchange glances.

NIKOLAI
(Apprehensively)
What HAVE we opened?

DAISUKE
We've just opened Pandora's Fucking
Box.

Vincenzo's voice suddenly bursts to life on the radio, a welcome sound for sore ears.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Vincenzo here – you need to get back here quickly. I think someone knows we're here and they don't like us trespassing.

Realising they can be in deeper danger than they think and very likely out of their depth, the two men arm their weapons and exit the observation dome, trying to control their anxiety.

INT. CRYOGENIC LABORATORY – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Nikolai and Daisuke enter a cryo-lab complete with frost and ice and smoke, the Asian man approaching a computer keyboard while the Afro-Siberian picks up and inspects a tiny half-gold, half-silver device shaped like a rounded rhombus and accompanied by a single flashing green LED – a hologram projection light bee.

As Daisuke types a series of commands into it, the light bee rises from Nikolai's hand. A 3D image of a humanoid figure appears on the screen. Nikolai, realising what is happening, notices Daisuke messing around on the computer, his eyes widening slightly.

NIKOLAI

DON'T TOUCH THAT!!

He runs to stop his friend and partner but it's too late – a white humanoid outline appears in the centre of the room, emerging from the light bee as Nikolai turns to glare at Daisuke murderously.

The white 3D shape gradually assumes a full colour form, revealing a man with tan skin and dark hair, a golden Ace of Spades present on his forehead – this is Peruvian-Australian hard-light hologram ALEJANDRO ROJAS. As his projection is fully loaded, he quickly gains control of himself and looks at Nikolai and Daisuke appreciatively.

ALEJANDRO

(Smiling)

Thank you, both of you.

NIKOLAI

You can thank us later – right now, I have a sneaky suspicion we shouldn't be here.

ALEJANDRO

My name is Alejandro Rojas. You are...?

Alejandro ignores Nikolai's anxiety as he holds out his hand — the Siberian looks at it suspiciously, prompting his Oriental counterpart to intercede.

DAISUKE

I'm Daisuke Kasai, and this is my friend and associate Nikolai Rostavili.

Daisuke shakes hands with Alejandro before Nikolai follows suit semi-reluctantly, who looks at his friend irritably. There is a burst of static before Vincenzo's voice is heard from the boys' radios.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

(Agitated)

Nikolai! Daisuke! What's taking you so long?

DAISUKE

We've found someone who can help us. We're on our way back — just give us 5 minutes.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

You've got 3. Out.

The connection is terminated. The trio look at each other as the transmission ends.

DAISUKE

OK... let's go. Nikolai, you're on point — Alejandro... you're with me.

NIKOLAI

(Sternly)

No tricks, *Señor* Rojas.

He half-walks, half-runs through the cryo lab with Daisuke behind him. They stop as they reach the computer, hesitating for a moment. They approach it carefully.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER — DAY — CONTINUOUS

In the safety of his Kazan "Ansat" helicopter sits Vincenzo, a Euro-Mediterranean man of slightly shorter stature than Nikolai but visibly taller than Daisuke, clean shaven with a receding hairline and sporting spectacles which turned into sunglasses when exposed to ultraviolet radiation.

He is sitting in the pilot's seat, observing the action through a pair of video monitors connected to Nikolai and Daisuke's shoulder-mounted cameras. The light on one of his allies' weapons illuminates a flat upright glass capsule – cryogenic tube – he can see something, or rather, someone inside...

VINCENZO

Nikolai, stop! There's someone in that tube.

It is indeed a tube, and it does contain someone.

BACK TO:

INT. CRYOGENIC LABORATORY – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Nikolai and Daisuke approach the cryogenic tube carefully. It is indeed a person. A woman, actually – nude, with jet-black hair and sleeping – Asian beauty SAKURA NOGUCHI. Daisuke looks at a nearby computer displaying some text written in Russian/Cyrillic while Nikolai examines the frozen Japanese girl.

NIKOLAI

(Reading and translating into English)

"Name: Sakura Noguchi. Age: 22. Sex: Female. Date of Birth: 1972/5/14. Country of Origin: Japan. Blood type: O. Miss Noguchi has shown to be resistant to the conditioning for Project Athena, although she has excelled at the trials. Her confidence makes her a valuable asset, although it could compromise the 5 Elements in the event of her defection."

(He and Daisuke exchange worried looks)

A woman, Vincenzo. How quaint – another girl to add to your list of damsels in distress?

DAISUKE

According to the computer, her vital signs are in perfect working order. She's still alive.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

She's alive? Get her out of there!

Daisuke proceeds to do so but Nikolai stops him.

NIKOLAI

Hang on! It's common knowledge you don't just rescue every cryonic woman you see just because she happens to be pretty. Besides, who knows what's wrong with her?

VINCENZO (V.O.)

We've got to save her, Nikolai.

Nikolai raises a solitary eyebrow in a Spock-like fashion.

NIKOLAI

We?

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Yes – you know, men of honour and all that jazz?

Nikolai laughs.

DAISUKE

Not we, Vincenzo – you. You want her thawed out? Fine – she's your load, though.

Daisuke works the control panel on the cryogenic tube and unfreezes the Oriental beauty – as the ice in her capsule turns to water, the liquid drains out of the tube, her eyes clicking open as the door slides upwards before her.

Sakura falls to the floor and covers her nude form, shivering and speaking incoherently in Japanese interspersed with some French. Daisuke wraps up Sakura in a towel, carrying her out of the base while Nikolai scans the area one last time.

Nikolai fires several shots at the computer, shorting out the circuitry – BA-BA-BAM! The electricity fizzles out into silence, reminiscent of a heart monitor failing.

He suddenly reaches into Alejandro's midsection and pushes a button on the light bee, disabling him – the projection turns white for a moment before fading away as the Siberian pockets the projection device calmly, smirking at Daisuke as they leave.

INT./EXT. BAND'S TOUR BUS – EVENING

SUPER: "ROUTE 101, CALIFORNIA, USA – 1989"

The Sun is shining, beginning to set over the Horizon as a humorously-painted tour bus drives across a motorway.

INT. LOBBY OF THE ORACLE ARENA – EVENING

A young woman with long golden blonde hair is present – 16-year-old Swedish-Canadian college girl LOVISA DRAKENBERG, along with her older brother, ERIK DRAKENBERG, the latter sporting a high top-style haircut.

All dialogue written in *italic* is in a foreign language and subtitled.

ERIK

(In Swedish)

Lovisa, I know this is a bit difficult for you, but just hold on: one more month and then the tour's over – you can go back to college.

LOVISA

That's what you said last month, Lovisa.

ERIK

I know, but ticket sales are going through the roof – this could be one hell of an opportunity for both of us. We've got two nights at Wembley Stadium followed by a grand finale in Rome – and it's free. You can't buy this kind of exposure – plus, people like the music.

Lovisa smiles a little bit.

LOVISA

Maybe they like something else, dear brother?

It does not take long for Lovisa to figure out what his sister is talking about as he screws up his face in disbelief.

ERIK

(Laughing
humourlessly)

Oh, Heavens! They'd have to be mad.

Lovisa's face falls slightly.

LOVISA
 (Trying not to look
 or sound hurt)
I don't think so.

Lovisa smiles at Lovisa kindly.

ERIK
*Lovisa, trust me – these people are
 predators. I don't want you having a
 one-night stand with a roadie or
 dating one of the crewmembers. Now...
 the gig's tonight at 9 PM. Make sure
 the tickets are sold out and then
 arrange security.*

Lovisa leaves to rehearse with the band, leaving Lovisa looking and feeling more than a little dejected – she curses to herself in Swedish and tightens up her face as she turns around, walking away.

EXT. HOTEL ROOFTOP - EVENING - LATER

A lone (and very lonely) Lovisa is relaxing at the Radisson Hotel in the city of Oakland, sitting on a deckchair as she feels the fading lights of the Sun hit her Scandinavian form, a light pink, almost rose-coloured, strapless one-piece swimsuit covering her upper body, leaving her neck, arms and shoulders exposed, along with a red Alice in Wonderland-style headband on top of her head.

A Hispanic-looking man complete with dark hair and wearing a hoodie with the band's logo on it observes her silently. Lovisa is startled by a voice calling her name. Jumping, she turns around to see its owner – Alejandro. Relieved, she smiles and brushes her blonde hair back in an attempt to make small talk with him, unaware of her fate.

LOVISA
 Don't sneak up on me like that! You
 frightened me.

ALEJANDRO
 You're right, I'm sorry. What are you
 doing out here?

LOVISA
 Oh, I'm just pissed off that my
 brother's being his usual self.

Alejandro laughs slightly.

ALEJANDRO
I'm... Rojas. Alejandro Rojas.

He holds out his hand for her to shake – she looks at him and then takes it, eyeing him up as she finds him attractive.

LOVISA
Lovisa... Lovisa Drakenberg.

ALEJANDRO
Nice to meet you, Miss Drakenberg.

Lovisa smiles.

LOVISA
Please, call me Lovisa. It's nice to be able to speak to a guy who isn't my brother for a change. I mean, why does he worry about me so damn much? I'm a big girl. I'm 16!

Lovisa is visibly irritated while Alejandro approaches her calmly, slowly gaining her trust.

ALEJANDRO
Let me worry about Erik. Just trust me... please?

Lovisa eyes him up for a moment – despite her own better judgement, she nods and replies in the affirmative in Swedish. Alejandro smiles.

LOVISA
OK, Alejandro... I'm trusting you on this one – let's keep it to ourselves if we can, OK? Please?

ALEJANDRO
Don't worry, Lovisa... my lips are sealed.

He smiles and tips his hat in a gentlemanly fashion before leaving, the Swedish-French-Canadian beauty feeling a sense of relief wash over her.

INT. BACKSTAGE – EVENING – LATER

Erik is present with his bandmates, the Scandinavian guitarist unaware of what fate lies in store for him as he reaches into his pocket and produces a gold-plated plectrum with a picture of the Swedish flag on it. Lovisa arrives just in time, smiling at her older brother.

LOVISA
 (In Swedish)
*Lovisa, I just wanted to say good
 luck.*

ERIK
*Thanks, Lovisa. Don't worry – this
 will make us superstars.*

LOVISA
*Don't you mean it'll make YOU a
 superstar?*

ERIK
*How can I not include you? You're my
 sister.*

Lovisa feels a slight tinge of guilt overcome her.

LOVISA
Lovisa... I need to tell you...

ERIK
*You can tell me later, Lovisa. For
 now... just sit back and enjoy the
 show.*

He kisses his sister on the cheek before heading into the fray with his band – the drummer is the last one to head on stage as he smiles at Lovisa before Erik's voice is heard calling his name loudly, making him jump and scuttle off. The band play while Lovisa watches from backstage, looking nervous as she brushes her blonde hair out of the way.

INT./EXT. STAGE OF THE ORACLE ARENA – NIGHT

On the stage in the Oracle Arena, the band switch on their equipment and greet their adoring admirers, the keyboardist slipping on a pair of white gloves as the show starts. Erik steps up to a handheld microphone with his guitar ready.

ERIK
*Hello, Frisco! We are Enlightenment
 and we play the best of prog and the
 best of pop! Let's go!*

The band play while Lovisa watches from backstage, looking nervous as she brushes her blonde hair out of the way.

INT./EXT. ORACLE ARENA – NIGHT – LATER

It's now dark and the Moon is shining in the Sky. Erik prepares to deliver one last message to the crowd before bursting into the final encore, the cheering subsiding into silence.

ERIK

Ladies and gentlemen... before we start this last thing... if you'll allow me to get a little bit sentimental here – this is the last night of the North American leg of our tour, and I just wanted to say you've all made us very proud to have come here. We can't take all the credit, though – we've got a crew without whom this would not happen. There's the sound crew, the lighting crew that put up the stage... you've got cameramen so you can all see what's going on. Truck drivers, bus drivers, without whom NONE of us would get here, never mind all this... and lastly, our own crew, who busted their balls throughout the whole leg... and there's one person in particular I want to thank for enduring all this, and I want you to show your appreciation to her in particular, because without her, I wouldn't be on stage playing for you guys and gals.

(Pause)

Lovisa, my sister – please put your hands together and give her a BIG fucking round of applause.

Lovisa is escorted onstage by Alejandro, a single white spotlight illuminating the beautiful blonde college girl.

Erik then grabs his guitar and proceeds to play a heavily amplified (and distorted) power chord, which shorts out the amplifier, electrocuting his hand and sending him flying back into the keyboardist's setup.

The audience cheers on, thinking it is just part of the show. Lovisa runs to her brother worriedly, helping him up with the keyboardist's support – his hand is burned, smoke billowing out of the charred flesh.

INT. BACKSTAGE – NIGHT

Lovisa pours disinfectant over Erik's electrical burn, causing him to scream in agony as he curses in Swedish – she then wraps a bandage around his burned hand as he tries to hold back his tears of pain. She rubs his forehead softly to soothe him.

LOVISA
(In Swedish)
I'm sorry, Erik.

ERIK
So am I. I shouldn't have insisted on extending the tour. Looks like it ended here either way.

He tries to pick up his guitar again but is unable to even strike a string due to the pain – he can barely move his fingers, either. Shattered, he drops his guitar onto the floor.

LOVISA
Erik, the doctor said you're lucky to be alive – the shock burned the tendons in your hand. It'll take time.

Erik sighs and curses in Swedish.

ERIK
Bloody cheap Chinese guitars!

LOVISA
Are you coming to the end-of-tour party?

ERIK
No, Lovisa. I don't want people to see me like this. You go ahead and have fun without me.

She thinks for a moment and then nods happily, smiling as she kisses her brother on the cheek.

LOVISA
OK, but don't stress yourself out too much.

With those words, she leaves and heads to get changed.

INT. HOTEL PENTHOUSE SUITE – NIGHT

The end-of-tour wrap party is in full swing. The Swedish-Canadian beauty enters the suite in a gorgeous pink strapless dress with a gold tiara on her head, her blonde hair down and out in an open style.

She flashes them a dazzling smile before heading over to Alejandro, who is dressed in a manner reminiscent of a *Miami Vice* character. Alejandro smiles as the two of them flirt with each other in a slightly awkward manner. Alejandro suddenly looks nervous – Lovisa catches on to this.

LOVISA
Relax, Erik's not here.

ALEJANDRO
What happened?

LOVISA
An accident onstage... he burned his hand.

She turns away, crying softly – Alejandro smiles imperceptibly before putting his arms around the young woman to soothe her.

ALEJANDRO
I'm sorry.

She turns to face him, wiping away her tears.

LOVISA
It's OK.
(Smiles, then kisses Alejandro – she soon pulls away guiltily)
I'm sorry... I shouldn't have done that.

ALEJANDRO
It's OK, don't worry... it's fine.

They kiss each other more passionately, eventually falling over.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. LOVISA'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT – LATER

Lovisa and Alejandro land on the bed as they continue kissing each other, exhibiting their passion for each other as their eyes meet – the Swedish beauty removes her top to reveal a white sleeveless T-shirt.

ALEJANDRO

You're such a beautiful and charming young woman, Lovisa.

LOVISA

That's not all I am, Alejandro. I'm also a black belt in Jeet Kune Do and I was swim team captain in my senior year of high school.

ALEJANDRO

Oh, so you've got the three B's: Beauty, Brains and Brawn.

As they move in to kiss each other again, a red laser beam appears, landing on Lovisa's body – instinctively, Alejandro wraps himself around her and pulls her to the floor as a loud gunshot is fired, missing her!

LOVISA

What was that?

ALEJANDRO

I don't know! It came from outside.

They run outside to the balcony.

INT./EXT. BALCONY – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Alejandro exits the hotel room and reaches the balcony followed by Lovisa, the Peruvian-Australian scanning the area intently.

ALEJANDRO

Nothing... not a bloody thing.

Lovisa turns to face Alejandro.

LOVISA

Tell me the truth, Alejandro: who hurt my brother?

At this point, he realises that the game is up.

ALEJANDRO

OK... I did it. It was me.

She looks at him in shock, cursing at him in Swedish.

LOVISA
You!? Why?!

Lovisa tries to hit him but he grabs her wrist, blocking her blow as she eventually falls into his arms, sobbing. Alejandro produces a handkerchief and a bottle of chloroform.

ALEJANDRO
(In Spanish, softly)
Please forgive me.

Pouring some onto the handkerchief, he forces Lovisa's face into the chloroform-addled tissue – she struggles for several seconds as her eyes meet his, mere moments before they close and her body goes limp. He picks up Lovisa's out-cold body, heading for the rendezvous point.

INT. ERIK'S HOTEL ROOM – NIGHT

There is a frantic knocking on the door, waking up Erik from his slumber.

ERIK
Come in.

The door opens and closes to reveal a panicky-looking roadie wearing a T-shirt with the band's name and logo on it.

ROADIE
He took her! She's gone!

ERIK
Who? Who's gone!?

ROADIE
Lovisa! She's gone!

Erik's eyes widen slightly as anger deprives him of the power of speech.

ERIK
WHAT? Who!?

ROADIE
The chief roadie! He was speaking to someone in Spanish, I couldn't figure out what!

Erik puts 2 and 2 together as he realises who he means.

ERIK
Where did he go?

ROADIE
Up to the rooftop – there's a helipad
there!

ERIK
Thank you.

He and the roadie run out of the room and head for the penthouse elevator.

EXT. HOTEL ROOFTOP – NIGHT

An unconscious Lovisa is being loaded onto a wheeled stretcher accompanied by a pair of scientists.

One is male – Japanese-American geneticist and nanotechnology specialist GONTA TAKAHASHI, and the other female, his older sister – Asian-American roboticist KANA TAKAHASHI, sporting dark hair and dressed in purple and white. The stretcher is loaded into a Kamov Ka-32 helicopter.

KANA
Well done, Alejandro.
(Notices him glancing
at her)
You seem distracted... are you
concerned about her?

ALEJANDRO
I have no interest in a job that has
already been completed.

She raises an eyebrow but says nothing. Kana boards the helicopter, ready to depart, but Erik intercedes with the roadie by his side, yelling Alejandro's name at maximum volume! He turns to face the elder Drakenberg sibling, who has the roadie with him as backup.

ERIK
What the fuck do you think you're
doing with my sister!? Let her go at
once!

Alejandro stares at Erik sadly.

ALEJANDRO

How many times have you come to your dear sister's rescue only to end up subverting her self-esteem and self-reliance?

ERIK

Shut up!

Alejandro decks an angry Erik with a single punch to the nose, knocking him to the floor.

ALEJANDRO

Where I am going, you cannot follow.
Forgive me.

As he climbs into the waiting chopper, the good roadie helps up his friend and boss, who can do nothing but watch the helicopter depart as blood streams down his nose. The chopper soars through the night Sky, leaving North America for an unknown location as the good roadie helps Erik to his feet – the two watch the helicopter disappear.

EXT. SECRET MOUNTAIN BASE HELIPAD – EVENING

SUPER: "UNKNOWN LOCATION"

As the helicopter lands on the rooftop of a secret mountain base, the Sun is beginning to set amidst the Horizon. Lovisa is lifted out of the chopper and taken into an ominous-looking elevator as Kana exits, holding a pen and clipboard with Gonta not far behind – he looks worried, while she is confident.

KANA

Get her dressed and into the arena – we have to have everything ready and on time!

(To Alejandro)

Compliments on a job well done,
Alejandro Rojas. Do excuse me.

Kana's voice is calm and condescending but authoritative – she gives Alejandro a moneybag full of Peruvian Sol as she heads into the complex/facility, ready to begin her nefarious experiment, a cruel smirk creeping across her face.

BEGIN MONTAGE

A phone is heard ringing before it is picked up. Kana's voice is heard over a montage displaying an unconscious Lovisa being prepared for testing, along with that of her boss – SHANG SI ("Big Boss").

SHANG SI (V.O.)
Doctor, you took your time.

KANA (V.O.)
I know, sir. We had some trouble on the way back.

SHANG SI (V.O.)
I hope it was not too much trouble?

KANA (V.O.)
Oh, no, of course not.

SHANG SI (V.O.)
You didn't choose Rosh's daughter, then, for a partner to Noguchi-chan?

KANA (V.O.)
No. Lovisa Drakenberg is ideal for Project Athena. Her youth, her beauty, her knowledge of martial arts. Trust me.

Gonta interrupts the conversation briefly.

GONTA (V.O.)
(Trying to remain calm)
The test subject has been delivered, sir.

A computer monitor shows Lovisa's personal bio and her personality traits.

SHANG SI (V.O.)
Good. Is she ready and active?

GONTA (V.O.)
Yes, sir. Lovisa Drakenberg has woken up.

SHANG SI (V.O.)
Good. You know what you must do. Out.

Gonta feels dread seep into him – he knows what his sister will do to this poor girl.

END MONTAGE

INT. ARENA – EVENING

Inside a hexagonal arena, Lovisa, clad in a hospital gown, sits up, clutching her head and shaking it.

LOVISA
 (Panicked, getting to
 her feet)
 Erik! Alejandro!
 (Looking around her,
 gasps in fear)
 Where am I!?

Her words are met with a brief but unsettling silence. Multiple CCTV cameras capture Lovisa from various angles.

INT. SKYBOX – EVENING

Kana looks at her aide, a bio-technician in front of a computer.

KANA
 Activate.

The bio-tech types in a command on a keyboard before executing it.

SWITCH BETWEEN LOVISA AND KANA/GONTA.

As if on cue, a door slides open. Lovisa looks at the door, curious as to what is going to emerge from the other side – eventually, a silver robot-like droid emerges from the shadows. Its black eyes look directly at the athletic blonde. It approaches her and raises its arms in a fighting stance.

COMPUTER (V.O.)
 Show us how strong you are, Lovisa
 Drakenberg. Experiment initiated.

Lovisa backs up a bit, assuming a martial arts pose. She looks at the bot, cracking a slight smirk as she flicks her hair back. Lovisa delivers a punch followed by a spin kick. Ducking to avoid a fistful of metal to the face, she performs a skilful backflip before knocking down her metallic adversary.

In the observation dome, a computer screen is flashing various numbers, indicating the amount of strength for each blow, measured in PSI.

AIDE
 Damage delivered to the dummy is 764
 PSI.

Gonta looks at Lovisa's profile, a twinge of combined guilt and determination crossing his mind. Maintaining his composure, he looks at his aide with open disgust.

GONTA
 Impressive. You're talking about the
 girl as if she isn't even human.

Lovisa delivers a sharp punch followed by a spin kick.

AIDE
 (With increasing
 excitement)
 792! 816! 914! 1,024!

Kana smirks with triumph.

The Nordic beauty begins to panic, half-hoping in vain that somebody would come to her rescue.

COMPUTER (V.O.)
 Splendid, Lovisa Drakenberg. Most
 extraordinary.

Lovisa continues to fight, the Scandinavian blonde's fighting skills being tested by the scientists.

LOVISA
 What's going on? Let me go! Please!
 (Beginning to panic)
 Erik! Alejandro! Where are you!?

She looks around the arena, crying out in Swedish.

INT. DRIVE ROOM OF THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE - DAY

SUPER: "THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' HQ - 2019"

Vincenzo, Nikolai and Daisuke, dressed in green/yellow, red and blue respectively, are seated around a round white table looking at notes and images depicting the 5 Elements and their clandestine activities. Daisuke is smoking, much to Vincenzo's irritation, who keeps getting smoke in his face. He is wearing a Casio F-91W digital wristwatch on each wrist (left one set to natural solar time, right one set to DST).

VINCENZO

So let me get this straight: the 5 Elements are some kind of modern-day *Carbonari* with a logo and philosophy based on the concept of Wu Xing.

NIKOLAI

That's one hell of a combination – a perfect blend of East and West. Even the Man of Steel would be proud.

DAISUKE

Such a dark secret. What else did you find out from Sakura last night, Vincenzo?

VINCENZO

Not much, except for a single name: Retomoto.

NIKOLAI

Sounds Japanese to me.

VINCENZO

That's because it is.

NIKOLAI

So you're saying we should go to Japan and look up every bastard in the phone book with that surname?

DAISUKE

We need something more specific, Vincenzo.

VINCENZO

(Impatiently)

Then you'll have to talk to Alessandro Rossi about it.

Nikolai thinks about it before reaching into his pocket – he produces Alejandro's light bee, the rounded rhombus's single LED blinking an unassuming green. He pushes a hidden button with a tactile CLICK and it flies out of his hand before floating in mid-air, the familiar white 3D silhouette appearing before turning into full colour once again. Alejandro looks at him with mild annoyance.

ALEJANDRO

(Irritated)

Don't ever do that again.

NIKOLAI

Do what?

ALEJANDRO

Reach into my guts and switch me off – not without warning me beforehand.

NIKOLAI

OK, sorry. *Mea culpa*.

DAISUKE

We need your help, *Señor Rojas*.

ALEJANDRO

Do me a favour and call me Alejandro – ranks and titles make my skin crawl.

He takes a seat and joins them. Just then, as if on cue, an Asian-accented voice intercedes, breaking the tension between the three strong-willed men and the hard-light hologram.

SAKURA (V.O.)

I'm right here, you know – don't be afraid, boys, you can talk to me.

Sakura sits down beside Vincenzo, who admires her tight-fitting outfit consisting of a ruby red long-sleeved Spandex turtleneck catsuit with a zip-back, along with a pair of olive-drab green tactical gloves, complemented by a matching tactical utility belt with a shiny gold-plated metal buckle. Nikolai smiles at Vincenzo's voyeuristic inclination.

SAKURA

The man you seek – his name is Retomoto Kensuke. I was kidnapped in a nightclub which he owns and runs.

Sakura slips on a pair of green elbow pads along with a matching pair of knee pads and side-zip Army boots to protect herself, while Daisuke facepalms himself – he knows where this is going.

DAISUKE

Where is this club?

SAKURA

In Japan – Osaka, actually. Lovisa and I used to go clubbing together.

Everyone looks at Vincenzo, waiting for him to make the call. he eventually snaps out of his reverie.

VINCENZO

OK, Osaka-shi it is, then.

He coughs from the smoke in his face, staring at Daisuke for several seconds. SLAP! He strikes Daisuke across the cheek with sufficient strength, the Japanese ex-Gendarme yelling and cursing at him in his native language while Sakura tries to suppress her laughter.

EXT. SUMMIT – DAY – MOMENTS LATER

The Sun is shining brightly in the Sky, illuminating the blue Horizon as Alejandro, Nikolai and Daisuke walk towards Vincenzo's modern Russian-made helicopter – a Kazan Ansat, which is ready to depart. The unmistakable pink and white chopper waits for its passengers patiently.

Stopping for a moment to reassure each other, they exchange nods and get aboard. The helicopter takes off and ascends into the air, soaring through the Sky and towards the Sun, vanishing into the Horizon.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – DAY

Inside the whirlybird, Vincenzo turns to see the trio in their suits and turtlenecks, their clothing modelled after their respective national flags – he can't help but crack an amused smile.

VINCENZO

Going on the pull? Where are you going, to the Babylon Club?

NIKOLAI

It's called going undercover. We don't always go out with guns blazing, you know.

VINCENZO

You look like rejects from a Gumby porno spoof.

He and Alejandro laugh heartily, further irritating the two serious-minded operatives.

DAISUKE

(Annoyed)

Just start her up, Vincenzo.

VINCENZO

OK, fine – I'm just having a laugh.

Vincenzo sighs and nods as he does as he is told.

EXT. SUMMIT – DAY – CONTINUOUS

The helicopter takes off and ascends into the air, soaring through the Sky and towards the Sun, vanishing into the Horizon.

INT. SECRET LABORATORY – NIGHT

SUPER: "UNKNOWN LOCATION – 1989"

Lovisa awakens in a laboratory, catching her reflection in a nearby mirror – her blonde hair is down and spread out, and she has been dressed in a sapphire blue Spandex racerback swimsuit. A flat glass capsule stands before her, upright and imposing.

COMPUTER (V.O.)

Please step into the capsule and the next test will begin, Miss Drakenberg.

The 16-year-old college girl looks scared – eyeing up her reflection, she smiles a little bit to disguise her fear.

LOVISA

(Softly)

Please... I just want to go home.

Without another word, she enters the tube, its door sealing shut behind her as the capsule descends into the floor. Screaming for help in Swedish, she hits her hands against the reinforced glass, water filling the tube as it descends into the floor. She takes a deep breath as the capsule door opens, revealing a darkened subaquatic labyrinth.

INT. SUBAQUATIC BASEMENT – NIGHT

A frightened Lovisa begins swimming, fighting the cold water as Konta and Gonta watch from the safety of an observation dome, CCTV cameras capturing the Nordic beauty's movements.

INT. SKYBOX – NIGHT

An aide takes notes as a computer is timing her progress with Kana watching alongside a nervous Gonta and an angry Alejandro, who is trying to conceal his disgust. Among them is a young woman with olive/tan skin and jet-black hair – 18-year-old Egyptian-Iranian dual national and recently naturalised French-Canadian citizen HELIA SALIBI, daughter of one of the most powerful recluses in the World.

KANA
 (Aroused)
 Fascinating... she's perfect.

She watches the terrified girl in the pool swim frantically for her life.

AIDE
 It certainly appears that way,
 Doctor.

KANA
 Appears? She IS perfect. Lovisa
 Drakenberg will make an excellent
 candidate for Project Athena.

While Kana and her aide talk, Helia looks sadly at the scared teenager swimming underwater. A MAN IN BLACK enters and she turns to face him.

M.I.B.
 Miss Salibi, your mother and father
 have requested your presence at the
 Buda Castle in Budapest, Hungary.

HELIA
 (Annoyed)
 Another one of his damned parties?

M.I.B.
 It is a historical occasion. They
 would not want you to miss the fall
 of the Iron Curtain.

Helia sighs and swears in Arabic and French.

HELIA
 OK, fine.

She proceeds to leave with the man in black but not before taking one last, final glance at the girl in the underwater maze, the scientists treating her like she isn't even human. Helia shakes it off and leaves.

BACK TO:

INT. SUBAQUATIC BASEMENT — NIGHT

Lovisa eventually reaches an illuminated opening. She opens her mouth to inhale a large breath of air, but her head collides with a glass trapdoor. Panicking, she blows bubbles and pushes her hands against the doorway, which eventually opens.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LABORATORY — NIGHT

As her head breaches the water's surface, Lovisa takes a deep breath, her tortured lungs gradually stabilising themselves after the ordeal. A pair of bio-technicians dry her off and change her into a light blue hospital gown before putting her in a wheelchair, wheeling her out of the laboratory.

INT. MIND-WIPE CHAMBER — NIGHT

Lovisa is seated in a chair connected to a super computer. Metal restraints close around her wrists as a helmet lowers onto her head.

INT. SKYBOX — NIGHT

Gonta and Kana are watching from the safety of the skybox-like observation dome.

KANA

Do it.

AIDE #1

But that amount of voltage could kill her.

He types into a keyboard, a series of commands appearing on the computer monitor.

KANA

(Snapping slightly)

Do it! That's an order! Project Athena cannot fail.

She turns to the aide, who faces her cold stare for a moment before doing as he is told. Gonta braces himself for the inevitable as the aide executes the command, Kana smirking devilishly while Alejandro looks disgusted.

INT. MIND-WIPE CHAMBER — NIGHT

The visor on the chair's helmet glows as Lovisa screams in agony, her memory being wiped like a hard disc drive. She struggles to free herself from the restraints as she continues screaming.

SWITCH BETWEEN LOVISA AND KANA/GONTA.

COMPUTER (V.O.)

Personality rewrite initiated. Mind scan complete. 5 Elements dominance level is at 99.8%.

Lovisa begins to shake a little as she feels her old persona leave her body, as if her soul is being sucked out of her very being while Kana looks on.

KANA

Keep going. Increase the voltage.

The Scandinavian blonde's shrieks intensify in both volume and pitch as the electricity surges into her brain. After a full minute, her screams begin to fade into whimpers before she ultimately passes out.

COMPUTER (V.O.)

Base personality scan: Remains found. Base personality now being purged by 5 Elements persona.

AIDE #2

Subject is stable.

AIDE #1

What if she overcomes the conditioning?

AIDE #2

If it's done by force, then she loses all of her memories.

AIDE #1

What if she started remembering who she is?

KANA

(Coldly)

Then we will just have to implant memories in her head that will leave her uncertain of her actions.

Kana and Gonta enter the chamber, the latter looking and feeling remorseful as the restraints open, Lovisa's unconscious form crumpling to the floor. He picks her up and places her into a large metal capsule.

GONTA

(In Japanese, *sotto voce*)

Forgive me.

Kana injects something into Lovisa's arm. A glass door slides over Lovisa, closing her inside as Gonta places his hand on a push-button switch hesitantly for a moment before pushing it, the LED illuminating the switch turning from green to red as the capsule's metal lid closes, sealing the young woman in suspended animation.

EXT. RESTRICTED AREA – NIGHT

The capsule is taken out of the complex/facility and loaded onto a truck which is part of a bigger convoy. Kana and Gonta mount the truck and the convoy leaves the base.

INT. CASTLE ANTECHAMBER – NIGHT

SUPER: "BUDA CASTLE, BUDAPEST, HUNGARY"

The Moon is shining in the Sky, the Horizon a pitch-black save for the Stars shedding their light silently. Helia is present, wearing an emerald green dress as she looks up to the Sky in a manner reminiscent of a princess gazing up at the Heavens.

The sound of a male voice calling her name pulls her from her daydreaming. She turns around to see a tall, muscular man with dark hair and a chiselled face – her personal bodyguard and carer, Swiss ex-commando RAINER ACKERMANN.

RAINER

Leaving the party so soon, are we,
Miss Helia?

Helia turns around to face Rainer, trying to cover up her anxiety.

HELIA

No, Rainer... I just... I needed some
time to myself.

She sighs, clearly perturbed by what she had been forced to witness back in the underground laboratory. Rainer raises a solitary eyebrow as he approaches her calmly, trying to give out a friendly impression.

RAINER

(Worriedly)
For what?

Helia can feel the tears streaming down her face but she is beyond caring as Rainer softens up – he hates seeing Helia like this and he pulls her into an embrace, holding her as if she was his own daughter.

HELIA
(Trying not to cry)
Something I heard one of my father's
researchers talk about... something
called "Project Athena".

She gradually regains her composure. Rainer looks slightly worried at the mention of those two words. There is a stark silence for several seconds.

RAINER
What on Earth is it?

HELIA
That's what I'd like to know.

She calms down and smiles at him – after a moment, he nods understandingly and lets out his own slightly devious grin.

RAINER
OK, Miss Helia... I think I know what
you're asking of me.

Her face suddenly falls as she grabs the Swiss bodyguard and her surrogate father, hugging him. Rainer hesitates for a moment before returning the embrace.

HELIA
Please be careful, Rainer. I don't
want anyone else for a bodyguard.
Now... let's go back to that damned
party. I so hate these events.

Rainer laughs as he walks with Helia back to the party, where live music is flourishing and people are chatting and playing games.

INT. CASTLE BALLROOM – NIGHT

Reinvigorated, Helia adjusts her dress and approaches a table where a game of Uno is about to take place.

HELIA
(Seductively)
Mind if I join you boys?

The other players agrees and reply in the affirmative. Helia smiles and sits with the big boys as she is dealt a hand of cards. A tall, thin man with fair hair wearing an orange tuxedo and sporting a visible bandage over several fingers on his right hand sits a few seats away from her – their eyes meet semi-flirtatiously – it's Erik.

ERIK
(Arrogantly)
I'm the best there is, if anyone
wants to take me on.

He smiles at Helia politely, who ruffles her dark hair in response.

INT./EXT. NIGHTCLUB ENTRANCE – NIGHT

SUPER: "OSAKA, JAPAN – 2019"

Nikolai and Daisuke are in a queue dressed in turtlenecks and suits matching the colours of their national flags, waiting for their turn and trying to remain inconspicuous. Sakura is with them, wearing a gorgeous red strapless dress with a gold pendant around her neck, her jet-black hair down and out.

NIKOLAI
Fucking hell, 14 solid hours on the chopper! We could have at least checked into a hotel for the night.

DAISUKE
This is our only chance, Nikolai – we can't waste any time. We've got to try to blend in if we're going to pull this off.

NIKOLAI
Blend in? We're in a country where ethnic minorities are less popular than the bloody clap.

DAISUKE
Look, we'll go in, act casual, score a meeting with Retomoto-san and if things do go south, then we call Vincenzo – he's waiting for us at the airport.

Nikolai sighs and lets it go as the bouncer examines them carefully. After several seconds of deliberation, the bouncer flashes them a thumbs-up, letting them in.

INT. NIGHTCLUB DANCE FLOOR – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Nikolai, Daisuke and Sakura enter the flooded nightclub – 1980s music is blaring at maximum volume.

Sakura immediately blends in and starts dancing, while Nikolai looks unimpressed. Daisuke, on the other hand, remains calm and focused.

DAISUKE

Come on – we'll split up. I'll take the lower level, you take the upper one.

NIKOLAI

I don't speak Japanese.

DAISUKE

In a situation like this, I don't think speaking will be necessary.

NIKOLAI

Fuck, I hope you're right.

They separate as they activate their earpieces, trying to blend in. Nikolai sits at a table by himself while Daisuke produces a pair of miniature binoculars, looking through the eyepieces calmly. Using her long-dormant fighting instincts, Sakura is getting cosy with a rich executive.

SAKURA

(In Japanese)

Do you come here often?

She puts her arms around him, working her charms just as she has done several times before in the past. The executive is nervous.

EXECUTIVE

Yes. I mean, usually I come here, yes, when I have the house to myself.

SAKURA

What do you mean? Don't you like being at home?

Sakura raises an eyebrow quizzically.

EXECUTIVE

Don't get me wrong, I like time to myself. I just like enjoying life more.

Sakura flashes a dazzling smile as she leans in closer to her target.

SAKURA

If you come here so often, then you must be in the owner's good books.

Sakura smiles, flipping back her jet-black hair. She plays with his tie for a bit before straddling the executive's lap. Eventually, he relents.

EXECUTIVE

OK... OK, fine. I'll take you to him.

She dismounts him, smiling sweetly.

SAKURA

Good boy.

She strokes his cheek and kisses it seductively. Daisuke smirks, having witnessed the whole event. He flashes Nikolai a thumbs-up, who returns the gesture. He leaves his post and heads for the upper level of the nightclub, rendezvousing with the others.

The executive leads the trio down a marble corridor, away from the hustle and bustle of electronic cacophony and posterior-wiggling *nouveau riche* pissheads.

INT. KENSUKE'S OFFICE – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

The quartet enter a white minimalist office complete with Japanese architecture and a single lonely Bonsai tree. A man in a white suit turns around to face them, smiling affably – this is KENSUKE RETOMOTO. Sakura looks at him and she begins to panic, the dull, monotonous colour palette making her nervous.

KENSUKE

How can I help you, gentlemen?

Nikolai and Daisuke are surprised at his fluency in English – they soon regain their composure, the Japanese taking the first step with the Afro-Russian behind him.

DAISUKE

We need your help, Retomoto-san.

KENSUKE

Help with what?

DAISUKE

On a dirty little secret called Project Athena.

Kensuke looks slightly uneasy as he adjusts his necktie briefly.

KENSUKE

I... I don't understand.

DAISUKE

We need your help. We need you to tell us everything you know about the 5 Elements.

He shows him Sakura, who looks scared at the sight of him.

KENSUKE

Is that...?

NIKOLAI

Yes – Sakura Noguchi. You lured her here more than 30 years ago and sold her to those pieces of shit called the 5 Elements, and if you can't talk about it here, then we can do it up in the air.

Sakura approaches Kensuke and levels with him, her eyes meeting his as she looks at him calmly.

SAKURA

(In Japanese)

Why?

KENSUKE

Why what?

SAKURA

Why did you hand me over to them?

KENSUKE

They needed a test subject that fit their criteria... you were their first hope: a powerful physique, proficient in martial arts, and a malleable personality.

Sakura looks disgusted at Kensuke's admission – she slaps him across the cheek – HARD – cursing him in Japanese.

NIKOLAI

(With restrained anger)

Where's the 5 Elements' base of operations?

KENSUKE

(Scared)

In the Andes Mountains in Patagonia, South America. Now, please, let me go! I've told you everything I know.

Nikolai looks angry, almost at the end of his tether, as he sits up with a look of pure hatred on his face.

NIKOLAI
OK, I'm done with this piece of shit.

DAISUKE
(In French)
Nikolai, NO!!

Daisuke steps forward but he is too late as Nikolai draws his cocked-and-locked CZ 75 SP-01 pistol and flips off the manual safety. He shoots Kensuke twice in the torso, the doomed businessman struggling in pain as he locks eyes with the Afro-Russian, who fires a third shot into his head, killing him.

NIKOLAI
So much for extending olive branches.
(In Russian, to the
executive)
You. Out. Now.

He points to an emergency exit behind him – the executive, sensing something is about to go down, nods in agreement and runs for his life. Daisuke draws his own sidearm – a CZ 75 SP-01 Tactical handgun – and pulls back the hammer, cocking it.

DAISUKE
Let's contact Vincenzo and get out of
here.

The doors burst open and a pair of security guards enter, yelling orders at them in Japanese. Nikolai opens fire on one, killing him with a single shot to the torso, while Daisuke injures the other one with a bullet to the leg.

INT. NIGHTCLUB DANCE FLOOR – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

The gunfire is loud enough to overpower the music as patrons start screaming and running for the exits. Nikolai opens fire on his adversaries with ease and unerring accuracy, dispatching his foes with a single shot to either the torso or the head, while Daisuke focuses on shooting his targets' extremities as the trio escape the half-destroyed nightclub – Sakura wields a Zastava M57 Yugo-Tokarev handgun, taking careful shots only when she has a clear line of sight.

EXT. CITY STREETS – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Exiting the ex-nightclub, they stop to catch their breath for a moment. Nikolai is tweaking his radio calmly while Daisuke tries to soothe a shaken Sakura, who is visibly agitated and anxious.

NIKOLAI

Vincenzo, it's Nikolai – we've got Mr Retomoto. We need to get out of here – start the chopper, we're on our way.

He hangs up and turns to face Daisuke and Sakura.

DAISUKE

(Angrily)

So we go to him for a change, is that it? With a dead VIP laying in his office and half the bloody city's police force on our tail!? That's going to look good, isn't it?!

NIKOLAI

(Calmly but firmly)

We've got no fucking choice, have we? He can't land in this urban jungle. We got what we needed, now come on!

He spots an incoming taxicab and calls to it in Russian. Daisuke sighs as he follows him, with Sakura walking behind them.

EXT. FOREST – NIGHT

SUPER: "UNKNOWN LOCATION – 1989"

Lovisa is wearing an outfit nearly identical to Sakura's but in sapphire blue, complete with tan-coloured accents (tactical belt, Army boots, etc.) and a silver belt buckle. Elbow pads and knee pads protect her extremities, and her long blonde hair is tied in a low ponytail. She raises her arms in a martial arts pose, ready to complete the final phase of her training, her eyes darting from left to right.

LOVISA

(Calmly and flatly)

I know you're out there somewhere.

Lovisa scans the area calmly like a soldier – eventually, her ice-cold steely blue eyes land on a figure clad in red and white – Alejandro.

He is wearing a T-shirt with the Peruvian flag on it. The Latin American spy turns around to see the Swedish lioness before him, and he panics slightly.

ALEJANDRO
(Placid but nervous)
Lovisa, it's me, Alejandro.

Lovisa glares at him.

LOVISA
(Coldly)
I know who you are.

She lunges at him with a spin kick, which he blocks with a well-timed and well-placed grab, throwing her to the ground.

ALEJANDRO
(Raising his voice slightly)
Lovisa, stop! Don't you remember?
What about your brother and your friends?

His mind flashes back to the one-night stand he had with Lovisa, his memory catching glimpses of her old self. Lovisa raises a solitary eyebrow in a Spock-like fashion as she pauses to observe the South American double agent before her.

LOVISA
(Calm-but-deadly)
Brother? I have no brother, nor do I have any friends... Alex.

Lovisa kicks Alejandro in the stomach. She then punches Alejandro in the torso, breaking at least one of his ribs before punching and shattering his collarbone.

Alejandro yells wordlessly with each blow, his screams a symphony of pain as he falls to the floor with the last strike, cursing in Spanish... but vain are his screams, for nobody can hear. Despite the persistent throbbing and stinging, he gets to his feet and winces visibly.

ALEJANDRO
(Fighting the pain in his body)
Lovisa... please... I'm sorry.

He blocks one of Lovisa's spin kicks with a pixel-precise punch, his fist impacting with the teenage assassin's face and temporarily catching her off-guard. She holds her face in pain as if she is crying.

LOVISA
 (Shocked)
 How could you!? I'm a woman!

Overcome by conscience, Alejandro approaches Lovisa and, despite his own better judgement and ignoring the increasing pain in his own half-destroyed body, helps her up.

ALEJANDRO
 (Remorsefully)
 I'm sorry...

Before he can continue his sentence, he feels another punch to the face, giving him a black eye. He groans from the blow and falls to the floor to see Lovisa standing before him with a tranquil fury.

LOVISA
 ...oh, I have a feeling you will be
 VERY sorry when I'm done with you.

On the V of "Very", she stamps on his torso and a loud CRACK is heard as Alejandro feels at least two more ribs shatter. He screams in azure agony at maximum volume. He can feel blood begin to ooze out of his mouth as his vision wavers and blurs from the intense throbbing sensation his body is being put through.

ALEJANDRO
 STOP!! Please!

Lovisa glares at him with a solitary raised eyebrow, a trait borrowed from Kana, her employer for the near future... and her mistress.

LOVISA
 (Coldly)
 You can thank me I'm letting you
 live, Alejandro. Just remember this
 moment the next time you decide to
 play with a woman's life.

ALEJANDRO
 (In Spanish, pained)
 Forgive me... please.

He closes his eyes and feels the dream world envelop him. Lovisa laughs a noblewoman's laugh as the brainwashing takes over her completely.

EXT. COURTYARD — NIGHT

Lovisa drops Alejandro's out-cold form onto a nearby stretcher gingerly but considerately as she approaches a hexagonal skyscraper's courtyard emblazoned with the familiar-looking rainbow pentagram complete with golden and silver castle towers.

BEGIN MONTAGE

A 5 Elements guard approaches her, the brainwashed blonde taking him out with a swift punch. A second guard approaches and he is knocked out with a punch to the gut and a kick to the face. A third guard approaches Lovisa, who punches, kicks and swings him round before finishing him off with a kick to the midsection and a punch to the face.

END MONTAGE

Lovisa stands in the centre of the courtyard, surrounded by a legion of unconscious guards and soldiers.

LOVISA
 (Confidently, almost
 monotonously)
 I am Lovisa Adela Drakenberg... the
 invincible warrior.

Kana approaches her.

KANA
 Very good, Lovisa. You are perfect
 for this assignment. Let me introduce
 you to your partner.

LOVISA
 My partner?

KANA
 Of course. We can't let someone hot
 and dangerous you work alone, can we?
 Lovisa Drakenberg, meet Sakura
 Noguchi — you're going to be working
 together.

She indicates the front entrance to the building — a young Japanese woman descends the steps and approaches her, wearing an identical outfit to hers but in ruby red, her hair also in a ponytail.

17-year-old Sakura extends her hand. Lovisa looks at it for a moment before shaking it semi-hesitantly.

LOVISA
Clean up the trash for me.

KANA
Good girls...
(Puts her hand on
Lovisa's shoulder)
...for now, however, it's time to go
home to the research lab.

Lovisa looks cool and focused as she stares back at Kana.

INT. HELIA'S BEDROOM – EVENING

SUPER: "GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION, TBILISI, GEORGIA – 1991"

Helia is alone, holding a teddy bear close to her body as she looks out of the window. The sound of a door opening and closing catches her attention – she turns to face Rainer. He smiles at her reassuringly as he approaches her.

RAINER
Still can't sleep, Miss Helia?

HELIA
No, not really.

RAINER
I did what you've asked and I gathered everything I could on Project Athena. It wasn't easy to get.

She turns to face him, smiling appreciatively.

HELIA
Thank you, Rainer.

She hugs him gently – he returns the embrace willingly as he gives her a bright red cardboard folder marked "Project Athena: CLASSIFIED". She peruses it calmly, her face turning to disbelief, then horror and outrage! She swears in Arabic.

RAINER
I know, it made me feel sick as well.

Closing the folder and handing it back to Rainer, she looks and feels more determined than ever. They smile at each other reassuringly – the phone begins to ring. Rainer looks at Helia for a moment before slowly approaching the ringing telephone, picking it up.

INT. BASEMENT STUDIO – EVENING

Erik is in a cheap-looking phone booth smoking a cigarette. He looks half-anxious, half-focused.

SWITCH BETWEEN HELIA/RAINER AND ERIK.

ERIK

I'd like to speak to Helia. All traces of my sister's whereabouts have ended up dead – I need you to be able to pull a string or two for me... please. Help me.

Rainer hands Helia the phone.

HELIA

Erik, it's me, Helia. Where are you now?

ERIK

Polar Studios in Stockholm.

HELIA

I see. Can you catch a plane to Czechoslovakia for tomorrow?

(Erik replies in the affirmative)

Go to Prague and meet me at Saint Vitus's Cathedral by 3 PM, below the city castle. Take a bus from the airport.

Erik writes down his instructions on a notepad, scribbling them in his signature crude calligraphy.

EXT. CITY STREETS – THE NEXT DAY

SUPER: "CITY OF PRAGUE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA"

A lone Erik is walking the streets of the city, trying to remain calm and relaxed as he heads for the intended rendezvous point – a big, imposing structure in the distance catches his eye: the cathedral. He can see a woman in green and a tall man in white – Helia and Rainer. They rendezvous.

ERIK

Miss Salibi, I thought you'd be here.

HELIA

A good role model always leads by example, Mr Drakenberg.

(MORE)

HELIA (cont'd)
(Indicating Rainer)
This is my personal bodyguard, Rainer Ackermann.

RAINER
Nice to meet you, Mr Drakenberg.

ERIK
Do me a favour, please, and just call me by my first name – titles and ranks make my skin crawl. It's one of the main reasons I left the family company behind.

Helia smirks as she switches on her own charms, the two engaging in a flirt-off as Rainer remains vigilant, fearing the wrath of his boss should he find out.

HELIA
That's why you ran away from home and took your precious little sister with you, isn't it?

Erik glares at Helia with a tranquil fury.

ERIK
Don't joke about that.

HELIA
I'm not. Being groomed to succeed your father was too much responsibility.. but lording over Lovisa... that was so much simpler.

ERIK
What do you know about her?

HELIA
She's alive – that's all I can tell you here.

She hands him a bright red folder marked "Project Athena: CLASSIFIED". Erik takes it and quickly flicks through the contents.

ERIK
"Project Athena"... what the fuck!?

HELIA
It's a disgusting, inhumane experiment, I know. I'm sorry, Erik.

Erik looks through a series of Polaroid images showing Lovisa during her various stages of "training".

One shows Lovisa fighting the combat dummy/droid, another shows her swimming through the flooded basement, while a third one shows her in her signature costume, seated in a chair with a helmet on her head, connected to a computer.

Yet another image shows Lovisa screaming while Kana takes notes, and the final one is of Lovisa standing in the centre of a circle of knocked-out opponents, an ice-cold look on her face. Erik is livid as he hands the folder back to Helia.

ERIK

Who runs the 5 Elements?

HELIA

Rosh Goldman... my father – he's the founder.

ERIK

(Barely trying to
control his temper)

Your father is a sick fuck, Helia, if he green-lit something of this nature! Either that or he's naïve beyond comprehension.

HELIA

No, my father would never agree to something like this. If it is being funded by the 5 Elements, then someone's running a crooked game, and I intend to prove it.

Helia locks eyes with Erik, finally gaining his trust and respect.

ERIK

What about that son of a whore Alejandro? I want his fucking head on a spike.

HELIA

Rojas is dead, Erik.

Erik curses in Swedish, the elder Drakenberg sibling feeling robbed of his revenge.

ERIK

It seems that I have no choice but to form a fragile alliance with you, Helia.

HELIA

A deadly alliance, Erik.

It is at this point that Rainer intercedes, stepping forward and indicating his gold wristwatch.

RAINER

Miss Helia, we must leave immediately – your father has requested your presence at the family mansion.

Helia looks irritated as she curses in Arabic, a trait picked up from her father. Suddenly, she has a brainwave: she looks at Erik slowly and calmly, smiling seductively. Erik looks nervous.

ERIK

What? Why are you looking at me like that?

HELIA

I think we've found our perfect opportunity to test our new alliance, Erik.

Erik panics as he realises what Helia means.

ERIK

No. No way! Forget it. I am not going to one of those posh bloody parties.

She smirks, amused by his reaction.

EXT. GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – EVENING – LATER

The Sun is setting over the Horizon, darkening the Sky as a limousine pulls up – Helia emerges, wearing her green dress, Erik is in a red tuxedo and Rainer is dressed in blue.

RAINER

Let's go... and please, *Herr* Drakenberg... try not to be too outspoken. Rosh does not take kindly to individuals of a politically incorrect nature.

HELIA

Here. If my father asks for your invitation, then show him this. Don't lose it.

She hands him a golden ticket with his name written on it in silver, the ticket embossed with the 5 Elements' logo. Erik pockets it and they enter the mansion.

INT. ROSH'S STUDY – EVENING

A man in a business suit and turtleneck top is present – Helia's father and the CEO and founder of the 5 Elements, ROSH GOLDMAN. The sound of a door knocking interrupts his musings. Rainer is shown into his study as the door closes behind him.

ROSH

Herr Ackermann... just the man I wanted to see. I don't think you know why I've summoned you here, so I'll explain: some highly confidential records regarding a certain project have gone missing, possibly stolen, possibly misplaced... and I drew the conclusion that you would have an idea as to their whereabouts. You haven't been pandering to my daughter's demands, have you?

(Pause, raising his voice slightly)

Herr Ackermann, I asked you a question: Have you been trying to appease Helia's curiosity?

Rainer stares back at Rosh, feeling intimidated but confident at the same time.

RAINER

She has nothing to do with this, if that's what you mean, sir.

Rosh looks stunned at Rainer's response – he gets to his feet and walks up to the Swiss ex-commando calmly.

ROSH

You're far too soft on her, if I may say so.

Rainer glares at Rosh.

RAINER

With all due respect, sir, I've formed a much closer relationship throughout her life than you ever have. All the tasks you were supposed to do, you relegated them to me while you closed multi million Shekel deals and pulled the strings from behind the scenes... all in the name of world peace and global stability.

ROSH
(Raising his voice
slightly)

The people of the world need to know their place! They use their beliefs, their ideologies, as a *deus ex machina* for their own personal benefits! There can be no peace for as long as emotions run rampant! There is only logic – the icon of the defender must be upheld.

RAINER
To answer your question, sir... I have no fucking clue as to what you're insinuating, and to be honest with you, I find it more than a little bit insulting.

Rosh looks at Rainer, backpedaling slightly as he nods grimly.

ROSH
OK... I see. If I find out that you've been lying to me or protecting her... I'll have you fired.
(Pause)
Get out.

Rainer does as he is told, opening the door and slamming it shut behind him. Rosh sighs and curses to himself in Hebrew.

INT. UNO TABLE IN THE GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – NIGHT – LATER

Erik and Helia are heavily involved in a game of Uno, the others having either left or passed out from alcohol intoxication. Erik has a single card left, while Helia has a full deck – he looks confident.

ERIK
My one versus your seven – unless you have a phenomenal case of good fortune, I'd say this game is mine.

Helia looks through her deck and then smirks at him.

HELIA
Oh, my dear Erik... you really should learn to remain silent so as not to tempt fate. I call you to draw four cards and play one in yellow – a rather appropriate choice of colour if you ask me.
(MORE)

HELIA (cont'd)
(Plays her cards
until she has one
left)

Uno.

Erik looks worried as she drops the dreaded "Plus 4" wild card, followed by another... and another... and another. His worry turns to panic and disbelief, then resignation. He ends up with more than 20 cards. Looking through them, he pitifully throws down two cards of no significance.

ERIK
That's it.

HELIA
Then I have bad news for you, Erik:
Endgame to me.

Helia smiles and plays her last card, winning the game. Erik drops his cards and gets up, leaving the table, with Helia following him.

ERIK
You knew what I was up to, didn't
you?

HELIA
What do you mean?

ERIK
You knew I'd try to wear you down
with my own wild cards early on —
isn't that why you held back?

Helia smiles enigmatically.

HELIA
Very good, Erik.

ERIK
You misled me.

Helia laughs melodically.

HELIA
Misled? No, I simply bided my time.
Something which you could never excel
at, if your rushed touring history is
anything to go by.

Erik looks shocked as he stops to face her.

ERIK

Hey, don't give me that! The record company wouldn't release any of our stuff as singles, so we had to do the promotion ourselves, while they were either promoting artists of ethnic minorities or banning soap-opera-spoofing drag queens!

Helia looks at him, amused by his mini-rant as they exchange sly glances.

HELIA

You know, Erik, you are a most talented individual.

ERIK

I know I am.

He beams proudly.

HELIA

Music, man, money, motor... you've got the four M's – you're every woman's man.

She leans in closer.

ERIK

And you are quite possibly the most compelling and enigmatic woman I've ever known.

He leans in.

HELIA

Sleeping with the daughter of one of the most influential men in the world is not a good idea, Erik.

ERIK

When was I ever about good ideas? I'm a bad idea guy.

She closes her eyes and lets him kiss her – their kiss becomes passionate as they hold each other. She breaks apart and glares at him.

HELIA

You fool! Have you learned nothing?

She kisses him passionately – this time, HE breaks apart.

ERIK

I've never had much common sense, and
I don't mean to start now.

HELIA

Then it's time you learned a VERY
valuable lesson, my dear.

She kisses him again – this time, he gives in and holds her, the two of them exhibiting their newfound passion openly. This goes on for several seconds until a door is heard opening and closing – they quickly break apart and try to look nonchalant... only to find out it's Rainer. He looks at them with a slight smirk.

RAINER

Relax, Miss Helia... *Herr Drakenberg*...
my lips are sealed.

They both breathe a sigh of relief as Helia checks her expensive gold watch – her eyes widen as she curses in Arabic and she escorts Erik out of the room.

INT. ATRIUM OF THE GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – NIGHT –
CONTINUOUS

Erik is being half-escorted, half-pushed out of the mansion by Helia while Rainer observes with mild amusement, the trio making their way through the dispersing guests.

ERIK

What are you doing!?

HELIA

It's time for you to leave, Mr
Drakenberg.

ERIK

What!?

HELIA

Party's nearly over – my father
doesn't like people outstaying their
welcome.

She pushes him out the front door.

EXT. GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Erik falls down the stairs and picks himself up at the bottom – he brushes off some dust from his tuxedo and looks up at Helia as a taxicab pulls up beside him – she opens the door for him as the Moon shines in the Sky.

ERIK

What the hell, woman!?

HELIA

(In French, to the driver)

Take this gentleman to the Mercure Tbilisi in town and make sure he gets treated well.

(In English, to Erik)

I'll do my best to help you but you've got to lay low... and keep quiet. Goodbye, Mr Drakenberg.

Erik, realising what Helia means, nods and heads into the taxicab – she closes the door and watches the car leave as it speeds off into the distance, leaving behind a trail of smoke – when the trail vanishes, so has the vehicle.

INT. HELIA'S BEDROOM – EVENING – CONTINUOUS

Helia is sitting at her desk, looking worried as she ruffles her dark hair. She is looking at a red folder marked "Project Athena: CLASSIFIED", an ashtray beside her as she holds a smoking cigarette. A knock on her door is heard.

HELIA

Come in.

The door opens and closes as Rainer enters, approaching her.

RAINER

Miss Helia... are you OK?

Helia turns to face Rainer, her usually olive-tan and vibrant face pale and drained of colour.

HELIA

No, Rainer, I'm not. I can't stop thinking about this damn project and that poor girl, and her brother.

He walks up to her sadly, holding a pink 3 1/2" floppy disk and holding it out to her. Looking at the diskette, Helia hesitates before taking it.

RAINER

I think you'll find the truth on that disk - it wasn't easy to get, mind you.

HELIA

Thank you, Rainer.

Rainer walks beside her as she loads it up, the CRT monitor blips to life, the disk drive's mechanical whirring and clicking synchronised with the images on the screen.

CRT MONITOR: "PROJECT ATHENA - (C) 1985 FIVE ELEMENTS CONGLOMERATE".

Helia looks increasingly shocked as she reads the text on the screen, while Rainer struggles to keep his stomach contents to himself. The CRT monitor shows images of a woman in various martial arts poses and attire before finally being automated and converted into a cyborg.

RAINER

I know... it makes me feel sick, too.

Helia turns off the computer and CRT monitor, ejecting the diskette with a tranquil fury.

INT. ROSH'S STUDY - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

Rosh is in his study, drinking from a bottle of vodka. The door to his private office is suddenly burst open, causing him to look up in a combination of surprise and irritation, seeing Helia and Rainer enter.

HELIA

(In Arabic)

You bastard.

Rosh looks worried at his daughter's unusual display of aggression.

ROSH

What? What is it?

Helia glares at her father.

HELIA

You know what I mean, Father.

ROSH

*What are you talking about, Helia?
Listen to me.*

Helia throws the pink diskette and red folder onto his desk, glaring at her father. Rosh picks up the diskette and inserts it into the disk drive of his own computer. What he sees also shocks him, to Helia's mild surprise.

RAINER

In all the years I've known you, Mr Goldman, I've never suspected you of being a disgusting anthropomorphic amoeba.

HELIA

(In English)

Who came up with Project Athena? I'm warning you, Father, if I think you're lying to me, then I'll have YOU put forward as a test subject.

She leers into his space dangerously.

ROSH

One of my top scientists... I was sure I'd fired her.

HELIA

What's her name?

Rosh regains his composure as he locks eyes with Helia.

ROSH

Takahashi. Kana Takahashi.

Helia softens up, feeling guilty for confronting her father in such a hostile manner. She hugs him tightly.

HELIA

I'm sorry.

ROSH

It's OK. You had every right to be angry at me.

Their forms part as they look at each other.

HELIA

You trusted her with your vision to make the world a better place... and she used you.

ROSH

I know... and as a consequence, I'm resigning as CEO of the 5 Elements. I'm handing over the reins to you.

(MORE)

ROSH (cont'd)

I know you will do a better job than I did, and I also know you will make the 5 Elements completely legitimate. Helia, I'm sorry I haven't been the best father in the world – I missed so much of you growing up. I just hope we can put this behind us.

(Hugs Helia and
kisses her forehead)

I love you.

Helia tries not to cry.

HELIA

I love you too.

Rosh shakes Rainer's hand.

ROSH

Look after her for me.

RAINER

I will... Rosh.

Rosh smiles at them both and walks out of the room, leaving the mansion as he passes over the torch to the next generation.

INT. ERIK'S SUITE – EVENING

SUPER: "CITY OF STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN – 1994"

A lone Erik enters his plush suite and heads for his bedroom, collapsing on the bed without even going under the covers. Several seconds later, he is rudely awoken by a persistent ringing sound on his telephone.

Groaning and muttering something incomprehensible, he struggles to push himself off the soft, plush bed and staggers towards a blue rotary dial telephone with a yellow handle. He eventually picks it up with some effort, answering in Swedish.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LIVING QUARTERS – EVENING

Sakura is sitting on her bunk, while Lovisa is on the phone, the Nordic beauty twirling her blonde hair nervously – both women are in casual civilian wear and now in their 20s.

SWITCH BETWEEN ERIK AND LOVISA/SAKURA.

LOVISA
(In Swedish)
Erik, it's me.

ERIK
Lovisa!? Is it really you?!

LOVISA
Yes. Listen, I don't have time to explain now, but I can tell you everything when we meet. Come to Hong Kong – we'll talk then.

ERIK
OK. Where do you want to meet?

LOVISA
At the airport by Victoria Harbour. I'll tell you everything.

Erik smiles softly.

ERIK
It's good to hear from you again, Lovisa... it's been 5 years.

LOVISA
I know, Erik. I'm sorry.

ERIK
You have nothing to be sorry for – you're my sister. Our mother and father will be overjoyed.

LOVISA
I'll see you then.

ERIK
I can't wait.

Click, dial tone.

INT. AIRPORT ATRIUM – NIGHT

SUPER: "HONG KONG INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT"

Sakura and Lovisa enter the atrium, looking nervous. Erik enters through one of the arrival gates and looks around him carefully, spotting a familiar blonde – Lovisa! He smiles and calls her name.

Lovisa responds by calling out to Erik. He jumps over a queue of passengers checking into their flight and runs up to her in excitement, hugging his younger sister.

ERIK
Lovisa! I knew you were alive.

LOVISA
Erik, I've missed you.

ERIK
I've missed you too – we all have.

He lets her go and smiles.

LOVISA
I'll tell you all about it later – for now, let's find somewhere to sleep.

ERIK
I've got a plane waiting – we can leave together.

Lovisa smiles and nods, replying in the affirmative in Swedish.

KANA (V.O.)
I am disappointed, Lovisa... I didn't expect such a display of emotion from you.

Erik looks up to see Kana step out of the shadows – he realises he's been had, and there's no way out this time – a pair of PMC troops arrive and physically restrain Sakura and Lovisa, recapturing the girls.

ERIK
Who the fuck are you!?

He steps in front of Lovisa protectively.

KANA
I'm the last face you'll ever see.
(Shoots Erik in the gut with a plasma pistol before slapping a restrained Sakura and Lovisa)
You two need to learn a lesson: no one leaves the 5 Elements.

They are dragged away, struggling in vain as Erik lies in a puddle of his own blood, screaming in agony as the world goes black for him, Lovisa screaming his name, begging for her brother to help her as she is taken away again.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN ELEVATOR – NIGHT

Sakura and Lovisa are quickly stripped down naked and their hair fall down as they are frogmarched into an elevator – they look at each other's bare forms silently, the Japanese beauty remaining defiant while the Swedish blonde looks scared, their captors holding them tightly. The elevator lands at its desired floor as it stops.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CRYO-LAB – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

The doors open and the girls are frogmarched into a cryogenic laboratory, where Kana is present. She looks at them with a cold disappointment.

KANA

Sakura Noguchi and Lovisa Adela Drakenberg... I have tried to steer you on the right path but I have failed... and, unfortunately, you leave me with no other recourse but to place you both in cold sleep indefinitely, to be stored in separate locations known only to myself. As such, some of your biological and psychological traits may be altered as a side effect. You will be awoken and reunited when you are needed again.

Sakura spits in Kana's face, cursing at her in Japanese, while Lovisa starts to cry as the girls are placed on separate tables, restraints closing around their wrists and ankles.

A technician lowers a white gelatinous substance onto their feet, which eventually engulfs their struggling physical forms as a computer behind them flashes bright green, the substance dissolving away.

COMPUTER (V.O.)

Subjects: Drakenberg, Lovisa A. –
Noguchi, Sakura. DNA samples
complete.

The restraints open and they are picked up like ragdolls before being thrown into glass tubes, the doors closing before them.

KANA
 (In Japanese, with
 overt malice)
Good night, sleeping beauties.

Lovisa screams and bangs on the tube while Sakura tries to remain calm. The tubes fill with cold water and they are zapped in the heart with electricity.

The girls pass out as they are submerged and frozen, a flash of white light turning their capsules into coffins of ice. Kana smirks evilly and leaves with her entourage, the doors slamming shut with a CLANG!, echoing away into a disquieting, almost deafening silence.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LABORATORY – EVENING

SUPER: "ACCURSED MOUNTAINS, BALKAN PENINSULA – 2019"

A group of operatives in winter gear enter the chamber, their leader wearing a pair of sunglasses. He then looks towards the ice-covered capsule. Inside the icy capsule is a beautiful blonde, nude and sleeping – Lovisa. A computer voice – a *basso profundo* – speaks up as the man works the control panel.

COMPUTER (V.O.)
 Revival process begun – subject:
 Drakenberg, Lovisa A. Age: 21. Sex:
 Female. Date of birth: 1973/7/4.
 Country of origin: Sweden. Blood
 type: AB. Heart restarted – heart
 beat and pulse nominal.
 (Lovisa's eyes click
 open as she wakes up
 inside the tube –
 she tries to move
 but cannot)
 Subject revived – unfreezing process
 complete.

Lovisa, now able to move, kicks and punches the glass – a crack forms as she smiles slightly before striking the glass again, which shatters, sending water gushing out onto the floor along with the Nordic beauty, who is gasping for air, finally awake and free from her subzero purgatory. The squad leader approaches her quickly. A sharp twinge of an injection in her neck sends Lovisa into a state of unconsciousness and into the man's arms.

INT. SHOOTING RANGE OF THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE - NIGHT

Vincenzo and Sakura are present, indulging in some semi-competitive target practice. Vincenzo lowers his empty sidearm - a Zastava M57A single-action handgun in 7.62*25mm Tokarev - and calls forward his target, revealed to be in the shape of a ninja-like warrior, with Sakura following suit. He admires her pinpoint group shots while she stares in awe at his affinity for headshots.

VINCENZO

(In Japanese)

Looks like all those years at 7-11
really paid off.

She laughs slightly as he sends out another target and loads a new magazine into his Yugo-Tokarev semiautomatic pistol. Without another word, Vincenzo continues firing at the target, his shots more accurate this time as they rip the target to shreds with Sakura joining in, showing off her competitive streak.

INT. REC ROOM OF THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE - NIGHT

Nikolai and Daisuke are present, trying to relax - the former is drinking from a bottle of vodka while the latter smokes a cigar.

DAISUKE

I'm telling you, Kolya - Vincenzo's going gaga over that yellow bitch. He's always like this when it comes to attractive women. Remember that blonde CIA agent he fell in love with several years ago - Elle Green - and it turned out she was a mole? He'll never change.

NIKOLAI

I don't blame him, D. Given the way the world works and how most of us were brought up to believe in stuff, which, in all fairness, is a load of crap... I think he has a right to be pissed - he's the only decent one among us when you think about it.

(Pause)

Maybe there is some hope for us, maybe it doesn't have to end in blood, sweat and tears... maybe she might just be the one for him.

Daisuke looks at Nikolai uncertainly, who returns the gaze with a slight smirk.

EXT. GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – THE NEXT DAY

SUPER: "GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION, TBILISI, GEORGIA"

The Sun is shining brightly as a white limousine pulls up outside the front entrance to the mansion. The doors open to reveal a mature woman with olive/tan skin and dark hair – Helia. A man in white with a pink turtleneck and sporting fair hair greets her, helping her out and hugging her – this is an older but not necessarily wiser Erik.

ERIK
Welcome back, Helia.

HELIA
It's good to be back, Erik.

They smile at each other as Helia's personal bodyguard – an older and greyer Rainer – approaches the Arab businesswoman.

RAINER
Welcome back, Miss Helia.

HELIA
It's Mrs Helia now, Rainer.

She smiles.

RAINER
To me, you'll always be Miss Helia.

She hugs Rainer gently and looks up at him.

HELIA
Did you do what I asked?

RAINER
Yes, I did. I found more than I expected.

Rainer beams proudly as Erik looks pensive – Helia catches this.

HELIA
What's wrong, dear husband?

ERIK
Nothing, I'm just remembering the first time we met all those years ago. You saved my life...

HELIA
..twice, I seem to recall.

Erik nods.

ERIK
Yes. I miss the old life, to tell you
the truth – album, tour, groupies,
and parties.

Helia looks at Erik sympathetically.

HELIA
It's called "growing up", Erik –
you're a lawyer now. I can't have a
rock star man-child for a husband.
The 5 Elements are nearly completely
legitimate, largely thanks to your
help – both of you.

RAINER
May I make a suggestion, Miss Helia?

HELIA
By all means, Rainer.

RAINER
It might be worth searching for the
one who got away – there were two
test subjects in Project Athena, I
seem to recall.

Helia cocks her head to the side and raises an eyebrow
slightly.

HELIA
What happened to this other one?

RAINER
She was rescued by a group of
mercenaries – guns for hire, dogs of
war, you know the type. They call
themselves the Rhodium Golems, and
they have quite the reputation for
being men of honour.

Helia looks intrigued.

EXT. SUMMIT – EVENING

SUPER: "PATAGONIA, ANDEAN MOUNTAINS, ARGENTINE-CHILEAN BORDER"

Vincenzo's helicopter lands on a flat plain on the mountain's Summit, the setting Sun painting the Sky a pinkish-orange shade, the Horizon seemingly on fire.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – EVENING – CONTINUOUS

Everyone except Vincenzo disembark – he tries to stop Sakura, grabbing her arm.

VINCENZO
(In Japanese)
What are you doing?

SAKURA
I'm going with them.

VINCENZO
What?

SAKURA
Trust me, Vincenzo, I can look after myself. I can fight.

Vincenzo thinks it over before nodding, kissing her cheek.

VINCENZO
OK... just let me know if you're in danger.

SAKURA
I will.

He lets go of her arm, releasing her as he ascends into the air, the helicopter circling around the site.

EXT. SECURITY GRID – EVENING

Daisuke, Nikolai and Sakura draw their weapons, the Japanese beauty brandishing a Serbo-Tokarev self-loading pistol as they walk slowly and quietly. Suddenly, Nikolai holds out his hand as if to stop the motion around him. Daisuke stands still as Nikolai crouches down, prying apart some grass with his hands. Daisuke kneels beside him.

DAISUKE
What's that?

NIKOLAI

It's an immobiliser mine. When activated, it releases a substance which prevents the target from escaping, and then it emits an electric shock, causing the mine to explode and the fluid to conduct the electricity, killing the target.

(Cuts a wire on the mine's PCB and a faint beeping sound is heard, getting louder and faster)

MOVE!!

The trio jump for cover as a single continuous beep is heard followed by a large explosion, followed by smaller ones – this goes on for several seconds, eventually falling into silence.

DAISUKE

I didn't think this kind of technology was even possible.

NIKOLAI

It's probably experimental – it's a high-intensity radiation grid.

(Pauses to think for a moment)

OK – 10 seconds to get from here to the blockhouse.

(Sighs)

This is harder than I thought it would be.

He motions for Sakura to kneel beside them as he brushes apart some grass to reveal the deadly land mines. Sakura looks confused – Daisuke notices this.

DAISUKE

What Nikolai is trying to tell us is that we're basically playing a live-action game of Minesweeper.

NIKOLAI

I can fire at ground level – the kinetic energy from our weapons should be enough to disrupt the radiation grid.

(To Daisuke)

Since you are our fearless leader, you have the privilege of going first.

Daisuke chuckles as he gets to his feet.

DAISUKE
(In French)
OK, I'm ready.

He takes a single step back. BANG! Nikolai fires at the ground.

NIKOLAI
(In Russian)
Run! Get going!

Daisuke sprints through the minefield, jumping over the mounds as if they are hurdles. Eventually, he makes it to the other side and flashes a thumbs-up to the others. Sakura steps forward, ready to get her part over and done with.

SAKURA
(In Japanese)
I'm ready to set a new Solar System-wide record.

Nikolai fires again as Sakura sprints and backflips across the minefield, landing beside Daisuke with a diving somersault. Alejandro follows suit as he bolts through the minefield unaffected, reaching the other side.

Daisuke fires his SMG/PDW, Nikolai runs... and trips, activating a landmine with a LOUD clicking noise. Daisuke runs to help him and is barely able to get them both to safety as the mine detonates.

Nikolai thanks Daisuke in Russian. Sakura fires a single shot at the door's keypad, causing it to slide open with a low-pitched whirring sound as the quartet head into the base, spotting a large cargo elevator of sorts.

INT. BASE ENTRANCE — EVENING

Activating a nearby power box, Daisuke operates the control panel on the elevator as the quartet descend deeper into the subterranean hideout, like a group of damned souls descending into the depths of Hell itself.

INT. BASEMENT — EVENING

At the base of the cargo elevator, the quartet stand before a corridor which leads into another room. Daisuke proceeds to move forward but Nikolai stops him, who takes out a coin from his pocket and drops it onto the floor. The coin explodes in a flash of light.

Daisuke looks around him, searching for any hooks or holes to grab onto, eventually spotting a series of metal rails on the ceiling.

DAISUKE

(Indicating the rails)
We'll have to manoeuvre our way via
the ceiling... and try to keep your
legs as high as possible.

Daisuke crosses over first followed by Sakura. Alejandro simply walks on the floor, swearing in Spanish as he is zapped with enough voltage to illuminate Rome for a year, eventually reaching the other side.

Nikolai grabs a support rail above him, which snaps off in his hand as he reaches for the next one. He eventually makes it to the other end with some effort, cursing in Russian as the trio descend a ladder.

INT. SUBBASEMENT – EVENING

The trio arrive at a marble-laden door with the logo embossed on the front in gold and silver complete with red LED.

DAISUKE

This is it. Beyond this door lies
Control.

Sakura produces a lock-picking device as she attempts to bypass the security lock. The LED flashes green with a high-pitched bleeping noise, and the door slides open, the group rushing into a large white chamber.

INT. COMPUTER CHAMBER – EVENING

A large computer room greets Daisuke as he enters the mainframe chamber, unaware of its true nature.

DAISUKE

Yes! Yes! YES!! We did it! We broke
into Control! Nikolai, I want a
complete backup of all the data
stored on this computer... for
insurance.

Nikolai hacks into the 5 Elements' mainframe, transferring the data onto a flash drive as Vincenzo's voice suddenly sparkles to life on the rebels' radios.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Heads up, guys – things are getting too hot for me to land on the Summit. I'll meet you at the foot of the mountain instead. You've got 10 minutes to get out of there – if you're not at the LZ in 5, then you're on your own.

Nikolai grunts in frustration before cursing in Russian.

NIKOLAI

Change of plan – we're going down the rabbit hole!

(Cocking his gun)

Let's go. We've got what we need!

Sakura replies in the affirmative in Japanese as Nikolai leads the group out of the server room.

EXT. MOUNTAIN BASE – NIGHT

The Moon is shining in the Sky. An agitated Nikolai curses in Russian as he knows he has to come up with a decision quickly.

NIKOLAI

Everyone – down the mountain! GO!!

Alejandro and Sakura take point with Daisuke and Nikolai bringing up the rear. BOOM! A HUGE explosion which rocks the side of the mountain sends Nikolai hurtling into the air – he lands about 100 metres below.

DAISUKE

I've got you, Nikolai – hang on!

(To Alejandro and Sakura)

Head for the foot of the mountain!
Get to the LZ!

Nikolai screams profanities in Russian while firing at the mountain angrily as Daisuke helps him up, the pair eventually reaching the foot of the mountain.

EXT. FOOT OF THE MOUNTAIN – NIGHT

A purple Kamov helicopter begins to land on the improvised helipad, the white snow stained red with Nikolai's blood. Nikolai smiles as Daisuke helps him up.

DAISUKE

Come on! Get up! We're almost there!
Come on, you can make it!

NIKOLAI

Vincenzo, let's get the hell out of..

BANG! A gunshot is heard as Nikolai falls to the floor, his Kalashnikov assault rifle lying beside its owner.

DAISUKE

(In Japanese)

NO!!

He points his SMG at the mystery assailant but someone unseen jumps at Daisuke and delivers a painful spin kick right into his back! Daisuke screams in agony as he drops his submachine gun/personal defence weapon. Looking up, he can see an angry-looking Lovisa standing above him, her fists clenched with determination as he tries to get up.

Lovisa attacks a shocked Sakura and quickly knocks her out with a spin kick to the face. Kana produces a jet-injector filled with a red liquid and stabs Daisuke in the neck with it at lightning speed, incapacitating him. He grunts, struggling to remain conscious.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Nikolai, Daisuke, this is Vincenzo!
I'm under attack! The LZ's a trap! Do
not go to the foot of the mountain! I
say again: DO NOT go to the foot of
the mountain!

Vincenzo curses in Italian as the transmission ends. A passing-out Daisuke glances at a semi-worried Lovisa, who snaps to attention when Kana calls her name, the two women leaving him and Nikolai, the Japanese glancing at the Afro-Russian beside him as he tries to reach out to his friend... and the world goes black.

FADE TO:

INT. GUEST BEDROOM IN THE GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION — THE NEXT DAY

A lone Vincenzo wakes up — he sits up, clutching his head in pain.

VINCENZO

(In Italian)

Bloody hell, my head feels like it's
been cut in half.

Regaining his composure, he picks up his spectacles and slips them on as he gets to his feet. Rosh's voice is heard behind him. He turns to face its owner.

ROSH
Welcome and good morning, Vincenzo
Rodolfo Corbucci.

Vincenzo looks at Rosh semi-suspiciously, the Italian pilot looking worried as Nadia steps out beside her husband.

VINCENZO
How do you know my name?

ROSH
We've been tracking your progress for
quite some time. My name is Rosh
Goldman, and this is my wife, Nadia.
Please come with me.

Vincenzo shakes Rosh and Nadia's hands and walks with them out of the guest room.

INT. BASEMENT IN THE GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – DAY

The basement is shrouded in darkness – the door opens to reveal Rosh's silhouette, who flicks a switch, turning on the light and showing his full form. He reaches into his drawer and hands Vincenzo a pink folder marked "Genesis of the 5 Elements: CONFIDENTIAL".

VINCENZO
What's this?

ROSH
The answer to the questions you want
to ask me... please – feel free to
peruse.

Vincenzo smiles.

VINCENZO
Thank you.

He does so, looking through various documents calmly but quickly, being a natural speed-reader. His eyes widen slightly as surprise deprives him of the power of speech – Nadia catches his expression.

NADIA
I know it's a lot to take in,
Vincenzo, but it's true – all of it.

He closes up the folder and gives it to Rosh.

VINCENZO

You must have had one hell of a budget.

ROSH

Not quite.

NADIA

This is what we used to give ourselves infinite funding. Heroes to some, villains to others.

Nadia indicates a gold and silver machine shaped like a compact refrigerator with three LED lamps in a traffic light configuration.

VINCENZO

What is it? All I see is a fancy fridge.

Rosh laughs slightly.

ROSH

It's a replicator, Vincenzo. You see, when I was younger, I discovered a way to synthesise precious metals, and I built this prototype to test out my hypothesis – looks like it worked.

(Laughs briefly)

If you want to find your crew, then contact Helia – she'll help you.

He hands him a red rotary dial telephone. Vincenzo looks at Rosh, then Nadia, who nods... and then picks it up.

INT. HELIA'S PENTHOUSE SUITE – DAY

A red telephone in the suite rings as two people – Helia and Erik, who are dining, exchange looks of annoyance as Rainer goes to pick up the phone.

RAINER

Hello?

SWITCH BETWEEN VINCENZO/ROSH/NADIA AND HELIA/ERIK/RAINER.

VINCENZO

I wish to speak with Helia, please. My name is Vincenzo Corbucci.

Rainer lowers the phone and looks at Helia.

RAINER
Somebody called Corbucci says he
wants to talk to you.

He hands her the phone and backs off, looking worried as Erik raises an eyebrow.

HELIA
Hello?

VINCENZO
Helia, I'm with your father – he says
you can help me locate my captured
crew.

HELIA
Crew? You're with the Rhodium Golems,
aren't you?

VINCENZO
Yes, quite so.

HELIA
OK, give me a minute, please.

She nods at Erik, who opens up his laptop computer and starts searching through the 5 Elements' encyclopedia. He clicks on a link and shows the page to Helia.

ERIK
Just as I thought. Another failed
attack on Central Control.

Helia takes the laptop and sets it down.

HELIA
They were last seen at an underground
base in the Carpathian Mountains –
specifically, Mount Gerlach in the
High Tatras region.

VINCENZO
Thank you, Helia. I now know what I
must do.

Click, dial tone.

INT. CELL — NIGHT

SUPER: "TATRA MOUNTAINS, SLOVAK-POLISH BORDER"

In a secret base operated by the 5 Elements deep in the heart of the Carpathian Mountains, Daisuke awakens groggily as he gets to his feet, the cold wind biting at his face. Nikolai is also present, sitting beside him with a bandage over his torso.

DAISUKE

What is wrong with these people, man?

(Sigh)

I hate to admit it, Nikolai, but you were right.

Nikolai looks at him calmly but seriously.

NIKOLAI

What now?

Jacques looks back at him straight in the eyes.

DAISUKE

We bust out of here, that's what now. Track them, find them... and kill them all. We have to get out of here and get our equipment back.

As Daisuke finishes speaking, the door to his cell opens. A tall guard approaches them, calling Daisuke's name. Daisuke replies in the affirmative in French.

GUARD

Come. It's show time.

Daisuke's heart chills at the mention of those two words as he and Nikolai lock eyes with each other briefly before he is led away, the guard closing and locking the door to the cell.

INT. TORTURE CHAMBER — NIGHT

Daisuke is restrained to what appears to be a revolving table, a white T-Shirt covering his torso.

DAISUKE

I disapprove of violence without a reason, but in this situation, I'll make an exception.

The torturer laughs humourlessly as he operates a control panel.

TORTURER

We're going to play a game, Daisuke. I'm going to ask you some questions, and I want you to answer them. Failure to answer will result in you being fried like a chicken.

(Pause)

Tell me: Why are the Rhodium Golems still fighting for a stupid and meaningless cause when the people you fight for will not listen because of their pride or lack of intelligence? Don't you see that ignorance begets destruction?

Daisuke thinks about this VERY carefully before coming up with a suitable response.

DAISUKE

I think we both know the answer to this.

The torturer flips a switch – a high-voltage electric shock runs through the revolving table, zapping Daisuke with enough power to illuminate Paris for a year. He screams in a combination of rage and agony, his shrieks of pain echoing into silence.

INT. FREEZER – EVENING

Sakura is naked and chained up in a blue room. Lovisa enters alone – she looks up to see her friend. The lights flicker on and off as Nikolai and Daisuke's voices are heard screaming in rage and agony, swearing in their native languages.

SAKURA

Lovisa! Thank God you're here!

Lovisa looks at Sakura calmly, raising a solitary eyebrow as the Swedish blonde approaches the Japanese brunette.

LOVISA

(Angrily)

You traitor...

(Slaps Sakura)

...you two-faced bitch!

Sakura is visibly shocked.

SAKURA

Lovisa, I don't understand! You're my friend!

LOVISA

Friend!? I wish I had one. Kana showed me just what kind of a friend you really are... sleeping with the enemy.

SAKURA

Enemy? They're trying to help me, help you!

LOVISA

The only help I need is to find my brother. Where is he?

SAKURA

I don't know. I haven't seen him since that day. Don't you remember? He got shot and we got taken away!

(Close to tears)

Please, Lovisa, try to remember!

Lovisa looks at Sakura for a moment, raising a solitary eyebrow in a Spock-like fashion before nodding.

LOVISA

I see. Goodbye, Sakura.

She turns to leave as Sakura calls her name in vain. A spray is activated, covering her in freezing cold water which slowly sets onto her body as frost and ice – she cries out in pain.

EXT. MOUNTAIN STRETCH – NIGHT

Vincenzo's helicopter soars through the inky black winter night sky, the Moon the only source of illumination as the Horizon becomes an empty void.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

A lone Vincenzo, looking determined and feeling anxious, looks at the navigation computer briefly. He accidentally jabs the radio's tuning dial with his knee, inadvertently tuning it into Kana's radio frequency, her voice garbled. Vincenzo moves to adjust the radio to correct his mistake but her words catch his attention.

KANA (V.O.)

Pilot, please proceed to the new base at coordinates: 48.32 longitude, 8.97 latitude. Shang Si will be expecting progress very soon.

He smirks and flicks a few switches.

EXT. MOUNTAIN STRETCH – NIGHT

The helicopter lands – the two security guards notice this new arrival and they ran up to the whirlybird with their weapons drawn, one of them banging on the door to the cockpit.

GUARD

What are you doing here? This is a restricted area!

There is a brief silence as the guard tries banging again, more emphatically. Unknown to him, however, Vincenzo emerges from behind, aiming a tranquilliser pistol at the man's head. BLIP! BLIP! Two silenced shots later and they collapse, sleeping like babies.

VINCENZO

Good night, boys.

He moves the bodies out of sight and examines his weapons before heading into the base alone, his mind burned with one intention.

INT. TORTURE CHAMBER – NIGHT

Nikolai is thrown onto a torture device as he feels the inevitable fear of doom creep into his body. The torturer activates the electricity, and soon enough, Nikolai is screaming in azure agony as the voltage rages into his body. He deactivates the electricity – Nikolai musters his courage to glare at the man with a look that could melt the Polar Ice Caps.

NIKOLAI

I'm going to kill you when I get out of here... you, that psychotic bitch and your leader.

Lovisa enters the room, looking at Nikolai coldly.

LOVISA

I've been waiting for this time to come.

She touches his cheek teasingly before slapping him.

NIKOLAI

You bitch!

She glares at him, holding her knife to his throat for a while before lowering it calmly.

LOVISA
Don't. Tempt. Me.

She leaves and the torturer reactivates the electricity, shocking Nikolai as he screams his lungs out.

INT. CELL – NIGHT

Nikolai is thrown into a cell again and locked up with Daisuke, his body smoking and burned from the electricity – dead skin is beginning to peel off his arms like Sunburn.

Examining his friend, Nikolai can see cuts and slice marks all over Daisuke's torso complete with bandages – not too deep, but enough to keep him alive and in pain for a while.

DAISUKE
(Shocked)
My God... what did they do to you?
(Pause)
We're going to die here.

NIKOLAI
No... don't say that.

DAISUKE
How else are we going to get out of here, Nikolai? We're fucked – I shouldn't have told Vincenzo to save his own skin... it's all my fault.

Nikolai laughs at the irony as Daisuke leans his head back against the wall and curses to himself in French. The sound of someone knocking on the door pulls them from their musings, the two mercenaries looking to see who it is – a familiar figure brandishing a Benelli M4 combat shotgun kneels before them... it's Vincenzo!

VINCENZO
You didn't think I'd leave you to die, did you?

Nikolai smiles slightly.

NIKOLAI
Well, now... you certainly took your time finding us.

VINCENZO

There didn't seem to be any hurry. I had an unexpected ally who filled me in on the rather sordid history of the 5 Elements... and saved my life in the process. Hold on and I'll get you out of here.

He starts working an electronic tool on the door's lock.

DAISUKE

What about the guards? They'll kill you.

VINCENZO

I took care of them - they'll be sleeping until well into tomorrow.

A metallic click is heard, the cell door opening as Nikolai and Daisuke help each other out.

NIKOLAI

We need to get our equipment back.

VINCENZO

I've taken care of that as well.

Vincenzo opens up a duffel bag with the Rhodium Golems' logo on it. Inside lay their guns, equipment and a pair of jet-injectors filled with a pink liquid. Nikolai picks one up and examines it, while Daisuke takes the other.

NIKOLAI

What's this?

VINCENZO

Nanotech ROM modules - a fast-acting first-aid kit - it heals the victim almost instantaneously, but you can use it only once.

Nikolai and Daisuke look at each other, examining their injuries before ultimately injecting each other, pressing the vials into their carotid arteries.

BEGIN MONTAGE

Nikolai and Daisuke's wounds rapidly heal thanks to the sub-microscopic computer programs interacting with their bodies, reprogramming them to full health. The peerless pair dress up once more in their combat outfits and cock their weapons.

END MONTAGE

DAISUKE

Now we look like ourselves again. We owe you one, Vincenzo. Thank you.

VINCENZO

Actually, you owe me four. Where's Alejandro?

NIKOLAI

We don't know.

Vincenzo can feel his confidence gave way to panic, his mind remembering someone special, someone dear to him.

VINCENZO

Where's Sakura!?

NIKOLAI

She's being held in some kind of freezer, one floor below us.

Vincenzo begins to panic as Daisuke grabs his large, bulky shoulders in an effort to pacify him.

DAISUKE

Vincenzo, calm down! Just go save her - Nikolai and I will take care of the rest. We'll meet at the helicopter on the surface, now go!

Vincenzo nods and replies in the affirmative in Italian as he heads for the subterranean freezer while Nikolai and Daisuke cock their respective weapons. Raising their guns, they head into the fray, ready to fight once again.

INT. FREEZER - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

A lone Vincenzo, dressed in combat gear and brandishing his automatic shotgun, enters the cold, dark, blue chamber.

VINCENZO

(In Japanese)

Sakura, it's me, Vincenzo! I'm here to get you out!

He can hear a female voice about 50 metres away from him, weak and feeble. Recognising it, he approaches its owner - a naked, frozen, half-dead Sakura, her usually golden skin a pale blue along with her lips. BLAM! BLAM! He fires two shots at the chains holding her up.

Collapsing the shoulder-stock of his shotgun and slinging it on his back, Vincenzo releases her and she falls to the floor. He removes his sweater along with his ballistic helmet and body armour, slipping them onto her body as he wraps her in a blanket. She looks at him, smiling weakly.

He holds her close to him, using his body heat to warm her up. Holding Sakura leaves him defenceless and unable to use his weapons as he leaves the freezer, heading for the stairway to the sublevel above.

INT. CORRIDOR IN THE SUBTERRANEAN BASE – NIGHT – MOMENTS LATER

Vincenzo looks around him, scanning the area for enemies as he finds a dozen or so corpses laid out before him. Recognising Nikolai and Daisuke's handiwork, he smirks to himself as he runs through the corridor and into the freight elevator.

INT./EXT. ENTRANCE/EXIT TO THE SUBTERRANEAN BASE – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

He slams the button to take him up to the surface and holds Sakura close to him, the freight elevator moving VERY slowly. He looks nervous.

SAKURA

Vincenzo... don't... leave me.

VINCENZO

I'm not leaving you, Sakura. I'm going to take you back to base and get you warmed up.

The freight elevator FINALLY reaches the surface and Vincenzo bolts out of there with Sakura in his arms.

EXT. SUMMIT – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Vincenzo exits the base and runs towards his familiar-looking whirlybird, rendezvousing with Nikolai and Daisuke. He opens the doors to the passenger area and lays her down carefully before climbing into the pilot's seat.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Vincenzo flips switches like a man possessed as he engages the whirlybird's twin engines, its dual rotor blades sparkling and whirring loudly along with its multicolour night lights flashing into action.

VINCENZO

Nikolai, watch Sakura until we get back to base. Daisuke, try to keep her warm and give her first-aid if you have to!

DAISUKE

She's going into shock, Vincenzo – if we don't get her somewhere warm soon, then she'll die of hypothermia.

VINCENZO

How soon?

NIKOLAI

2, maybe 3 hours maximum.

Vincenzo takes this in for a moment before loudly swearing in Italian, punching the digital control panel before him as he regains his composure.

VINCENZO

Then we'll have to take the express route – through the mountains!

Driving the twin engines to full throttle, he pulls up, looking determined.

EXT. SUMMIT – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

The whirlybird ascends into the air and flies into the night Sky, heading towards the Moon as it disappears into the dark blue Horizon.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE – THE NEXT DAY

The Sun is rising in the Sky, slowly illuminating the dark blue Horizon as the helicopter lands on an improvised helipad, its doors opening to reveal the boys exiting the whirlybird and all helping out Sakura as the chopper whines into silence. Three figures, however, are waiting for them – Helia, Erik and Rainer. The boys are too tired to fight.

HELIA

Congratulations, Vincenzo Corbucci.

VINCENZO

You must be Rosh's daughter.

HELIA

That I am...

(Indicating Sakura)

...may I... please?

Vincenzo looks at Helia for a moment before glancing down at Sakura's fading form. He looks up at Helia, handing over the Japanese girl's cold body with a nod.

VINCENZO

Please help her – the thought of losing her would destroy me.

Helia and Rainer walk away with Sakura's body, leaving only Erik, who greets the remaining mercenaries in Swedish.

INT. DRIVE ROOM OF THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE – DAY

Erik and the mercenaries enter the base as they remove their winter gear and settle into the drive room, sitting at the central white round table.

ERIK

She'll be fine. Helia saved my life twice – she'll save hers, too.

NIKOLAI

Who the fuck are you?

ERIK

I'm Erik Drakenberg, former musician turned lawyer... and I need your help just as much as you need ours.

DAISUKE

Project Athena, right? Lovisa Drakenberg?

ERIK

(Surprised)

Yes.

DAISUKE

Sakura was part of it, too.

VINCENZO

I scored one better: when I was on my way to bust you out, I accidentally stumbled onto their radio frequency and I got the location of their base of operations.

Erik looks at Vincenzo, barely containing his excitement.

ERIK

Where? Where is it!?

VINCENZO

I checked the coordinates: 48 degrees longitude, latitude around 9.

DAISUKE

That's right in the heart of Western Europe.

VINCENZO

Right – Hohenzollern Castle in Germany, near the town of Hechingen.

ERIK

Then that's where we're going.

His eyes narrow slightly with determination.

EXT. CITY SKYLINE – THE NEXT DAY

SUPER: "HECHINGEN, BADEN-WÜRTTEMBERG, GERMANY"

Vincenzo's chopper soars through the German medieval town as the Sun continues its descent, the Horizon now a threatening reddish-orange-yellow as the clouds appear to set the Sky on fire.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

I can't get too close to the castle – I'll have to drop you off a little further away. From there on in, you're going to have to make your way to the Summit. Nikolai, Daisuke, I want you guys to protect Sakura and Erik at all costs – if you need any help, then call me on the radio.

Nikolai and Daisuke reply in the affirmative in their respective languages.

EXT. CLEARING — DAY — CONTINUOUS

The chopper lands and Nikolai and Daisuke dismount, armed and ready. Nikolai watches Vincenzo's helicopter leave, acknowledging its departure in Russian before turning to face his entourage. Daisuke is looking through his binoculars.

NIKOLAI

Daisuke, how far is it to the top of
Mount Hohenzollern?

He lowers his binoculars, spotting Hohenzollern Castle sitting tall and proud on the eponymous mountain, and turns to face Nikolai.

DAISUKE

5, maybe 10 minutes if we take our
time and don't mind scanning for
traps, Nikolai.

He draws his SMG/PDW carefully and looks at Sakura and Erik calmly.

NIKOLAI

OK, let's go. Remember... it's Kana's
mind out there — expect sickness.

DAISUKE

You don't say.

They head into the forest, striding into the ominous woodland.

EXT. BLACK FOREST — EVENING

Nikolai is on point, his eyes darting from side to side cautiously, with Daisuke watching Erik and Sakura, who look worried. He stops and turns to face them.

DAISUKE

Are you OK?

Sakura sighs and nods, replying in the affirmative in Japanese as she regains her composure, while Erik, on the other hand, is struggling to contain his contrasting anxiety and excitement.

ERIK

I've got a bad feeling about this.

Daisuke nods understandingly and approaches Erik while Sakura looks at him with a look equalling the phrase "You had to say that, didn't you?".

DAISUKE
We're going to make it, Erik. Your
sister's going to be OK.

Erik looks back, his eyes alight with fear, guilt and terror.

ERIK
What if she gets taken away from me
again?

DAISUKE
She's not - we're going to save
Lovisa and kick Kana's bottom so hard
that the next aspiring mad scientist
is going to feel it. Come on.

Erik looks at Daisuke for a moment before nodding in acquiescence and replying in the affirmative in Swedish.

EXT. HOHENZOLLERN CASTLE - EVENING

SUPER: "HOHENZOLLERN CASTLE"

The castle sits tall and proud atop the eponymous mountain.

INT. KANA'S OFFICE - EVENING

Lovisa, now conditioned, trained and groomed for combat, is lying on a recliner, the human marionette in a deep sleep. Kana approaches her and smirks, kneeling beside her.

KANA
Wake up, Lovisa.

Lovisa's eyes click open, staring ahead, as if possessed, the brainwashed girl sitting up to face her new superior officer. Her blue eyes are now cold and steely, her blonde hair in a ponytail as Gonta approaches her nervously.

GONTA
How do you feel, Miss Drakenberg?

A pair of bright red ruby earrings hang from each of her ear lobes, hiding an experimental radio transceiver tuned to her brain's frequency.

LOVISA

I feel... fine.

Her voice is as cold and sharp as her new persona.

KANA

Lovisa Adela Drakenberg, you were trained to deal with a delicate issue. The natural balance of power in the world has gone wrong... and I need you to put it right again.

LOVISA

What do you mean?

GONTA

I'm not the best person to talk to about this... but I know someone who does.

The door to Gonta's office opens, revealing a robed figure – in actuality, Shang Si in disguise.

SHANG SI

You are the only one who can help suppress our current threat.

(Lovisa raises an eyebrow suspiciously)

A group of ragtag mercenaries are threatening to subvert freedom of speech and freedom of choice – cultural terrorists, if you like. These people work on a global scale.

LOVISA

I don't work cheap.

KANA

I know. How does 1 Million Swedish Krona sound?

Shang Si smiles as he speaks, putting down Lovisa's weapons – a knife and her Serbo-Tokarev handgun – on Gonta's desk, much to his distress. Looking at her weapons, Lovisa considers the opportunity before nodding in acquiescence.

LOVISA

(Picking up her weapons and holstering them)

OK, I'll do it.

SHANG SI
One more exercise before your
mission. Good luck.

LOVISA
Thanks, but I don't need luck.

She gets to her feet and leaves Kana's office.

EXT. CASTLE ENTRANCE – EVENING

The quartet emerge from a nearby clearing in the forest to finally reach the main gate of the fabled Hohenzollern Castle, the medieval eagle's nest towering over them, imposing and assuring at the same time, all brickwork and stone masonry.

NIKOLAI
So this is Kana's HQ... well, she's
nothing if not ostentatious. Let's
go.

DAISUKE
I never thought I'd be glad to hear
you say that.

Nikolai laughs.

NIKOLAI
I'll try not to make it a habit.

DAISUKE
The feeling is mutual.

They head into the castle, the quartet now looking and feeling determined as they breach the threshold.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD – EVENING

The courtyard is empty and quiet, almost desolated. Nikolai is scanning the area furiously, his eyeballs darting from left to right continuously, while Daisuke observes the sight before him calmly. Erik and Sakura draw their respective weapons (SIG P226 and Yugo/Serbo-Tokarev handguns), ready to tackle any incoming threat.

They split up and head off in opposite directions – Nikolai and Sakura head to the upper level of the castle, while Daisuke and Erik remain on the lower level.

EXT. CASTLE UPPER LEVEL – EVENING

Nikolai and Sakura walk through the medieval superstructure, the former keeping his Kalashnikov assault rifle raised and ready while the latter assumes a fighting pose with her semiautomatic pistol ready.

SAKURA

What is this place, Nikolai?

NIKOLAI

One of the most influential and important monuments in European history, Sakura – it served as the imperial seat of the House of Hohenzollern for generations – nowhere near as powerful as the Habsburg Dynasty, though.

Sakura nods and replies in the affirmative in Japanese as Nikolai remains alert, never letting his guard down – a faint cry of pain catches their attention.

SAKURA

What's that?

NIKOLAI

What?

The cry is heard again, this time louder and more agonised.

SAKURA

That.

Nikolai's eyes widen slightly as panic deprives him of the power of rationality.

NIKOLAI

Oh, shit. Sakura, come with me – quickly!

He runs off with Sakura in hot pursuit, the two of them following the source of the noise as they descend a spiral stairway.

INT. CASTLE CATACOMBS – EVENING – CONTINUOUS

Nikolai enters followed by Sakura, the Afro-Siberian scanning the area as he tries to remain calm.

NIKOLAI

Hello? Can anyone hear me?

His response is met with a painful yell, which echoes throughout the catacombs. He turns to Sakura and indicates with his head before running towards the voice's direction. They find a man slumped on the floor, leaning on the wall to keep himself upright... it's Gonta!

He looks up to see Nikolai and Sakura, relief crossing his face as he clutches his midsection in pain, his white clothing stained red with his own blood.

GONTA

Thank God you're here! You've got to get me out of here quickly.

Nikolai kneels beside Gonta and hoists him up with Sakura's help.

NIKOLAI

Try to relax, you'll be fine.

GONTA

She... left me here to die. Please, you must stop her.

SAKURA

(In Japanese, to Gonta)

We'll get you out of here first, and then we'll take care of her. Nikolai?

Understanding, Nikolai activates his radio.

NIKOLAI

Vincenzo, it's Nikolai. Do you read me? Over.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Yes, I read you, Nikolai. What's up?

NIKOLAI

We've got a survivor – he's bleeding quite badly. We need you here NOW.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

I'm on my way. Out.

Nikolai and Sakura try to help Gonta as they walk back to the spiral stairway leading up to the outside world.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD – EVENING – CONTINUOUS

Daisuke and Erik are present, the former aiming his SMG/PDW into the distance while the latter tries to hide his anxiety, keeping his Swiss-made handgun raised and ready. Suddenly, something zips past them from behind – Erik turns around, scanning his eyeballs from left to right as he eventually calls Daisuke's name, who turns around.

DAISUKE
What is it, Erik?

ERIK
Something or... someone... is here.

DAISUKE
Where?

ERIK
I don't know – they zipped past us.

DAISUKE
Well, where did they go?

ERIK
That way, I think.

He indicates with his head – Daisuke looks at Erik for a moment before nodding.

DAISUKE
OK, let's have a look, and keep your eyes peeled.

ERIK
You don't say.

They head in the zipping figure's general direction – there is a deep, abiding silence for several seconds. Erik yells as he is hit from behind, dropping his handgun! Daisuke gets out of the way at the last minute with a well-timed diving somersault, the blur avoiding his gunshots with lightning agility. He gets to his feet as the figure stops to reveal herself... it's a brainwashed Lovisa! She approaches her downed brother.

LOVISA
Hello, Erik... it's been a long time.

ERIK
Lovisa... is that you!?

LOVISA

Yes, dear brother... it's me... and now
I'm going to finish what I started.

He gets to his feet but his mind-controlled sister delivers a punch, which he counters with a blow of his own, causing her to wince in pain. He immediately feels remorseful.

ERIK

I'm sorry... I didn't mean to.

She gets up as if nothing had happened, her face a cold, icy stare as she stands before him.

INT. KANA'S HELICOPTER – EVENING

A lone Kana is present, watching Lovisa's fight from the safety of her private chopper, the Eurasian scientist looking calm and smug.

KANA

Initiate attack pattern Alpha, Miss
Drakenberg.

She has her pen and clipboard ready as Lovisa obeys her orders.

INT. CASTLE COURTYARD – NIGHT

It's now dark and the Moon is beginning to shine in the Sky, illuminating the blue Horizon as Lovisa attacks Erik repeatedly with a flurry of JKD moves.

ERIK

(In Swedish)

Lovisa, stop!

LOVISA

Die, Erik!

She continues attacking him, forcing him to evade her blows. Just then, Nikolai and Sakura emerge into the courtyard with a wounded Gonta, catching sight of the commotion.

NIKOLAI

What the fuck!?

Sakura, summoning her courage, strides towards her best friend and calls her name, causing the indoctrinated Scandinavian beauty to turn to face her.

LOVISA

You...!

SAKURA

Lovisa, it's me, Sakura.

LOVISA

I know who you are, traitor.

SAKURA

Traitor!? Lovisa, I'm your friend!

LOVISA

You WERE my friend... you shouldn't have joined this motley crew of inferior fighters and heretics.

Nikolai, incensed, raises his Kalashnikov assault rifle angrily.

NIKOLAI

(In Russian,
screaming)

WHO THE FUCK ARE YOU TO CALL ME
INFERIOR, YOU INSOLENT WOMAN!?

ERIK

Nikolai, no!

Vincenzo's voice via the radio cuts the tension once again.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

I'm at the main gate – come on. Over.

DAISUKE

I'm on my way. Out.

Nikolai, after a great effort, lowers his AK and exhales sharply, gritting his teeth as he and Daisuke turn to leave, the two men supporting Gonta – Nikolai turns back to face Sakura as he leaves.

NIKOLAI

Sakura, come on!

DAISUKE

It's OK, Nikolai... we've fought our war... let her fight hers.

Nikolai looks at Sakura for a moment worriedly before turning to face Daisuke. He nods understandingly before turning to face Sakura one more time.

NIKOLAI

Just don't get yourself killed, you
hear me?

They leave Sakura with the Drakenberg siblings, a sad reunion taking place as the air is thick with tension. The two siblings fight each other, occasionally dodging or blocking each other's blows.

LOVISA

(In Swedish)

*All my life I thought you were
helping me... when you were really
hindering my potential.*

ERIK

What do you mean? I don't understand.

LOVISA

*Your luxurious rock star lifestyle
while I toiled away as your personal
assistant, you keeping tabs on every
man I spoke to, and of course, our
joint upbringing.*

ERIK

*I was trying to keep you safe! You
know what those people are like,
preying on young women like you.*

LOVISA

Kana told me everything, Erik.

ERIK

Lovisa, Kana is evil!

(Pause)

*You weren't always like this. You
were a sweet girl everyone loved.*

Lovisa looks at Erik with mild confusion.

INT. KANA'S HELICOPTER – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Kana looks at the monitor showing Lovisa's fight with Erik as she finishes taking her notes and speaks into a desktop microphone.

KANA

Remember your orders, Lovisa
Drakenberg – seek-locate-destroy.
Defeat the target, Priority 1.
Remember, you are a machine.

(MORE)

KANA (cont'd)
Machines feel nothing. Initiate
attack pattern Delta.

She smirks cruelly, enjoying the display before her.

BACK TO:

INT. CASTLE COURTYARD – NIGHT

For a moment, it seems that Erik is about to break through to Lovisa, but her radio earrings glow a bright blood red and her face hardens once more.

LOVISA
*Not anymore. Acquiring target:
attacking Erik Drakenberg.*

Erik's eyes widen slightly as he dodges a deadly spin kick, causing him to curse in Swedish as he gets to his feet.

ERIK
Lovisa, stop!

Lovisa jabs him in the torso before striking him in the gut followed by a kick in the groin, sending him falling to the floor.

LOVISA
*I am Lovisa Drakenberg, the
invincible warrior.*

Erik's face contorts into an agonised expression of male pain as he lies on the floor clutching his gentleman's area, looking at Lovisa fearfully, who stands above him with her dark soulless eyes. Sakura, unable to stand and watch any longer, delivers a kick right into Lovisa's hips. Lovisa turns to face Sakura in mild disbelief.

SAKURA
*I'm sorry, Lovisa, but you leave me
no choice.*

Sakura drops her gun and raises her arms in a martial arts pose as Lovisa narrows her eyes slightly, her voice a robotic monotone.

LOVISA
*Target acquired: attack Sakura
Noguchi.*

Sakura, sensing Lovisa's preemptive strike, dodges her airborne kick and delivers a punch to her midsection.

Lovisa yells in pain, clutching her stomach in agony before glaring up at the Oriental beauty... and a catfight ensues, pitting the former friends against each other.

Lovisa eventually prevails, knocking out her ex-best friend with a punch to the nose. Ignoring her former friend, Lovisa turns her attention to face Erik, standing before her brother coldly.

KANA (V.O.)

Target defeated. Well done, Miss Drakenberg – complete your mission. Goodbye, Erik... thanks to you, I've made the perfect fighter, free from self-discipline and emotional restraint. Do you think there is anything left of the girl you knew in there?

(Pause)

Say goodbye to your sister... and hello to oblivion.

Lovisa's radio earrings start glowing, flickering on and off, causing her face to contort into a look of confusion and pain as Vincenzo's voice is audible on the rebels' radios.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Lovisa, betray that order. Is this what you really want? You're really going to side with a woman who basically ruined not only your life but your brother's, too? What about Sakura? Does your friendship with her not mean anything? You say she betrayed you... she didn't. We happened to find her first and spare her the fate you were given. I know this might sound strange, but your brother loves you. Please, forgive him... and forgive your friend. You're a good person, Lovisa Drakenberg – don't let your shining light be extinguished by the Devil's High Priestess.

Lovisa winces as she tries to control the voice in her head, clutching her face in pain.

LOVISA

No! Shut up! Get out of my head!
Please!

Erik gets to his feet as he realises what is going on. Lovisa lets out a LOUD shriek of azure agony, her whole body freezing and tensing up as her mind flashes back to her capture and brainwashing.

She passes out beside Sakura, crumbling to the floor as her form goes limp. Erik runs up to Lovisa's body and notices the fading earrings, removing and throwing them away contemptuously before trying to help his sister.

ERIK
(In Swedish)
Lovisa! Lovisa, wake up, please!

Lovisa groans wordlessly as her eyes open slowly.

LOVISA
Where... am I?

ERIK
You're safe... you're OK.

She looks up to see Erik, the younger Drakenberg sibling sitting up to examine him.

LOVISA
Who are you?

ERIK
It's me, Erik. I'm your brother.

Her confusion turns to a slight smile as she remembers, hugging him tightly.

LOVISA
Erik! You came for me!

ERIK
*I've been looking for a long time,
Lovisa... a VERY long time.*

He lets his tears fall freely as he just hugs his younger sister, helping her up as the Moon shines down on them. He then wakes up Sakura, helping up the Japanese beauty.

LOVISA
Where am I? What happened to me?

ERIK
You don't remember?

LOVISA
No... not much.

Erik nods sympathetically and draws his radio.

ERIK
 (In English)
 Vincenzo, it's Erik. Mission
 accomplished.

A familiar voice is heard behind him.

ALEJANDRO (V.O.)
 Not yet, Erik... it's not over yet.

They turn around to see the source of the voice – a white humanoid silhouette solidifying into a full-colour hologram simulation of the Peruvian-Australian ghost complete with gold Ace of Spades on his forehead. Erik's eyes narrow in a tranquil fury.

ERIK
 You bastard...! You're responsible for
 this!

He moves to attack the hologram but Lovisa stops him.

LOVISA
 Erik, don't! Please.

He glares at Alejandro for a moment before looking at Lovisa, his facial expression softening slightly before turning back to face the hard-light hologram.

ERIK
 OK, Alejandro... you've bought yourself
 some time... for now.

Alejandro joins the others as they walk away from the desolated castle and head for Vincenzo's helicopter as it lands in the castle courtyard.

EXT. CASTLE ENTRANCE – NIGHT

Vincenzo's helicopter whirs into life once again and begins to ascend into the black winter night Sky once again, heading into the distant Horizon as it disappears into the shining Moon.

VINCENZO (V.O.)
 OK, back to base.

HELIA (V.O.)
 Not yet, Vincenzo.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

How do you mean?

HELIA (V.O.)

Rainer and I need to go back to OUR base – there's a plane waiting for us at the airport in Stuttgart, ready to take us back to Tbilisi.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

What are you talking about? We're in this together.

HELIA (V.O.)

We are, but we can't help you anymore – not officially.

RAINER (V.O.)

I'm afraid she's right, *Signor* Corbucci. You're on your own from now on. We'll look after Doctor Takahashi, don't worry. Kana's base of operations is in Hong Kong – you must go there and stop her. I know you can do it.

Vincenzo sighs and replies in the affirmative in Italian.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE – NIGHT

Vincenzo's whirlybird hovers over an improvised helipad briefly before descending, eventually landing on the soft ground below. Nikolai and Daisuke exit, leading Erik and Lovisa into the base.

INT. LOVISA'S SLEEPING QUARTERS – NIGHT

Lovisa is alone, removing her tight-fitting outfit, discarding it with a combination of contempt and relief as she strips down to a white sleeveless top and black underwear. A knock on her door is heard as she quickly slips on a pair of sweatpants.

LOVISA

Come in!

The door opens to reveal Erik, looking nervous. She smiles at him, the two siblings finally reunited after nearly a third of a century apart.

ERIK
 (In Swedish)
Hi, Lovisa.

LOVISA
Hello, Erik.

ERIK
I'm not interrupting anything, am I?

LOVISA
No... please come in.

He enters and closes the door behind him.

ERIK
I've missed you. It's been a long time.

LOVISA
I know... 30 years. I see you've been looking after yourself – you haven't changed much.

ERIK
Neither have you, dear sister.

LOVISA
I was placed in cryogenic stasis for 25 of those years... how do you think I stayed young?

(Hugging him tightly)
We need to stop Kana, Erik – who knows how many girls she'll kidnap and hypnotise?

ERIK
It's not going to happen, Lovisa – after the Rhodium Golems get us to Hong Kong, I'm going to their HQ and I'll put everyone responsible in a full body cast.

Erik looks firm in his resolve as he and Lovisa exchange glances.

INT. KANA'S OFFICE – EVENING

The sound of a ringing telephone is heard briefly before it is picked up. Kana and Shang Si look at each other on their monitors, engaging in a tense Skype call.

SHANG SI

You took your time, Doctor.

KANA

I've been busy, sir. You know how it is.

SHANG SI

No, I don't. Would you be so kind as to explain why one of our key members and several troops of our PMC have died so quickly recently?

KANA

They knew the risks when they signed on the dotted line. The Plutonium Phoenixes must be ready for anything, even death.

SHANG SI

I hope you know what you're doing, Doctor. I have pulled many strings to help you in your mission. My patience is wearing VERY thin, Kana. Personally, I think using Lovisa Drakenberg as a test subject was a mistake. Sakura Noguchi was a far better candidate if you ask me.

KANA

No. She was perfect.

SHANG SI

Just make sure those rabble-rousing rebels are stopped – this is your final warning.

KANA

They will be. Count on it.

SHANG SI

I hope so... for both of our sakes. Goodbye, Doctor.

Click, dial tone.

INT. DRIVE ROOM OF THE RHODIUM GOLEMS' BASE – THE NEXT DAY

The Rhodium Golems and their allies are seated around the round white table, looking at notes about Project Athena.

NIKOLAI

Let's get down to business: we've got the coordinates for the Iron Bitch's base of operations.

(Revealing a printed map)

They're located atop Lion Rock Hill in Kowloon, Hong Kong. Shang Si's tower is surrounded by a hexagonal containment wall... hell, the base itself looks like a bloody ziggurat made of jam jars.

Vincenzo laughs.

DAISUKE

The tower isn't on any of the official maps for tourists and it's accessible mainly via air insertion. There is a way to reach the tower on land but we haven't been able to identify the route.

SAKURA

OK, that makes sense.

LOVISA

What's the plan, then?

VINCENZO

It's quite simple - Lovisa, you and Erik infiltrate the complex with Alejandro, while Nikolai and Daisuke perform an aerial assault as a diversion - we'll draw their fire and give you a chance to sneak inside.

NIKOLAI

Once the perimeter is breached... and enough bastards are dead... Daisuke and I will break in from the rooftop and make our way to the lobby.

DAISUKE

Once we've all rendezvoused, we'll take on Kana herself. There should be an express elevator which should take us to her inner sanctum.

SAKURA

Hang on, what about me? Am I just meant to sit on the sidelines and ruffle my hair?

NIKOLAI

No, Sakura – your role is to keep Vincenzo in check, stop him from being too heroic.

Vincenzo curses in Italian in disbelief and looks insulted as Nikolai chuckles.

ERIK

Nikolai, can you drop us off on the shoreline of Kowloon Bay near the East Victoria Harbour? There's a station nearby. They wouldn't suspect us since we're civilians, although Lovisa's martial arts background might just come in handy.

NIKOLAI

No problem. We leave in 2 hours.

They exchange knowing looks.

EXT. CITY SKYLINE – EVENING

SUPER: "HONG KONG"

The Sun is beginning to set, the Horizon turning a faint yellow. Nikolai is on the port side, aiming his Kalashnikov assault rifle into the urban jungle below, while Daisuke is on the starboard side with his FN M249 light machine gun ready. Vincenzo is in the front with Sakura.

VINCENZO

We're approaching Shang Si's tower!
Coordinates: 22.35 degrees longitude,
latitude around 114.19!

NIKOLAI

Good! I can't wait to stick the barrel of my AK up his anus and pull the fucking trigger till it either goes "click" or all his internal organs are shredded, whichever comes first!

DAISUKE

You'd probably fire your grenade launcher up there if you could, wouldn't you?

NIKOLAI

You'd better believe it!

Vincenzo opts to remain silent as he pilots the helicopter. After a while, Sakura points to something in the distance – a unique building standing tall and proud on a green base – Shang Si's tower – sleek, sexy and soulless, all glass and stainless steel, a futuristic ziggurat composed of high-tech hexagons with a bottleneck-like top.

SAKURA

There it is – the Dark Citadel!

VINCENZO

I see it! Get ready, everyone!

He steers the whirlybird with deliberate precision towards the skyscraper. As if on cue, Nikolai spots a group of PMC troops on one of the office levels of the tower, scanning for them. The black Siberian waits for a moment before opening fire, firing a volley of short, controlled bursts at the defenders.

NIKOLAI

(In Russian)

It has begun!

Daisuke holds down the trigger on his LMG as he struggles to control the weapon's recoil. The helicopter suddenly swerves to one side to avoid a rocket, sending Nikolai falling out of the open passenger door but Daisuke is able to grab him and pull him to safety at the last minute. Nikolai thanks Daisuke in Russian.

DAISUKE

Vincenzo, circle around while Nikolai and I reload!

VINCENZO

You got it, Daisuke!

He does as instructed while Sakura watches Nikolai and Daisuke carefully, the ex-Spetsnaz officer's body language worrying the Japanese beauty slightly before turning to face the Japanese ex-Gendarme, who loads his weapon more calmly by comparison.

NIKOLAI

OK, we're ready! Vincenzo, get us back into the fray!

VINCENZO

Yes, Nikolai!

He does as he is told as the chopper gets closer to the tower once again and the firefight continues.

Nikolai fires from the hip of his Kalashnikov rifle, while Daisuke aims down the sights of his LMG, the Japanese ex-Gendarme calm and collected, in stark contrast to the angry Siberian, who screams profanities in Russian.

Vincenzo narrowly avoids an RPG blast, prompting Nikolai to fire a 40mm grenade at the bastards, blowing them up and destroying their improvised turret in the process.

INT. KANA'S OFFICE – NIGHT

Kana reaches into her drawer and pulls out a plasma pistol with a trio of LEDs in a traffic light configuration – the green LED illuminates as she cocks the photon handgun, also known to the 5 Elements as a Slow-Fire Protector.

KANA

OK, Rhodium Golems... come and get me.

Kana lets out an evil smile as she looks at an orange USB flash drive in her hand, inserting it into the computer. The monitor switches over to an incoming Skype call from Shang Si, which she answers as his face appears on the screen.

SHANG SI

The invaders have repealed our forces, Doctor. We must initiate the self-destruct sequence and evacuate the base immediately.

KANA

No. I have a better idea. Let them in.

Shang Si looks slightly confused by Kana's suggestion.

SHANG SI

Are you sure that is wise?

KANA

We don't want them damaged, do we? You worry too much, Shang Si.

SHANG SI

Somebody has to.

KANA

They will fall – I can assure you... and Project Athena will bring in a new era for the human race.

She terminates the connection before switching back to the humanoid model on the screen, letting out an evil smile.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – NIGHT

Shang Si's tower by this point is half-destroyed from explosions and gunfire. Nikolai and Daisuke reload their weapons and pack some additional ammunition – Daisuke swaps his LMG for his CZ SMG as he turns to face Vincenzo, who lands on a helipad on the rooftop of the tower.

DAISUKE

We're going in – Vincenzo, stay in the vicinity in case we need you.

NIKOLAI

Come on, Daisuke – let's show these psycho scientists how real soldiers kick anus!

Nikolai and Daisuke disembark as Vincenzo watches them leave, sighing wordlessly before taking the chopper up into the air once again. He begins to fly away from the scene, glancing back as he sees his friends and allies enter Shang Si's tower.

ERIK (V.O.)

Vincenzo, Nikolai, Daisuke – Erik here. We breached the perimeter of the base!

Vincenzo waits several seconds for Nikolai and/or Daisuke to reply before taking action.

VINCENZO

Good work, Erik – are Lovisa and Alejandro OK?

ERIK (V.O.)

Lovisa's fine – you don't need to worry too much about Alejandro.

VINCENZO

No shit. How'd you get there?

ERIK (V.O.)

A subterranean entrance thanks to a little out-of-the-box thinking from Alejandro. Looks like being dead has its benefits. We'll meet you topside. Vincenzo?

VINCENZO

Yes, Erik?

ERIK

No heroics. Over and out.

Erik terminates the connection before Vincenzo can respond. Vincenzo screams a series of profanities in Italian as he turns to look at Sakura.

VINCENZO

(In Japanese)

Not this time... not this fucking time,
Sakura.

Sakura looks back at Vincenzo, sensing his frustration.

INT. WHITE CORRIDOR – NIGHT

RAT-TA-TAT-TA-TAT! The sound of gunfire from Nikolai's Kalashnikov assault rifle echoes and reverberates as he kicks a door open, the Afro-Siberian entering a hexagonal corridor with his AK-74M aimed into the distance, with Daisuke following him close behind, the Japanese man's CZ Scorpion submachine gun armed and ready.

NIKOLAI

As far as I'm concerned, everyone in this building that isn't Erik, Lovisa or Alejandro is a hostile, so don't hesitate to open fire, OK?

DAISUKE

OK... I just hope Vincenzo has the sense to get out of town if this goes South.

Nikolai turns to face Daisuke with a surprised look on his face.

NIKOLAI

Sense? Vincenzo? You do know we're talking about a man who falls in love with every pretty woman in danger, right?

(Chuckles)

Come on, let's kick some Rhodium rectum.

Some progress into the corridor, Nikolai squints slightly as he can see what appears to be a shimmering outline, something transparent which appears to distort the scenery behind it. A pair of glowing red eyes reveal themselves accompanied by a digitised growling sound.

Nikolai fires a volley of bullets into the invisible creature.

Losing its stealth camouflage, its true form is revealed to be a humanoid cyborg with a silver body and golden accents complete with a gold visor, a pair of plasma blades fused to its wrists in lieu of hands.

Nikolai aims at the thing's head, unloading his high-velocity rounds into the cyborg, which continues unfazed for a few seconds before finally keeling over, seemingly dead.

A group of cyborgs short in stature emerge from the shadows, phasing into visibility, their faces blank and expressionless complete with the same metallic bodies and black soulless eyes, a reddish-bronze forehead doubling as a bull's eye and a gaping, fanged mouth.

Some of them teleport to safety around the men, using their dual plasma boomerangs (one in each hand).

DAISUKE

Nikolai, look out!

He shoots out a pair of plasma boomerangs heading for Nikolai's eyes. Nikolai thanks Daisuke in Russian as he dodges a spin kick from one of the ninja cyborgs and the two men soon emerge unscathed. Examining their fallen adversaries, Daisuke can see that some of them are still very much alive.

To both men's horror, there is indeed a living person inside the destroyed exoskeleton, the futuristic armour revealing a young woman with a bald head, her eyes black and soulless and her skin pale as bone. Daisuke looks away briefly in disgust.

NIKOLAI

Oh, God... I think I'm going to fucking puke...

(Into his radio)

Vincenzo? It's me, Nikolai. I need you to do us a favour.

DAISUKE

If you can call it that.

Nikolai laughs humourlessly.

NIKOLAI

Check out what we're sending you.

There is a brief pause before Vincenzo's voice is heard on the other end of the line.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

I got it – these are Mercury Griffins you're dealing with. Real fucked up history, too. These cybernetic conscripts were once human beings, all young women aged between 13 and 23...

NIKOLAI

...let me guess: test subjects for Project Athena?

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Former test subjects. Failed test subjects... at least failed in Kana's eyes. What you just took down were the Gamma types with stealth camouflage and lightsabres, and Beta models with feline agility and plasma boomerangs, complete with teleportation abilities.

DAISUKE

I suppose there's also an Alpha model?

VINCENZO (V.O.)

(In English)

Yes. The Alpha variants have stealth camouflage which also makes them immune to physical damage like ghosts, and are built like brick shithouses – these guys can decapitate you with a single slap to the cheek, so watch out. Their exposed torso is their weakness.

(In Italian)

Good luck.

He terminates the connection as Nikolai and Daisuke look at each other, their faces struggling to find an appropriate expression before ultimately settling on a combination of disgust and horror.

Both men load new magazines into their weapons silently before heading into the bulk of the installation where they are greeted by muscular-looking cyborg zombies with dark soulless eyes and triangular cavities in their torsos protecting their weakness – a glowing cadmium heart.

NIKOLAI

Daisuke, the Geiger counter's going off the scale – keep your distance!

Daisuke complies, replying in the affirmative in both French and Japanese as he keeps his SMG aimed at the advancing bipedal nuclear reactors before him.

DAISUKE
Nikolai, shoot!

He and Daisuke do so, aiming squarely at the triangular cavities in the futuristic zombies' torsos. Daisuke goes full-automatic with the intent to cause terminal damage while Nikolai fires in short, controlled bursts, going for accuracy.

Some of the mutant cyborgs try to activate their stealth camouflage to become intangible, but their invisibility soon wears off – eventually, the cyborg soldiers are just piles of flesh and steel... and the boys reload their guns silently, cocking them simultaneously with deliberate force as they stride into the Dark Citadel, looking determined.

INT. MIND-WIPE CHAMBER – NIGHT

A trio of PMC troops enter, removing their helmets to reveal Alejandro and the Drakenberg siblings. Erik is enthralled by the high-tech machinery around him, while Alejandro simply looks at it remorsefully. Lovisa, on the other hand, feels her inner rage build up. She clenches her knuckles in white-hot anger, clutching a futuristic-looking Steyr AUG assault rifle with a grenade launcher.

LOVISA
(Darkly)
This is it. This is where it all
began 30 years ago.

Erik is more than slightly shocked by his little sister's anger as he steps forward, trying to pacify her.

ERIK
Lovisa... I'm so sorry.

Lovisa raises her bullpup weapon. Aiming squarely at the metal throne, she squeezes the trigger and unloads an entire 100-round magazine at both chair and supercomputer, gritting her teeth in a silent rage as she fires a grenade.

Consoles explode, computers sparkle with electricity, wires burst and glass shatters – nothing can stand up to the Swedish lioness's tranquil fury. The whole laboratory is engulfed in flames!

LOVISA
Let's go find that fucking bitch.

She discards her uniform as she reloads her rifle and walks out of the lab while Erik and Alejandro look at each other in bewilderment, removing their disguises and producing their pistols.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN LABORATORY – NIGHT

Nikolai and Daisuke are engaged in a fierce firefight, the Osaka native taking a bullet to the kneecap he falls behind cover, cursing in French and Japanese.

When the smoke clears and dust settles, Alejandro and the Drakenberg siblings arrive to see Daisuke patching himself up, removing the bullet from his extremity. He yells as they exchange knowing looks. Alejandro looks at the massacre before him remorsefully. The tension is defused by Vincenzo's voice emanating from Nikolai and Daisuke's radios.

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Vincenzo here. I've cleared the Executive Floor and I'm on my way down with Sakura. I don't give a damn if you told me to stay put – Lovisa and Erik need our help more than I do. Where are you?

LOVISA

We're in the basement beneath the tower, Vincenzo. Have you got Kana's location?

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Yes – there's a subbasement beneath you accessible only to personnel with Platinum-level security clearances.

NIKOLAI

Can you hack it?

VINCENZO (V.O.)

Already have done – the elevator should be on its way. Follow the red arrows – I'm coming as soon as I can. Out.

Nikolai and Daisuke break into a nearby weapons locker and start scavenging whatever ammunition they can find before leading the way. Alejandro remains behind for a moment, looking and feeling guilty as he witnesses the carnage before him. Nikolai's voice snaps him back to reality.

NIKOLAI (O.S.)
 Are you coming, Alejandro? Now's your
 chance to redeem yourself.

Alejandro thinks it over for a moment before replying in the affirmative in Spanish as he turns around to catch up with them, his face tightening up.

INT. SECRET LABORATORY – NIGHT

A lone Kana is present, smirking evilly as she taps her fingers calmly on her desk, examining her computer. She glances at a pair of double-doors before her, unfazed and unfettered.

INT. DARKENED CORRIDOR – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

The Rhodium Golems step out of the express elevator into a dimly-lit corridor illuminated with burning torches and decorated with a granite floor. They approach the double-doors, looking and feeling determined.

VINCENZO
 Stand back.

He shoots the double-doors once and kicks them open, leading the group into the laboratory.

INT. SECRET LABORATORY – NIGHT – CONTINUOUS

Erik bellows Kana's name as his eyes meet hers, the scientist rising from her chair, laughing evilly.

ERIK
 Something funny about dying?
 (Suddenly grabs Kana
 by the throat and
 starts choking the
 shit out of her
 with barely
 repressed rage)
 You disgusting piece of SHIT!! I.
 KNOW. EVERYTHING!!

Vincenzo intercedes as he and Lovisa step forwards, trying their best to restrain the angry ex-rock star.

VINCENZO
 Erik, stop! That's enough.

LOVISA

We've got her. It's going to be OK.

Erik looks at his sister and his friend as he tries to calm down, his anger giving way to realisation. They release him as he relaxes.

KANA

Your compassion... your empathy... is your undoing. Do you not see how your emotions blind you? They have cost you your sister, and they will cost you your life.

She approaches him but Nikolai and Daisuke raise their weapons, stopping her.

NIKOLAI

Don't even fucking think about it.

DAISUKE

Why'd you do it, Kana?

Kana looks at Daisuke icily before glancing back at Erik.

KANA

Wouldn't you like to know the truth? Lovisa truly was perfect – think about it: an impressionable young woman with an insecure personality thanks to her overprotective older brother, her demanding father and her passive mother. You, Erik Gunnar Cassiel Drakenberg, helped make Lovisa the way she is. You were the perfect big brother. You took her independence and self-reliance. I never choose a subject by mistake. Lovisa was thoroughly researched, and I ensured that she would be respected... and to my delight, I discovered she had very low self-esteem. She was far too easy to brainwash... who'd have thought your little sister would lose herself in trying to live up to your expectations...

(Smirking evilly)

...and it's all thanks to you.

Erik is shocked and visibly hurt by this revelation. Alejandro steps forward, the hard-light hologram finally gaining the courage to stand and fight.

ALEJANDRO

Rosh and Nadia know the truth,
Doctor. It's over.

Kana glares at Alejandro before shooting him with a hidden plasma pistol, damaging his light bee – he screams wordlessly, his face frozen in mid-scream as his form turns white before crackling away into silence, his light bee falling to the floor with a dull clunk – Erik picks it up and pockets it, looking and feeling remorseful.

SHANG SI (O.S.)

STOP!!

They all turn to face Shang Si, who enters the lab, looking firm and determined as he approaches Kana.

SHANG SI

You're fired, Doctor. I've had enough
of your abusive and manipulative
attitude.

Kana's eyes widen slightly in mild panic, showing fear for the first time.

KANA

Excuse me?

SHANG SI

You're out – pure and simple.

Kana's fear turns to anger as she suddenly raises her plasma pistol and shoots Shang Si in the chest twice, killing him instantaneously – he yells wordlessly as he falls to the floor, dead. Kana then slams her fist on a red push-button switch concealed under the desk – red warning lights start flashing accompanied by a blaring alarm.

COMPUTER (V.O.)

Attention: The emergency self-
destruct sequence has been activated.
The complex will be destroyed in 10
minutes.

Kana pushes another button – a hidden door slides open to reveal a humanoid figure made of a fusion of titanium and synthetic polymers, coloured silver – ATHENA ALPHA.

KANA

Allow me to introduce to you the
ultimate warrior: Athena Alpha.
Goodbye, Rhodium Golems... looks like
you're not so precious after all.

Kana turns to leave as she heads for the emergency exit. Athena Alpha's eyes glow red as it prepares to attack, targeting the Drakenberg siblings as its primary objectives. Erik and Lovisa prepare to fight Athena Alpha, the elder Drakenberg sibling still feeling guilty over Alejandro's holodeath as his younger sister drops her guns and raises her arms in a combat pose.

NIKOLAI

Daisuke, let's go!

DAISUKE

We can't leave Erik and Lovisa here – the place is rigged to self-destruct!

ERIK

We'll be fine! Just stop her!

They proceed to do as they're instructed – Sakura hesitates, however, remaining behind temporarily.

SAKURA

Try not to get yourselves killed, OK?
I'd miss you.

LOVISA

Same goes for you.

She and Lovisa exchange knowing smiles before a fierce hand-to-hand battle ensues between the brother-and-sister fighting team and the techno-warrior.

VINCENZO

Come on, Sakura... let's go.

Sakura turns around and breaks into a run with Vincenzo, following Nikolai and Daisuke.

INT. DARKENED CORRIDOR – NIGHT

The quartet run through the dimly-lit hallway, gunning down the remaining troopers foolish enough to engage in battle with them as they enter the express elevator, Nikolai slamming his large fist into the control panel as its double-doors close, Vincenzo killing a Plutonium Phoenix with a single well-aimed shotgun slug.

INT. ELEVATOR – NIGHT

The quartet look at each other, catching their breaths as the red warning lights flash on and off, the klaxon-like alarm blaring at maximum volume.

VINCENZO

Shit, I never thought I'd go out like this – saving the world while taking out Frankenstein's twisted descendant.

NIKOLAI

That's because you're not going after her – we are.

Vincenzo looks at Nikolai – before he can protest, Daisuke intercedes.

DAISUKE

You're the only one who can pilot the chopper, Vincenzo – at least one of us has to survive, to carry on the Rhodium Golems' legacy of mercenaries with morals... and that has to be you.

NIKOLAI

I'm afraid he's right. If you die, then we all die. If we can't cancel the self-destruct sequence, then one of us has to live to tell the tale. Besides, you and Sakura make a good couple.

Vincenzo looks angry, then upset, then nods his head in understanding as he realises they have a point.

VINCENZO

OK... just... don't die in vain.

He shakes hands with Daisuke before attempting to do the same with Nikolai, who responds with a hug instead. Vincenzo lets out a series of muffled grunts due to the Afro-Russian's tight grip. The doors open with a PING! as Nikolai releases Vincenzo.

NIKOLAI

Go... go and live your life, Vincenzo.

Vincenzo nods wordlessly before turning around and breaking into a run with Sakura. Now alone, Nikolai and Daisuke exchange knowing looks.

DAISUKE

Ready?

NIKOLAI

I thought you'd never ask.

They cock their weapons and stride out into the hallway, raising their guns as they scream loudly, opening fire.

INT. SECRET LABORATORY – MORNING

Despite his efforts, Erik is eventually knocked out, leaving Lovisa to fight the mechanical monstrosity alone, the techno-warrior mimicking her movements. After a brief battle, she decapitates the android with a well-timed spin-kick. Athena Alpha's circuits sparkle with electricity for a moment before it collapses on the floor, defeated. She looks at her downed adversary, feeling a sense of grim satisfaction.

COMPUTER (V.O.)

The base will self-destruct in 2 minutes.

The computer's voice snaps her back to reality as she goes to help Erik, waking up her brother as she helps him to his feet.

LOVISA

Erik, it's OK – it's over.

ERIK

Shit, my head... what's going on?

LOVISA

We have to get out of here – the place is going to blow.

Erik looks at Lovisa for a moment before an idea comes to his mind – he quickly draws his radio and activates it.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – MORNING

Vincenzo is eyeing up the camera angles carefully as Erik's voice comes from his radio.

ERIK (V.O.)

Erik to Vincenzo, come in!

He enables his own radio while concentrating on the monitor at the same time.

VINCENZO

Go ahead, Erik.

SWITCH BETWEEN ERIK/LOVISA AND VINCENZO.

ERIK

We did it – that... thing... is done for.
We need your help in disabling the
auto-destruct.

VINCENZO

OK, leave it to me.

ERIK

Hurry – we've got less than a minute
left.

Vincenzo does as he is told, typing on a computer keyboard at near-light speed as the monitor shows him a digital countdown timer flashing a threatening red with 1 minute of time left.

45 seconds: Vincenzo hacks into the 5 Elements' computer network.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN CAR PARK – MORNING

30 seconds: Nikolai and Daisuke pursue a fleeing Kana into a car park, opening fire on her remaining PMC troops as the Afro-Russian yells a string of profanities amidst the flashing lights and warbling sirens.

20 seconds: He lowers his AK in a moment of restrained anger as Kana escapes in a purple Audi sports car.

INT. SECRET LABORATORY – MORNING

15 seconds: Erik and Lovisa look at each other grimly, the younger Drakenberg sibling beginning to panic and hyperventilate as her elder brother holds her tightly.

LOVISA

I'm sorry, Erik.

ERIK

So am I, Lovisa... so am I.

They close their eyes and brace themselves for the imminent explosion.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – MORNING

10 seconds: Vincenzo is nearly done as Sakura looks at him anxiously.

SAKURA
 (In Japanese)
 Whatever you're going to do, do it
 fast!

Vincenzo executes a complex and elaborate command with just 5 seconds of time left as the countdown timer freezes, the display turning green as the alarms fade away and the red lights go out.

VINCENZO
 (In Italian)
 It's OK, we're clear!

INT. SECRET LABORATORY – MORNING – CONTINUOUS

As the white light of the lab is restored and the alarm fades into silence, Erik and Lovisa open their eyes apprehensively.

COMPUTER (V.O.)
 Self-destruct sequence cancelled –
 emergency evacuation procedure
 aborted.

They let go of each other and breathe a combined sigh of relief.

LOVISA
 Vincenzo, you did it!

VINCENZO (V.O.)
 You can thank me later – for now,
 come up to the rooftop and get
 aboard, both of you. Mission
 accomplished. Out.

Erik nods before remembering Alejandro's light bee, producing it from his pocket.

ERIK
 What about Alejandro? He... his...

VINCENZO (V.O.)
 I've backed up his personality disc –
 Helia and Rainer might be able to
 restore him. Come on.

He ends the transmission as Erik and Lovisa look at each other, smiling at each other as they leave the laboratory.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – MORNING

Vincenzo cycles through the camera angles... and spots a shot-up, semi-dented luxurious car escaping. The computer identifies the registration plate as he zooms in on the driver... Kana! An evil smile crosses his face.

VINCENZO
I've got you now.

Grabbing his Dragunov sniper rifle, he cocks it and bolts outside amidst the rising Sun.

EXT. ROOFTOP OF SHANG SI'S TOWER – MORNING – CONTINUOUS

Vincenzo disembarks from the helicopter and reaches the correct end of the tower's rooftop, aiming his sniper rifle VERY carefully as he tries to compose himself. Kana's car is escaping though a hidden route from a subterranean passage, heading into the forest – he grits his teeth slightly and narrows his eyes. He laughs mockingly before composing himself once again... his finger closes around the trigger... and he fires. BANG!

EXT. FOREST – MORNING – CONTINUOUS

The bullet hits one of Kana's car's tyres, causing her to swerve out of control slightly. Vincenzo fires two more shots – one at the fuel tank and another at a second tyre – as Kana's car swerves and crashes into a tree, exploding.

EXT. ROOFTOP OF SHANG SI'S TOWER – MORNING – CONTINUOUS

Vincenzo lowers his Dragunov sniper rifle calmly, smirking triumphantly as he activates his radio.

VINCENZO
It's over – the Iron Bitch has
corroded.

There is a pause before Nikolai's voice is heard on the other end of the line.

NIKOLAI (V.O.)
Vincenzo, you are a fucking diamond!

Vincenzo smiles.

VINCENZO
We're all diamonds, Nikolai. Come
on – we're getting out of here.

He terminates the connection just in time for Erik and Lovisa to exit onto the rooftop – Nikolai and Daisuke arrive a few seconds later with their weapons slung over their shoulders, exchanging smiles and thumbs-up with their friend and pilot.

NIKOLAI

The remaining Plutonium Phoenixes have either escaped or been taken out. I'm glad you made it, Erik.

Erik looks at Nikolai, smiling slightly.

ERIK

So am I.
(Pause)
What now?

NIKOLAI

We're going back to our base in the Scandinavian Mountains, if that's what you mean. You, on the other hand, are going to patch things up with your sister. Oh, and just to prevent something like this from happening again, you might want to work on giving her some space, comrade.

Nikolai laughs while Erik shoots him a mildly annoyed look as they board the helicopter.

EXT. GOLDMAN FAMILY MANSION – EVENING

The double-doors to the mansion open as the whirlybird lands on an improvised helipad, the Sun setting – Helia and Rainer stand in the main entrance. The crew disembark in silence. As they reach the mansion's distinctive and eclectic main entrance, Helia hugs Erik tightly, while Rainer approaches the exhausted mercenaries with a soothing smile.

RAINER

Well done, Rhodium Golems... very well done indeed. Please come inside – you must be tired.

He leads Erik and Lovisa into the mansion, with Helia following suit – Vincenzo, Nikolai, Daisuke and Sakura look at each other knowingly.

NIKOLAI

What about us, Vincenzo?

VINCENZO

We're done, Nikolai – we're not mercenaries anymore.

DAISUKE

OK – look after yourself and keep yourself alive, Vincenzo. We don't want to have to bail you out of prison again.

VINCENZO

Don't worry; I'm laying low for a long time. I'll put the base under lockdown just to be sure.

He chuckles at the irony before shaking hands with Nikolai and exchanging a smile with the Afro-Russian. Sakura looks at Vincenzo.

SAKURA

Vincenzo, can you give us a minute? I'll be with you soon.

VINCENZO

Yes, Sakura, of course – anything you say.

He heads into the mansion, while Sakura approaches Nikolai carefully and looks at him slightly guiltily.

SAKURA

Nikolai, I know we haven't exactly gotten on, you and I... and, in all fairness, I could understand why you didn't trust me... but I just want you to know that, all things considered... you're OK.

She tries to make eye contact with the dark-skinned titan before her, who looks back at the golden-skinned, raven-haired beauty with an appreciative smile.

NIKOLAI

Thanks, Sakura. You and Vincenzo deserve each other.

He shakes hands and exchanges a knowing smile with Sakura, who kisses him on the cheek, thanking him in Japanese before following Vincenzo into the mansion.

INT. MOUNTAIN HOME — MORNING

SUPER: "LORENZAGO DI CADORE, VENETO, ITALY — A WEEK LATER"

There is a ringing sound on Sakura's laptop computer — answering the call, she cannot believe her eyes! Erik and Lovisa are on the other end!

SAKURA
(Smiling brightly)
Hi!

ERIK
Sakura, is Vincenzo there?

SAKURA
(Raising a solitary
eyebrow)
No, why?

ERIK
I've got a business proposition for
him which he might find VERY
interesting.

LOVISA
Let's just say we want to meet and
chat for a while.

Sakura nods understandingly as she puts 2 and 2 together.

SAKURA
OK. I'll tell him.

She smiles and says goodbye to her friends in Japanese before terminating the connection. Sakura gets up and calls Vincenzo's name. He emerges, dressed in green and yellow.

VINCENZO
(In Japanese)
*I heard everything, Sakura. I don't
know — I just left the life last
week, I don't want to get dragged
into all that bullshit again.*

Sakura looks at him, switching on her charms for one of the few times in her life.

SAKURA
*Come on, Vincenzo... do it for Lovisa...
do it for me.*

She smiles, ruffling her jet-black hair in front of him and giving him the classic look reminiscent of a kitten or puppy – after several seconds, he finally relents as he locks eyes with his Oriental girlfriend.

VINCENZO

OK... all right, fine. Let's go.

Sakura flashes a wicked smile.

EXT. HELIPAD – AFTERNOON

Vincenzo's chopper stands on an improvised helipad as the dual rotor blades whir into life along with the helicopter's twin engines.

INT./EXT. VINCENZO'S HELICOPTER – DAY – CONTINUOUS

Sakura looks at Vincenzo with a slightly concerned expression, worried at his sudden confidence as he flicks the usual switches, bringing both the rotor blades and engines back to life in a mechanical symphony ready to be conducted and performed to a much wider audience than before.

SAKURA

Vincenzo, are you sure you want to pick them up in this? The authorities might get suspicious.

VINCENZO

Authorities? In my line of work, I don't listen to the authorities.

Vincenzo flips down his spectacles and engages the engines.

EXT. CITY SKYLINE – DAY

The pink and white Kazan Ansat helicopter whines into action as it ascends into the air, moving forwards before turning around and heading towards US as a flash of white light appears.

FADE TO BLACK

ROLL CLOSING CREDITS.

THE END