

NEOPOLIS

Episode 1: Gridrunners

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NEOPOLIS

"Gridrunners"

TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. SPYDER'S LAIR - NIGHT

SPYDER, a man in his 50s, wiry and intense, stands in a huge industrial loft space. High ceilings, brick walls, mesh glass windows that overlook a blurred cityscape.

Spyder wears a strange overall, interwoven with wires, micro electronics, optical devices. A tv shows footage of a strange sporting event:

ON THE SCREEN

A sports broadcast. Footage of a crew of female GRID-RUNNERS, combat athletes inside a city scape, overlaid with augmented reality data.

TV PRESENTER 1 (O.S.)

Last night's match between the Coyotes and the Betsies was quite the spectacle! The Betsies aren't known as a subtle crew but wow, they just hammered the Coyotes with brute force all night long.

Leather clad men, being hit by virtual laser fire and neon explosions...

BACK TO SCENE

The loft space is filled to the rafters with banks of mainframes, laptops... a maze of computer equipment.

Spyder approaches a chair in the center of the room.

TV PRESENTER 2 (O.S.)

That's right Karl. The Match looked boring! One sided! Over and done with! At one point the Betsies had the Coyotes running tail into a tiny courtyard. I thought this goose was cooked!

The chair is connected to a bank of Tvs and monitors hanging above it. One of the tvs shows the sports broadcast. The chair itself is hooked up to the various mainframes and computers around the loft. When Spyder sits down the broadcast image distorts.

TV PRESENTER 1 (O.S.)

We all did George! But then, suddenly, Betsies were falling over, left, right, center! A few Coyotes had been grabbing sniper ammo all night, and their best shooters were lined up high above. It was one crazy play, but it sure paid off! Four Coyotes took out all twenty-two Betsies in ten minutes flat. The rest was just mop up.

The chair features a keyboard and screen on a retractable arm. Spyder pulls it over and starts typing.

Other monitors above the chair show security camera footage of the loft. One monitor shows Spyder in detail:

ON THE SCREEN

After a few seconds of typing, a neon glow appears on Spyder's chest. AN INSECT'S LEG pushes out through the electronics on his body. A glowing, wire-frame insect appears. It is a virtual SPIDER.

TV PRESENTER 2 (O.S.)

(Distorted)

One of the matches of the seasZZZ-
ZZZZ-is why Neopolis was conceived.
The spectacZZZzz-amazing. We get
all the violenZZZzzz- ZZZzz-none
of the victimsZZZ-

The glowing spider scuttles along the wiring, to a mainframe, and disappears into it.

Spyder's body suddenly erupts with glowing insects. Spiders, bugs, moths, butterflies. They all enter different computers. A short while later they are all gone.

BACK TO SCENE

Spyder has stopped typing. He rises, and walks to the mesh glass windows. The outside view is blurred. The TV hisses static.

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. NEOPOLIS TRAIN STATION - MORNING

The platform is painted in bright colors: Yellow, blue, green. Modern and slick.

Posters show off names and images of Neopolis street gangs: The Betsies, The Two Tone Rude Boys, The Omni Street Warriors, The Coyotes.. a parade of so called "Grid-Runners".

DETECTIVE ELMORE HOWARD waits, getting wet and cold. He is the only person on the platform. Hunched over, hands in pocket.

Moments later a train arrives. Even sleeker and more colorful than the platform. Only one person gets off, exactly in the middle of the platform, right in front of detective Howard. JENNIFER JOHNSON, all dressed in black, trousers not a skirt, late 30s. She speaks with a hint of British upper class in her accent.

JENNIFER

Detective Elmore Howard? Neopolis PD?

Elmore looks around the empty station.

ELMORE

But.. But.. How did you know?

She holds out her hand.

JENNIFER

Jennifer Johnson. San Francisco police department. Don't call me J.J.

Elmore shakes her hand. His own hand is wearing a strange wiry glove.

ELMORE

Let's go Jennifer.

Elmore starts walking, Jennifer follows. There is a slight stiffness about his gait.

They pass a direction sign: "NEOPOLIS CHECKPOINT".

INT. CHECKPOINT TUNNEL - MORNING

The tunnel is empty, round. Footsteps reverberate loudly.

ELMORE

Why are you here Jennifer? I mean, why transfer to Neopolis? Nothing ever happens here.

JENNIFER

When did the murder take place?

Elmore whistles some random notes, listening to the echo dance around the tunnel.

ELMORE

It's not a murder yet sweetheart.

They arrive at a waist high gate. An electronic lock holds it shut. Elmore extends his hand, the one wearing the strange glove. Palm facing the lock, about a foot away. It clicks and opens.

JENNIFER

Truth is; I am here to give old ball-breakers a hard time and make them look bad in front of their superiors. It's what I live for.

They arrive at the end of the tunnel. An airport style metal detector gate and a booth manned by a corpulent CHECKPOINT GUARD.

Elmore raises his hand as if holding an invisible pass. The guard waves them through. They walk through a big set of doors marked: "WELCOME TO NEOPOLIS".

EXT. NEOPOLIS STREET - MORNING

The city is ugly. Concrete, decay, old posters plastered onto old posters, lurid signs, cheap neon. It's not busy. A few people rush along, some cars zip about.

ELMORE

Isn't she beautiful?

Jennifer laughs in disbelief.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

Welcome to Neopolis J.J. I'm sure you'll love it here.

He hails a cab. They both get in.

EXT. NEOPOLIS STREET - MORNING

The rain has stopped, the streets are still wet. The temperature is high, steam rises off the road.

An area has been cordoned off, police in uniform mill about. Somebody is taking photos. Camera flashes light the scene. A messy corpse lies in the middle of the sidewalk. Blood is splattered all around the body, its face a ruin.

A young woman (LISA) is crying. She is dressed in a showy outfit; high tech sportswear, gloves, gadgets. The corpse is wearing similar clothes. A Policewoman is taking notes.

ELMORE

You wanna talk to the lady?

JENNIFER

Which one?

ELMORE

You know what? You choose, we'll take it from there.

Jennifer takes a breath, then walks towards the two women.

POLICEWOMAN

Was he depressed? Drugs?

LISA

(Agitated)

No! Nothing like that. He was on top of his game. He's been winning matches..

POLICEWOMAN

Arrogant maybe? Got sloppy?

LISA

No. NO! You aren't listening! I already told you we finished training when he fell. He was too good to be sloppy anyhow. He wouldn't have messed up like that!

Jennifer moves into the discussion, her face shows sympathy.

JENNIFER

We can do this bit later.

The policewoman takes a step back.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Hey, what's your name? Would you like a drink? Coffee?

LISA

(Relaxing a bit)

Coffee yes. Black.

Lisa dries her tears with her sleeve. She is built like a gymnast, legs like a runner, arms like a rock climber.

JENNIFER

(To the policewoman)

Could you get us a coffee please?
One black one white? Two Sugar
for me?

Jennifer winks at the policewoman who gets the hint and walks off.

LISA

Lisa.. My name is Lisa. I'm with
The Diamonds. Rich was teaching
me stuff. He was really good.

Jennifer looks at the corpse.

JENNIFER

That's Rich?

LISA

Yeah..

JENNIFER

What were you trying to tell the
officer earlier? You said she
wasn't listening.. What did you
mean?

LISA

I'm not sure I should-

JENNIFER

Don't worry. You can trust me to
take whatever it is you want to
say seriously. That's why I am
here.

Jennifer touches Lisa's arm briefly. A gentle squeeze.
Lisa looks at her arm, then rubs the spot Jennifer touched.

LISA

I was saying that no way this was
no accident. He just walked off
the damn roof. Do you understand?
He didn't slip, or fall, or get
sloppy. He just.. Walked.

Tears well in Lisa's eyes, but she keeps it together.

LISA (CONT'D)

It was horrible.. I looked in his
eyes, he was as surprised as I
was. Do you get me?

The policewoman returns with two coffee. She wordlessly
hands them to Jennifer, then mimics writing a note.
Jennifer nods her head, acknowledging the gesture.

JENNIFER

I am going to look into this Lisa.
This is now my case. You
understand? I'm on this, and I
will see what I can find out.

LISA

(Softly)

Thanks.

JENNIFER

Here is my card, and I'll need
your details as well.

Lisa takes the card with a puzzled look.

LISA

Actual paper? No way! I thought
you were a cop?

Elmore joins the two women.

ELMORE

She is a cop! She's getting fitted
tomorrow. Don't worry, the other
officer will take your details for
now. We'll get in touch later.

Elmore waits a moment until Lisa has moved off.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

Anything interesting come up?

JENNIFER

Maybe. The girl insists Rich over
there was not a jumper type.

ELMORE

Yah, I thought so. Which is
interesting, because these grid-
jockeys are too damn good to have
messy accidents like this and Richy
Rich was one of the best.

JENNIFER

So, Rich was not a jumper, not
clumsy, not sloppy. Which leaves..

ELMORE

Maybe. We'll see.
(Looking up)
We need to take a look on the roof.

Elmore walks towards the entrance of the adjacent building,
theatrically opens the door. He performs a mock bow:

ELMORE (CONT'D)

After madame!

INT. NEOPOLIS BUILDING, LIFT - MORNING

The lift is old and noisy. It rumbles and shakes.

ELMORE

Do you watch sports?

Jennifer looks sideways at Elmore, but doesn't comment.

ELMORE (CONT'D)
Neopolis sports I mean. Grid-
running.

She looks at him again.

JENNIFER
I have done my homework detective,
I know what this city is about.

The lift arrives. The doors open.

EXT. NEOPOLIS BUILDING, ROOF - MORNING

Sunshine. Lots of it. It is getting hot.

The roof is large, flat, full of structures. Big pipes, elevation changes, air-vents, aerials. The view is impressive. Most of Neopolis can be seen from here. Ugly concrete and neon stands out against a murky yellow sky. Yellow, like an old monochrome computer monitor.

ELMORE
Grid-jockeys come here to train in the week, and compete in the weekend. They train hard, because they need to cut the mustard or they get kicked out of their crews.

JENNIFER
I expected something more.. glamorous. Top facilities for top money? That kind of thing. But Lisa down there did not seem like she was swimming in cash.

ELMORE
That's because she's new, small fry, and she isn't running with their best jockeys. But if you are good, real good, and you work your way up into the big time..

Elmore walks around, looking for something.

ELMORE (CONT'D)
You know how many people watched last weekend's big match-up?

JENNIFER
Go on, tell me.

ELMORE
Three. Hundred. Million. Bozos.

Jennifer kneels besides an air vent, picks up something from the roof. It looks a bit like a TOY GUN.

JENNIFER

This what you looking for?

ELMORE

Lady's and gentlemen we have a V-gun! This, dear jennifer, is a Virtual G-

JENNIFER

Yes.. I HAVE read the brief, I DO know what it is and I DO know it uses virtual ammo. Now, are you going to talk down to me all day or just this morning?

ELMORE

Hookaaaayyy..

Elmore walks to the edge of the roof, looks down.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

This is where our grid-boy walked himself into a big headache.

Jennifer joins him on the roof edge. Elmore looks across to the adjacent building. It's roof is of a similar height.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

Too far to Jump.

Jennifer looks down.

JENNIFER

There aren't even any balconies. Why would he walk off here? It makes no sense..

ELMORE

It's a bonafide mystery..
(Looks down)
Hey J.J.! I think I can see bits of brain!

Jennifer walks away.

JENNIFER

Let's go, before we get a tan.

INT. NEOPOLIS BUILDING, LIFT - MORNING

The lift rumbles and screeches. Jennifer is taking notes in a little black book.

JENNIFER

Did you examine the corpse?

Elmore reaches into his pocket, shows Jennifer a plastic evidence bag. It contains a bloodstained metal cylinder.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

What's this?

ELMORE

Rich's final moments I hope. While you were doing all this touchy-feely stuff with grid-girl I was poking around in things I would rather not poke around in.

JENNIFER

Yeah, that's great. But what is it?

ELMORE

Data backup! All jockeys carry one in their head to make sure nobody cheats. That's why there is almost no crime here. We call em BRAAAAAAIN BUGS.

Jennifer takes the evidence bag. Studies it.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

Even these turkeys can't fly without a black box.

JENNIFER

Right. That's handy. So what's next?

ELMORE

(Smiling)

Meet the captain!

INT. NEOPOLIS POLICE STATION, OPEN PLAN - AFTERNOON

Jennifer and Elmore walk through an open plan office. Various desks are manned by bored looking men and women, a phone rings once in a while, people talk softly. Elmore leads Jennifer to a door with a sign that reads: "Captain's Office". He opens and enters.

INT. NEOPOLIS POLICE STATION, CAPTAIN'S OFFICE - LATER

A big desk. Huge. Captain SANDRA McDANIEL makes it look small. She is standing behind it, not sitting. Over 6 feet tall, 45-ish. There is paperwork everywhere, stack after stack of paperwork.

Frantic jazz plays softly on a tiny radio in the corner.

MCDANIEL

(Looks at her desk)

Just look at this. Look at all this.

Elmore and Jennifer silently observe.

MCDANIEL (CONT'D)

Just look at it. Elmore, are you looking?

ELMORE

Yes Captain. I'm lookin'.

JENNIFER

Captain I would like to-

MCDANIEL

Jennifer Johnson! I've read your profile, very impressive. Keep it up and maybe one day all this will be yours.

JENNIFER

Thank y-

MCDANIEL

In fact, I'll give you a head start, and give some of it to you now.

McDaniel shoves one stack (out of many) forward, to the edge of the enormous desk.

MCDANIEL (CONT'D)

Elmore, you be a gentleman and carry this stuff for detective Johnson. And show her to her office. Use Billy's old room. He won't need it anymore.

ELMORE

What about the-

MCDANIEL

You will team up with Detective Johnson. Get her up to speed on Neopolis protocol. Make sure she gets her implants as soon as possible. She's no good to us VR-Blind.

ELMORE

I have evidence to-

MCDANIEL

Make sure you get that brain bug checked. You got the bug right? And the V-Gun?

Elmore nods.

MCDANIEL (CONT'D)

Good man. Later on you will show her to her new apartment. Again, Billy won't be using it any longer.

(MORE)

MCDANIEL (CONT'D)

But Jennifer will. Help her out.
Get her settled in. Don't be a
jerk. You know the deal.

ELMORE

I-

MCDANIEL

Both of you report to me personally.
I expect regular updates.
(Looks up at them)
That will be all.

INT. NEOPOLIS POLICE STATION, JENNIFER'S OFFICE -
AFTERNOON

Jennifer's office is large, quiet, and devoid of any
personality whatsoever. Her desk nearly empty except for
a monitor and keyboard and two stacks of paper. One small,
one large. Her monitor is not switched on.

The walls are bare, pastel. Color coordinated furniture
is arranged precisely and neatly. It is corporate Feng
Shui at its worst.

Jennifer sits in silence, staring at nothing. Her shoes
are off, placed next to the desk.

A rapid series of knocks on the door. A muffled voice.

ELMORE (O.S.)

Can I come in? Are you decent?

JENNIFER

I am completely naked!

Elmore comes in.

ELMORE

You aren't really right? I was
just kidding.

Spots her shoes.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

Ah, I see, you were only half
joking.

JENNIFER

I got dressed real quick, but not
quick enough. Now, what do you
want?

ELMORE

Your computer is switched off.

Jennifer looks at him, furiously.

JENNIFER

There is no ON SWITCH.

Elmore approaches the desk. The stiffness in his gait is momentarily apparent. He waves his gloved hand in front of the screen. It switches on.

ELMORE

I.T. guy forgot you don't have your upgrades yet..

He finds a chair, sits down with a sigh.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

Listen, I dropped off the v-gun and brain bug, filed a preliminary report, and put in the paperwork for your appointment tomorrow.

JENNIFER

Thanks. Sorry.. I hate not being up to speed with you guys yet.

ELMORE

Don't worry about it, I'm here to help. You ready to go? There's nothing you can do here for now anyway.

Elmore spots a little device on top of a file cabinet next to him. Several metal balls hanging from strings in a little contraption. He lifts one ball, releases it, and it swings against the other balls. Energy is transferred to the furthest static ball and it swings out. When it swings back the process repeats itself. A gentle clicking sound accompanies the action.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

Will you look at that? Isn't that amazing? Click. Click. Click. Like a metronome.

Jennifer gets up, puts her shoes on.

She stands at the door, waiting for Elmore who is still mesmerized.

JENNIFER

What happened to Billy anyway?

ELMORE

Aren't you hungry? I reckon it's time for lunch. And because I'm such a great guy, I'm buying!

INT. DINER - AFTERNOON

Elmore's plate is filled with disgusting slop. It is hard to figure out what exactly he is eating.

Jennifer eats jam on toast.

JENNIFER

Wow, you sure know how to treat a lady.

ELMORE

(Mouth full)

Best food in town. Kills all known germs in your body.

JENNIFER

I bet it does wonders for your acne as well.

Elmore rubs his cheeks, a mock look of surprise on his face.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

Neopolis has about one hundred thousand grid-runners right? They all compete for prize money and big fat corporate sponsorship deals, all thinking that one day they will hit the jackpot.

ELMORE

Yah. They all want the same things. Money, fame, respect, good food like this.

JENNIFER

I mean, that is a lot of potential motive floating around. A little push here... a little nudge there... Accidents happen right?

ELMORE

Na-ah. Doesn't work that way. Everything jockeys do is monitored and stored on their brain bug. Even a tiny hint of foul play and they get rotated back to the real world outside our beautiful city. Fast.

JENNIFER

What about non-athletes? Get somebody else to do the dirty deed?

ELMORE

There aren't many, and they get bugged too. Grid-jockey wannabees do a lot of the city's boring jobs. The city pays for their equipment and gives them a place to live, in return they gotta work for the city when they aren't training.

(MORE)

ELMORE (CONT'D)

There are some exceptions of course.
Pencil-pushers.. Corporate types..
Specialists... They are background
checked up the wazoo.

JENNIFER

Neat system. Should be fun to
find the cracks in it.

ELMORE

I told you, almost nothing ever
happens here.

JENNIFER

Almost.

They both eat in silence. Elmore with gusto, Jennifer
with small bites. She uses a knife and fork to cut her
toast in tiny pieces.

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - EVENING

A door, neatly painted in pastel colors. Keys rattle,
locks turn. It opens and Jennifer and Elmore enter the
apartment.

ELMORE

Billy's old pad. Feng shui
paradise! Now all yours!

The apartment is almost completely empty except for some
basic furniture. The lounge features one single couch, a
large flat-screen tv, and a tacky scene painted straight
on the wall: a yin-yang symbol and a panda.

Some bamboo sticks are placed in a waterless vase and all
the walls are painted in the same soft and bland color
tones as Billy's old office.

JENNIFER

It feels like home already.

She walks to the far end of the living room, and pulls up
cheap blinds. It reveals a magnificent view of the city.
Panoramic, high up, impressive.

ELMORE

Crazy sonofabitch never opened
those blinds you know? The view
was too much for him. Too much
detail.

JENNIFER

This is beautiful. Do all Neopolis
cops live like this?

ELMORE

Hey, we deserve something nice, we provide a valuable service!

JENNIFER

I thought nothing ever happened here?

ELMORE

(Laughs)
Precisely!

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Jennifer sits at a desk, a laptop in front of her. Several items are placed around the laptop. A small gun and holster, a dark red mobile phone, a small microphone.

She is studying what looks like a personnel file. It shows data on Elmore Howard.

Jennifer clears the screen, and starts writing a **report**. The header shows a photo of Elmore. The words "Internal Affairs" and "Suspect" appear clearly.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - EVENING

It's dusk, everything is bathed in golden light. A rooftop looks out over other rooftops, a skyline of angles. The sun is going down right above the edge of the roof, in full view. Running footsteps can be heard.

LUCY, a Betsie grid-girl, jogs into view, muscular and athletic. She runs across the setting sun, past a chimney stack, then stops. She takes cover. Her outfit shows the Betsies' name and logo on its back. The logo shows a powerful female mechanic, holding a wrench and a gun.

She pulls a large v-rifle out of a holster on her back. It sports a scope, and she puts the rifle against her shoulder, aiming across the edge at the adjacent roof. A tiny figure can be seen running across the adjacent roof, contrasted sharply against the golden skyline.

LUCY

(Tracking the small
running figure)
Beautiful. Just perfect.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - EVENING

On the adjacent rooftop, a running target: another Betsie grid-girl (JANE). She is light on her feet, weaves around obstacles, jumps over urban hurdles, runs along walls. She looks like she is lighter than air.

She wears a headset and microphone.

JANE
(Slightly out of
breath)

I am too fast for you. Too fast!
Where do I go? You don't know.

She runs behind a large air vent and disappears from view.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - EVENING

Lucy sees her target slip behind the air vent.

LUCY
HAH! Got you now! You can't hide
forever girl!

She settles into a kneeling position, ready to react. A moment of silence, followed by another. She shifts her weight.

LUCY (CONT'D)
Come on.. come on..

EXT. ROOFTOPS - EVENING

Jane sits with her back against the vent, she looks at her watch.

JANE
Five, four, three, two,..

A moment later a large jet of steam erupts from both sides of the vent. She runs for it, back from where she came.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - EVENING

The steam obscures things, but the setting sun provides a perfect backdrop to contrast any movement. Jane clearly stands out as she makes a run for it. She dashes out from behind the vent, races across the far roof.

LUCY
Good move!

She pulls the v-rifle's trigger. A loud HUMM! A spray of blood bursts from Lucy's face. She slowly crumples and falls over.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - EVENING

Jane sprints across the roof. A sudden loud buzz comes from somewhere in her clothes. She curses and laughs at the same time.

JANE
Damn, you are good.

She slows, stops, and stretches. Then speaks into her headset.

JANE (CONT'D)

That was incredible! Just..
amazing? How did you make that
shot?

Silence.

JANE (CONT'D)

Lucy?

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. SPECTRA VISION BOARD ROOM - MORNING

Ten men in power suits. They all have different faces but somehow they look identical. Same type of hair, same posture, same air of power. Each and everyone wears the same shape tie. Nine ties are of a unique color. But tie ten is made of all colors. A full spectrum tie.

The ten men sit on one side of an intimidatingly large table. Jennifer and Elmore on the other end.

The walls display an excessive number of high resolution tv screens. The Spectra Vision logo is everywhere in various incarnations. Nobody speaks.

ELMORE

We need to see some of your recordings.

MAYHEM. The board members start yelling at each other, at Elmore, at Jennifer. Their language is incomprehensible but sounds like a mixture of Klingon and Esperanto.

Elmore and Jennifer look at each other.

Board member ten shouts a single word, slightly louder than the others. Instant quiet follows.

BOARD MEMBER TEN

That will not be possible I am afraid. We have strict rules about this kind of thing. I am sure your understand?

Elmore and Jennifer look at each other again, for a moment.

JENNIFER

You do realize we are police officers?

BOARD MEMBER TEN

Yes of course. Detectives Johnson and Howard. Erm... Would you care for some tea?

On cue, a YOUNG MAN in a suit, wearing a white tie, steps forward with a note pad. He was standing next to a plant all this time, completely unnoticed. He looks expectant at the two detectives. Notepad ready.

JENNIFER

Jasmine Pearl please.

ELMORE

(To Jennifer)

You made that up.

JENNIFER

Instant coffee for detective Howard.
He likes it with cold water, heated
in a microwave to boiling point.

ELMORE

And cookies please.

The man with the notepad scribbles furiously. For longer than seems necessary. He leaves the room silently.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

Let's start again. We need to see
some of your files. Namely, the
last minutes of the life and times
of a grid-boy called Rich. He was
with the Diamonds.

PANDEMONIUM. The board members are yelling at each other yet again, even louder now. It takes longer for board member ten to assert control. Eventually he manages to reign them in. His own face red and sweaty.

BOARD MEMBER TEN

This request is not feasible I am
afraid. We have assurances from-

Elmore leans forward and speaks rapidly, angrily, in their own language.

ELMORE

XXX XX XXX XXXXX XX SPECTRA VISION?

Everybody falls silent... Jennifer re-appraises Elmore.

Elmore continues, softly now, but with menace.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

XXX XX XXX XXXX!

BOARDMEMBER TEN

(Nervous)

Spectra Vision XXX xxx xxxxxx...

ELMORE

(Calm, authoritative)

Xxx. Xxxx xxx. Is that understood?

Board member ten looks pale. Rattled.

BOARD MEMBER TEN

I am sure there is no need for-

ELMORE

Good! We'll have tea while you
prepare the disk for us.

One of the younger board members starts to protest, a
haughty sneer on his face. Board member ten gets up,
approaches him, and SMACKS him across the face with the
back of his hand.

He then barks a series of words at the stunned other board
members. They don't respond but get up and leave the room.

BOARD MEMBER TEN

I do apologise for my colleagues.
They sometimes forget that there
is a world beyond the corporation.

He takes a moment to wipe his brow, rearrange his rainbow
tie.

BOARD MEMBER TEN (CONT'D)

Now, I was not aware that the
unfortunate death of young Rich
was a police matter. Is there any
reason to suspect foul play?

JENNIFER

It is within our remit to
investigate the potential of a
crime. At this stage we have not
yet decided if an actual crime has
taken place. Establishing this is
something you can help us with.

The young man with the notepad returns carrying a tray of
drinks. He wordlessly distributes the glasses, serving
Jennifer last. Hers is tall, containing a flower bud,
slowly unfolding its petals in the hot liquid.

ELMORE

That is Jasmine Pearl? Why would
you drink something like that?

BOARD MEMBER TEN

My colleagues are nervous. They
are nervous because what we are
doing at Spectra Vision is...
vulnerable.

JENNIFER

Vulnerable, how?

BOARD MEMBER TEN

I believe you don't have your
upgrades yet, is that correct?

ELMORE

(Sipping his coffee)

I think it's time to start getting to the point now.

BOARD MEMBER TEN

The true nature of what we are doing with Neopolis is easier understood if one is able to share the benefits the upgrades have to offer.

ELMORE

She's getting them right after this meeting. Now, please get to the point. A point. At some point. Please!

JENNIFER

Vulnerable, how?

Board member ten wipes his brow again.

BOARDMEMBER TEN

Right, I will explain.

Elmore silently pumps his fist in the air, as if cheering a great victory.

BOARD MEMBER TEN (CONT'D)

Neopolis is an experiment. An experiment which we think is successful. We have a crimeless city. A city where people aspire to greatness through merit. Through hard work. A city where people volunteer to monitoring at such a level that any crime is pointless, because, everybody monitors everybody. As a result nobody hurts anyone. We have managed to take people's violent erm... tendencies, and channeled them into something that is clean and pure.

ELMORE

Like Pearl Jasmine tea.

BOARD MEMBER TEN

The grid-jockeys get rewarded, the viewers get rewarded, the sponsors get rewarded... Society gets rewarded. It is a perfectly balanced system.

JENNIFER

Which is how you would like to keep it. So a grid-runner murdering another grid-runner would not be the best pr.

BOARD MEMBER TEN

Our contract with the government is based on performance. If we are successful with Neopolis, then we get to start similar erm... ventures, in other cities.

JENNIFER

With projected viewer numbers of...?

BOARDMEMBER TEN

We think that we can easily grow our world wide market share to two billion viewers before saturation becomes a factor.

He waits for effect, expecting a reaction, but none is forthcoming.

BOARD MEMBER TEN (CONT'D)

Hum... the athlete's backup unit was damaged I take it?

ELMORE

Damaged beyond repair. Grid-boy made quite an impact on the sidewalk. Or was it the other way around?

Board member ten reaches into his pocket, and fishes out a dvd. It shows the Spectra Vision logo. He gives it a shove and it silently slides to Jennifer and Elmore's side of the table.

BOARD MEMBER TEN

In that case I trust that you will find the footage on this disk most reassuring. This is the last recorded hour of the young grid-runner in question.

ELMORE

I thought you had strict rules about this sort of thing?

BOARD MEMBER TEN

I had to put up a show of strength for my colleagues. It is not acceptable to indulge third party requests without a struggle. Weakness is not tolerated in my position.

(MORE)

BOARD MEMBER TEN (CONT'D)

In this case however I judge it is essential that we cooperate.

Jennifer's tea, untouched, now shows a completely unfolded flower. She drinks it all in one go, while Elmore looks on in disgust.

Jennifer grabs the disk and gets up.

JENNIFER

Thank you. You have been most helpful.

INT. SPECTRA VISION WAITING ROOM - MORNING

Eyes everywhere. On the walls on posters, on magazines.. The eyes exist as part of yet more Spectra Vision logos and advertising material.

JENNIFER

I wish it wasn't necessary to operate on my eyes.

ELMORE

Believe me it's worth it.

JENNIFER

About what you said to rainbow tie in there? When you showed it to me the brain bug looked perfectly intact.

ELMORE

Yah. Lab couldn't save it. I guess bouncing off the road from a great height jarred a bit more than it could handle.

JENNIFER

Elmore..

ELMORE

J.J.

JENNIFER

Does it hurt? The procedure?

ELMORE

Only when you piss.
(Laughs loudly)

Elmore drops his smile, puts his hand on her shoulder.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

Hurts a bit on the first day, mostly light sensitivity. There may be some bruising as well.

(MORE)

ELMORE (CONT'D)

But, in the grand scheme of things,
it's a walk in the park. And the
park is a mighty pretty one after
the operation.

A NURSE steps into the waiting room. Even her uniform
sports the Spectra Vision logo.

NURSE

Miss Johnson? Would you follow me
please?

Elmore gives Jennifer a thumbs up sign and cracks a smile.

ELMORE

See ya tomorrow!

Jennifer silently follows the nurse. After a while Elmore
gets up, feels his leg, then stiffly walks out.

INT. SPECTRA VISION OPERATING ROOM - LATER

Everything in the operating room is beautiful and soothing.
The walls are Magnolia colored, not white. A window looks
out onto a flower garden with exotic and gorgeous plants
and flowers. Ambient music plays in the background, perhaps
a Brian Eon piece.

A DOCTOR wears a bespoke Spectra Vision medical costume.
Jennifer is seated in a high-tech chair, surrounded by
instruments and lenses that emanate from the back of the
chair. Her head is strapped tightly to the top of the
chair. The nurse stands behind the chair.

DOCTOR

(Dripping smug
condescension)

What is often popularly referred
to as upgrades, is in fact a series
of AR nano-tech implants and
modifications.

He puts on surgical gloves, again, not quite white.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

AR meaning Augmented Reality, but
I am sure you already know that.

He moves one of the chair extensions holding a magnifying
glass so that it hangs over Jennifer's face. It appears
through the glass, warped and magnified.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

We enhance your cornea, and add
receptors to your optic nerve.

(MORE)

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

We also provide a physical neural interface that you can wear on your body. Most people choose a glove for this system.

After looking at her eyes through the magnifying glass the doctor grabs a needle. It has been prepped by the nurse. He taps it once, twice, then squirts some fluid out of the needle.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

The AR glove will allow you to edit and change your implant settings to suit your personal augmented reality needs. Do you understand what this means?

JENNIFER

(Shaky voice, nervous)

It means I can choose what visual overlays are active.

DOCTOR

Very good!
(As if speaking to
a child)

The Doctor moves the needle closer to her eye.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

Don't move now, this may smart a little.

Jennifer's magnified eye looks terrified. The doctor leans over Jennifer, shielding his injection from view. The nurse starts to speak, but her words are muffled and can't be understood.

JENNIFER'S P.O.V. HOSPITAL ROOM - AFTERNOON

Ambient music again. More Brian Eno. Vagueness. The view moves with Jennifer as she looks around but she can't see any details. Shades of grey and off-white.

A voice is heard, soft, muffled.

ELMORE (O.S.)

Hey kiddo.

The view moves again, towards the direction the voice came from. It centers on a vaguely human shape.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

I bought you a present.

BACK TO SCENE

The room is dimly lit. Elmore sits in a beige luxury chair, awkwardly holding a wrapped present. Jennifer lies in a hospital bed, her eyes covered with yellow gauze.

ELMORE (CONT'D)

You should open it later, when they send you home.

JENNIFER

It doesn't hurt. Feels odd though..

Elmore gets up.

ELMORE

There have been developments. We'll talk tomorrow.

He puts the present on the table next to her bed, then leaves without saying anything else.

Jennifer is left alone. Several moments pass until she grabs the present and opens it. Inside she finds a pair of mirror shades. She smiles.

INT. JENNIFER'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Jennifer lies in bed. It is different from the one in the hospital. Her face is free of bandages, but she looks slightly bruised around her eyes.

She gets up, starts dressing herself.

MOMENTS LATER

Jennifer is sipping tea in her lounge, the blinds are drawn. She is wearing an AR Glove. It covers her hand and her arm about halfway up to her elbow. Jennifer raises her arm a bit, so she can see the touch-pad that allows her to control the type and level of augmented reality she wishes to use.

The screen shows an input box: "ACTIVATION CODE". She types in a code, and the screen lights up. A confirmation message appears: "NEOPOLIS PD - VR PROTOCOLS ACTIVE".

Jennifer looks around, nothing seems different. She then holds out her hand. Still no change. Finally she makes a thumbs up sign with her gloved hand. A glowing icon appears between her thumb and fist. It is virtual police badge, rendered in glowing orange lines. It hangs in the air just above her hand, transparent.

JENNIFER

Oh!

Jennifer observes the badge for a moment, then unfolds her hand and it disappears.

She studies her hand for a moment, seemingly lost in thought, then walks to the window and opens the blinds.

The cityscape appears completely transformed. Color and movement everywhere. The same buildings are present but now covered in digital art, billboards, moving advertising. Virtual blimps and planes fill the sky, the streets seem teeming with vehicles that weren't there before. She silently stares at the bright cityscape, perfectly framed by the apartment window.

INT. SPYDER'S LAIR - MORNING

Spyder sits in front of a monitor and camera. His face is covered by a strange mask that shows digital static.

The screen shows another man, dressed in black, also digitally obscured.

Spyder speaks to him, his voice altered, like a robot.

SPYDER

Did you get to your data?

MAN IN BLACK

She has already moved in.

SPYDER

How will you correct your failure?

MAN IN BLACK

I got to her physician. She is now on the grid. Give me some time and I can get past most of her security protocols.

SPYDER

Proceed as planned. This should not delay us.

Spyder turns off his screen. His face-mask is turned off. The surface reflects his surroundings.

EXT. NEOPOLIS STREET - DAY

Elmore is waiting at the side of the road next to an old and dilapidated building. It is sunny and warm, as he waves some cool air onto his face with a folded newspaper. The building's entry is barred by an electronic padlock.

A virtual billboard on the side of the building loops a piece of semi-erotic advertising.

A cab pulls, up, its roof displays another virtual billboard. Jennifer steps out. Again dressed all in black, although the clothes are different. She wears Elmore's mirror shades.

JENNIFER

I have a terrible headache.

ELMORE

You'll feel lucky when you see the girl on the roof. She really has a headache. Nice shades by the way.

JENNIFER

I want to try out my new super powers.

She walks up the side entrance of the building, and observes the electronic lock. It contains a virtual component, a little virtual display that reads "Police Access Only", in red glowing letters.

ELMORE

Try it! Go ahead.

JENNIFER

Like this?

She holds her gloved hand out towards the lock, and when close enough her hand glows briefly. The lock opens, the virtual text display reads "Access Granted."

Both enter the building.

EXT. ROOFTOPS - DAY

The corpse lies face down, its head surrounded by a pool of blood and worse. The v-rifle lies in front of her. The scope emits a laser beam.

ELMORE

Gives new meaning to the term "murder weapon".

Jennifer walks further down the roof. A bright icon floats in the air, bobbing up and down. Its orange wire-frame lines portray three long bullets side by side, surrounded by a round cross-hair image. Jennifer walks around it studying the VR image in wonder.

JENNIFER

This is ammo? Virtual ammo?

ELMORE

Yah... The city is one big arena for the Grid-Jockeys. It's all about strategic positions and ammo placement. The v-guns can shoot different types of ammo, and can be reloaded at these kinds of ammo hot spots. This one is for sniper bullets.

Jennifer looks around across the rooftops. The scope and character of the virtual playground of the Grid-Runners becomes clear. Various ammo icons can be seen bobbing up and down. Arrows and lines highlight routes, other icons indicate where a jump is possible. The roofs are alight with virtual imagery that enhance the drab surroundings into a high tech sports arena.

JENNIFER

I can see the appeal.

ELMORE

Spectra Vision won't like this one bit.

JENNIFER

My heart bleeds.

INT. NEOPOLIS POLICE STATION, OPEN PLAN - AFTERNOON

The police station is busier than last time. More urgency. There is tension in the air. People walk a bit faster, voices are a bit louder.

Jennifer and Elmore walk past a number of colleagues. They cross the room and pass a desk where Jane is talking to a police officer. Jane looks crestfallen, her eyes are red.

They reach the far end of the open plan office and enter a room.

INT. NEOPOLIS POLICE STATION, SCREENING ROOM - AFTERNOON

The screening room is nondescript. It looks like a million other screening rooms around the world. The far wall features a large flat-screen monitor. Various types of equipment are placed below the monitor. Jennifer is seated at a central table. Elmore stands next to the tv.

JENNIFER

Let's see what we can see.

Elmore removes the Spectra Vision disc from a plastic bag, opens the case, and inserts it into a player. He grabs a remote and joins Jennifer. She points it at the equipment.

ON THE SCREEN

A corporate logo appears, Spectra Vision's many colored emblem, fading into a white screen showing a date, time, and "subject name: Richard Radsinsky". This screen fades into video footage.

It shows things from the point of view of Richard. Rooftops, far away traffic sounds, pigeons...

RICHARD

Come on Lisa! Ya gotta do this jump. Its gonna win you match after match.

LISA (O.S.)

Maybe I need to practice more?

RICHARD

COME ON! Ya practiced this a thousand times. Ya won't get more ready than this! It's the nerves, ya gotta shake em.

Richard's view changes. He approaches the edge of a roof, a sheer drop lies below. He looks up, another building across the road. Richard's view turns half circle, focuses on Lisa.

RICHARD (CONT'D)

I'll show ya. Ya run straight through the ammo, do the flip, land right on the other side ready to take out all comers with the new bullets.

LISA

It ain't easy.

RICHARD RADSINSKY

Sure it is!

Richard turns around again, walks backwards, revealing a cache of bobbing virtual ammo. When about 30 meters from the edge he stops, breathes audibly and starts running. The view jerks accordingly. Rich races past the ammo, his view rotates sickeningly for a second, and suddenly jars into place. His arms and gun are extended and he is looking at Lisa on the other side.

LISA

Fuck me. You better catch me if I fall Rich.

Lisa retreats, out of view. The bobbing vr-ammo can still just be seen. For a few seconds there is nothing else, until Lisa FLIES through the ammo which disappears as if she picked it up. She JUMPS high, somersaults and turns midair, pulls her gun (which now shines with the new ammo loaded) and lands in a crouch right next to Rich. Her gun is aimed at the roof she just jumped from.

LISA (CONT'D)

Like that?

BACK TO SCENE

JENNIFER

That's odd..

Jennifer pauses playback of the video.

ELMORE

What? Human beings flying through the air?

JENNIFER

The ammo... it judders...

ELMORE

(Imitating Jennifer's accent)

I am not familiar with that term.

JENNIFER

Back there..

(rewinding)

There! The ammo bobs up and down, up and down.. see? It has a steady rhythm. But here it... judders.

ON THE SCREEN

The screen shows the vr-ammo bobbing regularly, until it briefly jitters, flickering on and off.

BACK TO SCENE

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

That's odd isn't it?

Elmore gives her a blank look.

ELMORE

So it judders... oddly..?

JENNIFER

Ok just forget it. Let's play the rest of the damn thing.

ELMORE

Hooookaaaaaay...

The video resumes:

ON THE SCREEN

RICHARD

Keep this up and ya can join our junior squad.

LISA

A girl can dream right?

RICHARD

As long as ya dream the right stuff, yeah. You know you can do this, it isn't a dream. Everybody in our crew started out like you.

Richard's view focuses on the edge off the roof.

RICHARD (CONT'D)
 Now let's go. This was a perfect
 training session, time for some
 R&R.

Richard's POV shows him approaching the roof edge.

LISA
 (Concerned)
 Rich?

RICHARD
 Come on, time to party! I got us
 an inv-

The view jerks sharply.

LISA (O.S.)
 Rich! NO!

Richard SCREAMS! His POV shows the roof edge falling away,
 Lisa appears looking over the edge.. Another sharp view
 turn.. The ground rushes towards him.

The scream is cut short and the view instantly turns to
 static.

BACK TO SCENE

Silence.

JENNIFER
 That's... disconcerting...

ELMORE
 It's goddamn awful is what it is.
 And the bloody disk didn't tell
 us anything new.

JENNIFER
 That's not true.

ELMORE
 Ok J.J. Share your genius insights.

JENNIFER
 Rich did not trip, he was not
 pushed, he was of sound mind as
 they say...

ELMORE
 (Snorting)
 Nothing sound about jumping off
 buildings.

JENNIFER

He just walked off... As if there was something supposed to be there. It's odd.

ELMORE

So grid girl's story pans out. Which leaves us with a whole lot of nothing new. Like I said.

JENNIFER

Maybe. At least we confirmed her story.

ELMORE

Maybe it's time to chalk this one up to bad luck. If it ain't a crime it ain't our business.

Elmore gets up, approaches the door.

JENNIFER

That's it?

ELMORE

Nope, gotta write the report. Better get to it.

Elmore closes the door behind him, leaving Jennifer alone in the room. She stares at the static on the screen.