

# The Mechanized Messiah

by

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12/02/15

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FADE IN:

SUPER: Northeastern New Mexico - August 15, 2296

EXT. MOSQUERO, NEW MEXICO - MAINSTREET - DAY

A TRAVELER appears in the foreground, riding a slow moving horse. Another horse is tethered to his side with several bundles hanging from the packsaddle.

Mosquero is not your typical dried-up prairie up town. The architecture is very old, but we see signs of revitalization...

EXT. GENERAL STORE

The traveler slides off the lead horse, hitches both animals to a post, and slips into a store.

INT. GENERAL STORE

The traveler --

**LAREN FISK**, 19, disheveled hermit cowboy - tall and lanky --

-- dumps two bundles on the counter, and after opening them, spreads out the haul in front of the --

**SHOPKEEPER**, late 50's, who is rubbing his chin and examining the items for sale.

SHOPKEEPER

I can only take the ham - alright, some of the goat cheese too, but I just can't sell all these chili's, or the flatbread.

LAREN

I can't keep coming here, if that is all your goin' to buy. It's just not worth the trip.

SHOPKEEPER

Well, the only thing the boys want around here is some meat, ammo and some booze when they can get it. Half the time they're drunk if they can help it, and --

LAREN

I had some hope for this town.  
 Things were looking good here. Two  
 years ago I saw lots of folks here -  
 some even had children with them.  
 Now it's startin' to look like a  
 ghost town.

SHOPKEEPER

We're doing the best we can, Son.  
 Most of those folks moved away.  
 They overgrazed their cattle, and  
 what few crops we have, haven't  
 been doing that great, lately.

A bitterness swells within Laren as he draws his fist and  
 slams it on the table.

LAREN

I grew up here. My family and I had  
 a life here before we moved to  
 Crestfallen. I know it was a long  
 time ago, but you just can't let  
 this town die out.

The shopkeeper gently lays one hand over Laren's clenched  
 fist.

SHOPKEEPER

I know how you feel, Laren, but  
 sometimes life ain't easy.

Struggling to maintain his composure, Laren slowly pulls his  
 hand from the counter.

LAREN

Just give me what you can and I'll  
 leave you alone.

The shopkeeper drops some coins and a small bottle on the  
 counter.

SHOPKEEPER

I added some of that horse liniment  
 you like.

Laren snatches up his payment, along with his rejected  
 offerings and heads to the door. The --

**SHOPKEEPER'S WIFE**, early 50's, appears from the back room,  
 and looks at the purchased goods on the counter.

SHOPKEEPER'S WIFE

Is that all you bought from him?

SHOPKEEPER

It's all we can sell.

SHOPKEEPER'S WIFE

You know Laren comes a long ways.  
He only comes beggin' here about  
twice a year. As you know for  
yourself, both of his parents  
already passed on - have some pity.

SHOPKEEPER

I can't have a bleeding heart for  
every drifter who comes through  
here. Besides, money is practically  
worthless around here, anyway.

SHOPKEEPER'S WIFE

He wants to keep hope alive. The  
money is just a symbol of that  
hope. Young people need hope, not  
the realities of our sick society.

SHOPKEEPER

Alright - just stop! I have  
something that he might want. It  
will give him more hope than money  
ever will.

The shop owner leaves the register and goes into the back  
room.

EXT. STREET

Laren is crouched down, and is rubbing the liniment on one of  
the horses' legs. He hears the Shopkeeper calling for him,  
and stands up into the PALE SUNLIGHT.

The shopkeeper is carrying a SADDLE with some tack piled on  
top of it.

SHOPKEEPER

Sorry about earlier. It's just that  
we couldn't pay ya for all that you  
brought ...and, I have this saddle,  
here. It's really not in too bad of  
a shape if you think it might pay  
for the whole lot?

LAREN

Why are you doing this?

SHOPKEEPER

I noticed that yours is in rather poor shape ...and, well ...it was mostly the wife's idea, to be honest with you.

LAREN

My mother was kind hearted too. Please tell your better-half that this will do nicely.

SHOPKEEPER

(Smiling)

Better-half ...So true ...you would be correct in saying that ...that is so true...

The Shopkeeper hands Laren the saddle. Laren gently rubs the leather, and admires its craftsmanship.

LAREN

This is a very nice saddle. Are you sure you want to part with it?

SHOPKEEPER

Well, I think you need it more than I do.

Laren hands over several bundles of homemade goods to the Shopkeeper and they shake hands.

SHOPKEEPER (CONT'D)

We'll see you next time, okay?

LAREN

I'm not sure if I'll be back this way again. I don't know why I think that ...just somethin' in my bones I guess. Good luck to you all - either way.

Laren loosens up the old worn saddle, pulls it off, and replaces it with the new one.

He rubs his hands gently over it, and places one foot in the stirrups, grabs the horn, and pulls himself up into the seat.

EXT. STREET - MOVING

Laren, on horseback, plods slowly towards us, as he passes a large wooden placard --

SIGN: MOSQUERO, NEW MEXICO - We see a long LIST OF DATES and corresponding populations. The numbers show a drastic decline in town population, with a very slow increase in population afterward.

We also see --

ROWS OF DECIMATED BATTLE TANKS -- with ample vegetation growing on them.

GRAVE MARKERS -- in a wide expanse of field.

A VICTORY MARKER -- shown some attention.

EXT. THE GOODNIGHT-LOVING TRAIL - DAY

Laren is riding on horseback, plodding southward along a rough hilly trail. We are presented with an immense prairie wilderness covered with brush, oak and pine.

A LONG TRAIL OF ANTS, scurries across our view in the opposite direction.

Like the shores of a great ocean, rugged hills cradle a large expanse known as the Plains of Crestfallen.

EXT. SMALL FARM - DUSK

Laren and both horses slowly disappear inside a large barn.

INT. BARN

Lamps have been lit, illuminating Laren as he releases the saddle from the lead horse. He swings the saddle onto a fence rail. As he does so, he glimpses a SILHOUETTED FIGURE in the barn doorway. Laren reels back and instinctively grabs a long rifle from a saddle holster and points it at the figure.

The silhouetted figure moves briskly through the darkness. The personage, BREATHING MECHANICALLY, appears under the GLOW of the lamps. It wears a duster, cowboy hat and boots. It is an android - quite tall - the mechanical face, of which, is staring at Laren --

**MANAX547**, completely mechanical, cowboy clad and towering. There is a RED GLOW in the eyes, and well-defined features, with a metallic skin that shows much wear.

MANAX547

(leaning in close)

Are you Donner Fisk ...maker and  
repairer of clocks and other such  
mechanical devices?

LAREN

(reeling back)

No ...my father died three years  
ago.

MANAX547

(gently grabbing the rifle  
and pushing it aside)

That is most unfortunate.

Laren backs up a few paces, however Manax547 shadows his  
every move.

MANAX547 (CONT'D)

(leaning in)

And who might you be, then?

LAREN

(sweating)

I'm his son, Laren.

MANAX547

So you're his offspring. Your  
father's passing is truly  
unfortunate, indeed. Do you repair  
mechanical devices yourself?

LAREN

No ...I'm a simple dirt farmer. I  
don't want to be rude or anything,  
but who are you?

MANAX547

What do you mean, who am I? Don't  
you mean what am I?

LAREN

If you don't mind being referred to  
as a what? You're a MechenEZ,  
mechanized chess robot, aren't you?

MANAX547

Robot! That is a very offensive  
title, young man! I'm a Manax  
series logistical android. Top-of-  
the-line - I must say!

LAREN

(wiping his brow)  
 Manax series, eh. You were second  
 in command to the Bolto units, or  
 something like that - weren't you?

MANAX547

Yes, yes. Those days are much in  
 the past...

Manax547 walks around, inspecting everything.

MANAX547 (CONT'D)

Did your father leave you any  
 schematics or blueprints concerning  
 androids like me?

LAREN

How did you --? Okay - yes he did,  
 but how would that help you?

MANAX547

I have certain needs - repairs that  
 need to be made, that I ...well  
 ...cannot do for myself.

Manax547 leaves the barn with Laren trailing behind. He heads  
 for a nearby dwelling and attempts to open the front door.

EXT. FISK RESIDENCE

Laren blocks the entrance.

LAREN

Hey, look! You can't go in there!

MANAX547

Something in there you do not want  
 me to find?

LAREN

It's my home, and I'll thank you to  
 remember that, before waltzing in  
 uninvited!

MANAX547

Sorry to be so rude, but even a  
 rudimentary understanding would be  
 helpful. If we could study your  
 father's work, maybe that  
 understanding could be magnified.



LAREN

I'm no technician. What happened to your technical support?

MANAX547

They are all dead.

LAREN

So, how did they die?

MANAX547

Most of them were riding together in airships when they were surrounded and murdered by an unknown enemy. Their flying machines fell to the earth, killing all on board. It was a poor tactical decision to have that many Mechanical Masters in one location. Well, mechanized chess was coming to an end, anyway, but it leaves some of us in an awful bind.

LAREN

Well, you my friend ...are in trouble.

MANAX547

There might be hope in the records your father left.

LAREN

I guess it wouldn't hurt if I let you take a peek.

Laren twists some cleverly contrived handles and the two wooden front doors open and --

INT. FISK RESIDENCE

-- Manax547 and Laren walk slowly in. Soon, Manax547 is unashamedly investigating the rest of the house, while Laren follows close behind.

LAREN

If you're looking for something in particular - it might be in the workshop.

Manax547 gestures for Laren to show him. Laren heads for a side door.

LAREN (CONT'D)

Right over here my friend.

Laren leads him to the adjoining workshop.

INT. WORKSHOP

The FLICK of a light switch reveals a work space which is modest and cluttered.

MANAX547

There is quite a collection of parts here.

LAREN

Yup, a ton of the stuff - it's everywhere! Why the MechenEZ Corporation let him have all of it, I have no idea. See - we have a calf muscle - I think, and a thigh unit.

Manax547 thumbs through some blueprints and journals, and inspects the various components.

MANAX547

Didn't your father ever teach you anything about electronics and mechanics?

LAREN

He sure did try. I have to admit, I didn't pay much attention to his work. He sure loved you though - well, I mean mechanical people like you.

MANAX547

That is most unfortunate. Mechanical manipulation is a lost art, and to think you could have been privy to it.

LAREN

The only privy, I am in procession of, is in the backyard.

MANAX547

What kind of child takes no thought of his father's work?

LAREN

Well, it's just that we didn't always get along. He was always talking about androids, but it wasn't like I had actually seen an android before. To be honest with you, I kinda got tired of hearing about it.

MANAX547

You seem to be a very confused young man!

LAREN

And you're a really pushy fellow. I don't even know your name.

MANAX547

My name? Do you mean my designation? That would be Manax547.

Laren begins to pace around.

LAREN

(flailing his arms around)  
So you think I can repair you?  
Well, friend, I think you have another thing coming. You know, I'm thinking your name should really be Sprung. Because you, my friend, are sprung. Somewhere in your manufactured synapses you think I can help you. Okay, let's say I can repair some of your motor functions - get your servos running smoothly and your gears oiled. Your higher functions will not be able to keep up because the tolerances are extremely high, and the calibration is very sensitive. If, and I mean if, I was able to get all that working properly, your neural pathways would have to be restrung, calibrated and fine-tuned with your cerebral cortex. Eventually, all of that would have to be synchronized with your brain-disc stack. Of course, you know what a core calibrator is?

MANAX547

(obviously annoyed)

Yes, I know what a core calibrator is...

LAREN

It took a team of no less than eight men to calibrate your brain ...did it not? And ...well ...you just told me they are all dead?

MANAX547

I think you are lying to me. It sounds like you were listening after all.

LAREN

(stretching and yawning)

Alright - you got me there. I do know quite a bit about mechs, like you. However, mechanoids were my father's life, not mine.

MANAX547

Mechanoid is a term you humans use. I am a sentient being, despite the fact that I am manufactured.

LAREN

Well it's Manax547 - correct? Well Manax547, we humans created you. Manax is the factory you were manufactured in, and the number 547 means you were five hundred and forty seventh in a series of one thousand or two thousand - who knows.

MANAX547

I am the 547th of 600 to be exact.

Laren tires of the bickering and sinks into a large chair.

LAREN

Calm down, my friend. *Mechanoid* and *android* are terms we humans use to differentiate mechanical people from biological people - that's all.

MANAX547

Yes - forgive me for arguing over semantics.

(MORE)

MANAX547 (CONT'D)

I promise not to press you any further today - if I could continue reading, though?

LAREN

Just remember this is my house. I don't care too much for human company as it is, and I especially don't care, terribly much for nosy passive-aggressive robots such as yourself. I've had a very long day and us humans require sleep. Got it?

MANAX547

Yes - yes! I will read quietly as you slumber.

Laren throws his hands up in the air in frustration and leaves Manax547 to himself. A variety of wooden doors can be heard SLAMMING in the distance.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

As Laren STAGGERS out of his bedroom he is greeted with the AROMAS of breakfast. He is shocked to see Manax547 cooking. Manax547 waves a skillet full of bacon and eggs in front of Laren's face.

MANAX547

Hungry?

LAREN

How'd you learn how to cook?

MANAX547

I want to apologize for my rudeness yesterday. I was particularly anxious about connecting with someone who might have the solution to my needs ....and I got a little carried away. I was hoping breakfast might make up for that a little.

LAREN

I suppose I can overlook your lack of patience, and it does look good.

MANAX547

It is indeed extraordinarily fortunate to see that your father kept remarkably complete records, despite his lack of organization.

LAREN

Well, my father wasn't much for pretense, that's for sure.

MANAX547

I think with a little more reading on your part you could quite easily repair some of my subsystems.

LAREN

I suppose. But, who knows what damage I could cause once I start tinkering inside you.

Manax547 spreads the breakfast out on the table. As Laren takes a few bites, he sinks into his chair with enjoyment. The flavors, to him, also have a sense of familiarity.

LAREN (CONT'D)

Wow, this is incredible! My mother use to make eggs just like this!

MANAX547

I just used ingredients from the cupboard.

LAREN

You are quite the inspired fella, despite being a chess drone.

Laren unashamedly forks in the meal.

MANAX547

(quietly)  
Inspiration can be a very unpredictable thing.

INT. WORK SHOP - DAY

Manax547 and Laren are pouring over BLUEPRINTS and DIARIES written by his father, **DONNER FISK**. Laren soon becomes captivated by some of the journal entries.

DONNER FISK (V.O.)

Trin finally left today. Tension has been building between us for some time.

(MORE)

DONNER FISK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

When he was younger, he was such a good boy. He never complained. Laren idolizes him, I'm afraid that he's gone now, out into the world. If Pelipa was still alive, she would be so sad. Trin has so many wild aspirations. I am afraid all he will find is the cold snow. Also, the Martins are hounding me about their clock. The main spring will need replacing and I doubt I have any spares. I suppose I will have to make a new one.

Laren opens the pages at the end, and finds a PEDIGREE CHART showing his family tree. We see his father's Scandinavian origins and his mother's Zuni origins. He pulls out a picture of TRIN and himself when they were young. In the picture --

**TRIN FISK**, 12, boyish exuberance in a smiling face ...and Laren is there at age 10 - equally exuberant.

Manax547 leans over to see the picture.

MANAX547

I never could understand human tokens of past memories. What is done is done, the second it happens ...I do say.

LAREN

I'm not sure it's sensible ...or at least explainable. Humans are just wired that way, I guess.

MANAX547

Wired! That does seem funny to me.

LAREN

How is a chess bot programmed for humor ...or ...cooking, for that matter?

MANAX547

We were all given human algorithms.

LAREN

Makes sense.

Manax547 goes silent while Laren continues to read his father's journal.

DONNER FISK (V.O.)

They have discovered where I am,  
and they want me to return,  
immediately. Do they not know, that  
I am not well? I am no use to them  
now. Even though Laren and I do not  
speak much, I cannot leave him.  
They are parasites. I will not be  
among the living, by the end of  
this year. My clocks will be my  
legacy. I know they will be  
cherished by future generations. I  
will die a happy man knowing  
this...

Laren, becoming inwardly emotional about what he reads, slams  
the book closed.

MANAX547

That is a very interesting reaction  
to a technical manual.

LAREN

It's not a technical manual.

MANAX547

More memories?

LAREN

Too many for my taste.

MANAX547

Is it about your family. May I ask  
how?

LAREN

I don't think you would understand.

MANAX547

Maybe not, but it might pass the  
time.

LAREN

Okay, then. It's about my father. I  
think he was becoming mentally ill  
...or something.

MANAX547

I assume that is not a good thing  
for humans.



LAREN

Funny thing ...you know how to make an omelet, but you don't know what mental illness is.

MANAX547

I never said I had a complete database of human experience.

LAREN

My father writes about my brother Trin, and some connections to some distant group. He believed these former relations were coming to bring him back ...it's all unclear.

MANAX547

You never said anything about your mother.

LAREN

My mother Pelipa died ...five years ago. It was some sort of chest inflammation. He couldn't save her ...my father was ...helpless. It completely ruined him. My brother's leaving didn't help either. It completely destroyed my father, and he died three years later.

MANAX547

And you have been alone ever since.

LAREN

I use to have friends. I uh ...made some mistakes.

MANAX547

What could you have done?

LAREN

Well ...I worked on a cattle ranch ...for the Branch family ...I really liked it there too ...but there was this girl, Penelope Edgewater. Well ...I really liked her, and, unfortunately she also liked my friend Niyol. He's the youngest Branch - anyway ...we got into a fight over ...this girl ...and ...I beat him senseless, and...

Manax547 leans in closer.

LAREN (CONT'D)

Anyway ...his family didn't like that too much, and I felt incredibly bad about it - I really did. I thought they were going to lynch me. It was just that I was messed up at the time - still am, I guess. It's just that I don't want to ever touch another human being like that, again. I can't believe I lost it like that.

MANAX547

The memories must be painful for you.

LAREN

Excruciating.

We see time passing as Laren and Manax547 work together. We see the SEASONS CHANGE from late August to early March --

A LENGTHY REPAIR -- on Manax547's left leg.

MANAX547 LIFTING -- heavy objects and moving them a considerable distance.

MANAX547 PLOWING -- in late spring.

EXT. FISK FARM - DAY

Laren is digging in wet soil. We hear the sound of a TROTting HORSE and Laren stumbles out of his field to see who is coming. We see a young man with raven black hair, astride a painted horse --

**NIYOL BRANCH**, 20, a highly confident member of the Navajo Nation, well-built and youthful.

NIYOL

Who would of thought you could still be here.

LAREN

Yah, who would of thought it - wait! - look Niyol --

NIYOL

I don't know what's going on here, but there are about two hundred mechs parked down the hill from you, and --

Niyol stops in mid-sentence, as he sees Manax547 walking out the front door. Niyol backs up the horse a few paces.

NIYOL (CONT'D)  
What is that doing here?

LAREN  
It's kind of my guest. Are you telling me there are more mechs ...like him?

NIYOL  
Yah, exactly like him.

LAREN  
What's going on Sprung?

MANAX547  
I was going to tell you --

LAREN  
What, Sprung - that you're not alone?

MANAX547  
My brethren need your help, Laren.

LAREN  
(shaking with an angry laugh)  
My help - That's really funny, Sprung!

Laren presses into Manax547.

LAREN (CONT'D)  
Look at this place - look at me!  
I'm a useless human.

Niyol paces around on his horse.

NIYOL  
Look, we have a whole lot of folks who are a little trigger-happy right now, so Laren if you have any say with these machines ...then ...

LAREN  
This guy showed up at my door late summer. I thought he was alone ...tells me a story about how he needs repairs. I didn't know he was - sorry, Niyol I don't know any more than you do.

NIYOL

Maybe we can figure it out  
...together ...

LAREN

You got to be kidding me! I blooded  
you up really good. I thought --

NIYOL

Look Laren, my family overreacted.  
You popped me in the nose, and  
well, my left eye didn't fair too  
well, but I healed well enough.

Laren gives a closer look to Niyol's face.

LAREN

I would have to say you're right.

Niyol slides down his horse and walks towards Laren.

NIYOL

Take my hand Laren ...please.

Laren moves forward, slowly, with his hand held out, Niyol  
pulls Laren close and embraces him.

NIYOL (CONT'D)

(hugging tight)

Three years in exile has been too  
long, my friend.

Laren leans back and, while cradling Niyol's chin in his  
hand, he turns his head side to side and sees some facial  
scarring.

LAREN

I deserved every year.

NIYOL

Unfortunately, it looks like you've  
brought more conflict upon us  
...and I don't know what will  
happen when folks find out you're  
behind it.

LAREN

I will do what I can. I will meet  
with these creatures ...

NIYOL

Then let's go! Get your horse and  
we will ride out to meet them.

(MORE)

NIYOL (CONT'D)

Whatever you do, don't trust any  
one of them.

LAREN

I'm definitely with you on that  
one.

EXT. PLAINS OF CRESTFALLEN - DAY

Laren and Niyol ride on TROTting HORSES. A late morning  
thunderstorm is dissipating as they reach the mechanical  
army.

We see a mechanized army that is poised at attention. They  
are formed up by rank and file similar to any human army.  
Manax547 can be seen in the front row. Laren slides off his  
horse and greets, what appears to be, the senior officer.

LAREN

My name is Laren Fisk, and who  
might you all be?

A senior looking MECHANOID OFFICER dressed in a waist coat  
and top hat moves forward to address Laren --

**BOLT05**, his overall configuration is similar to Manax547 -  
except with different markings.

BOLT05

We are the Delegation of Zanthros.  
We have come to make allegiances  
with the Mechanoid Master.

LAREN

Mechanoid Master? Now I don't know  
what that idiot Sprung told you -  
you know Manax547, but you have to  
know that I can't do a thing for  
you.

BOLT05

What you do not understand is that  
you can help us. If you are the  
Mechanoid Master, then you are the  
key to our whole future, and we ask  
for your assistance.

LAREN

So what is your name? Robot number  
one - or something?

The mechanoid officer walks toward Laren and stops close in  
front of him.

BOLT05

You do know that robot is an offensive title to us mechanoids.

LAREN

You are a chessbot - designed for human enjoyment ...or at least you were.

BOLT05

My name is Bolto5, if you must know.

LAREN

I suppose that helps. Think of this though, Bolto5. You and your army have put me in a whole lot of danger because when a posse shows up at my door, I will be going to jail, along with this other young man next to me, and a whole lot of you will be melted down for scrap!

BOLT05

(pointing to Manax547)  
It is not my army ...it is his.

LAREN

(to Manax547)  
So you're the messiah of this bunch.

MANAX547

(as he steps forward)  
So what have you been doing with your life that can be more important than helping a bunch of broken-down machines such as ourselves, Laren?

LAREN

Then will you leave, if I do help them?

MANAX547

Yes, we will leave, if you help.

Laren paces around, pondering his next move. He looks at Niyol, who nods his head to an unasked question.

LAREN

Okay then. My name is Laren Fisk! I am your new leader!  
(MORE)

LAREN (CONT'D)

At this point in your confused lives you will answer to me! I will do my best to repair you, but do not test my patience!

Niyol smiles at Laren's humorous posturing.

MANAX547

You heard the human. Get in single file and follow him to his dwelling.

LAREN

(grinning)

I guess we're going to be spending some more time together, Sprung.

MANAX547

Always a pleasure.

EXT. FISK FARM - DAY

We see a vast group of androids scattered around the Fisk family farm. A large amount of equipment and spare parts have been pulled out the garage, and set up as service stations.

Laren is pacing restlessly around Niyol, who has been lube and oiling a long line of androids.

LAREN

These mechs look a lot better, Niyol.

NIYOL

(chuckling)

I think I have more lubricants on me than the mechs do inside them. How many are there to go?

LAREN

Niyol, it's been really nice being able to spend some time together ...it's just that I'm getting an itchy feeling about all this. We need to get these things away from here. Correction - I need to get these things away from here. You have to go home - now. I truly appreciate what you have done, but, please go home to your family. This is very dangerous work.

NIYOL

You're such a martyr, Laren. You think you don't need anybody - do you! Do you think I have much of a life? My folks are great. I have a brother and a sister - they're great. Ya, you would be correct in saying that. My life is the same thing every day, Laren - every day the same chores, the same cattle herding, the same field work. You stuck a grease gun in my hand, and I became a happy man. It's something different to do, and you're taking that away from me? You're so arrogant my friend. Tell me what is going to happen because, because believe me, I want it to happen. I had forgiven you a long time ago - you just didn't want to be forgiven, so you shut yourself inside your house - all because of some stupid girl - always the martyr!

LAREN

Niyol, please. It's just that you're like a brother to me, and you're the only family I have left.

NIYOL

You know I'm going with you. My family understands that you are trying to do the right thing. All of the farmers and ranchers just want to stay out of this. My parents raised me to be my own person ...and you're in need.

LAREN

Alright, tell your parents that you are walking off into the great unknown with that idiot, Laren, if you really want to take the risk.

NIYOL

Actually, their nickname for you is *tkele-cho-g*.

LAREN

(laughing)  
You didn't have to tell me that.



EXT. FARM HOUSE - MOVING

Laren walks toward his home when he is greeted by Manax547, who seems agitated.

MANAX547

I have the feeling that you plan to dismiss us soon.

LAREN

And how would you know that.

MANAX547

I have incredible hearing - remember.

LAREN

Okay, yes that is the plan, but --

MANAX547

We had an agreement. I thought we had a trust, so to speak?

LAREN

A trust? And what about those troops? Did that slip your mind, or something?

MANAX547

I planned on telling you ...I guess I became too comfortable.

LAREN

Look ...this is my home. It is all that I have left, and everyone in this region knows about you - all of you. I could be arrested any time now - and who knows what they would do to me! They're all vigilantes - every one of them!

MANAX547

But we are like brothers - right. You would take risks for me ...wouldn't you?

There is a long pause.

LAREN

Sprung, I guess I'm not ready to make that sacrifice right now. I'm too ...well ...introverted.

MANAX547

So be it then. We will leave, and  
it will be without you. Just do not  
call me Sprung anymore - got it!

Manax547 trudges off. We see Laren looking confused and  
dejected as he KICKS the dirt, then follows after Manax547.

INT. FISK RESIDENCE

Laren finds the duster and hat of Manax547. They are neatly  
hung on a row of pegs. Manax547's boots sit side by side  
below them.

EXT. THE PLAINS OF CRESTFALLEN - EARLY MORNING

It is the next day and a damp breeze flows through the camp  
of Manax547's army. The mechanoid transports are in position  
and are loading up with mechanical troops. Laren appears from  
the west on his horse and trots up to Manax547.

Niyol is watching from a distant hill.

LAREN

(holding Manax547's range  
wear on his lap)

Look Manax, I'm sorry that things  
didn't work out between us. I just  
thought you might want these back.

Laren holds up the duster, boots and hat, which are rolled  
together in a bundle.

MANAX547

You can have them.

LAREN

Look, every good cowboy needs his  
gear.

Manax547 walks over to Laren and grabs the gear from him. He  
unrolls the duster, and picks up the well-worn cowboy hat and  
places it on his head.

MANAX547

(snickering)

When did I ever say I was a good  
cowboy?

Laren, looking a little spooked, backs up his horse.

LAREN

Take care of yourself ...Sprung.

Laren turns the horse around, and gallops back to his home.

INT. FISK RESIDENCE - EVENING

We see Laren and Niyol sitting around a kettle of stew and a plate of flatbread.

LAREN

Niyol, would it be strange if I told you I felt a little bit guilty about this?

NIYOL

Because you're impatient. They told you they would leave when the job was done. You would have made a crappy messiah, anyway.

LAREN

I suppose so.

NIYOL

(laughing)  
I know so!

LAREN

It's been three months. What would happen if the government found out that they were on my property? I wouldn't even get a trial! There would be life in prison, and no future at all!

NIYOL

You always felt like the world was on your shoulders. Besides the landowners around here would probably lynch you first - but that isn't very comforting, is it?

LAREN

(pacing)  
Not very.

NIYOL

What's done is done.

LAREN

You know ...I liked Sprung ...he  
felt like family. Winter would have  
been dismal without him.

EXT. THE PLAINS OF CRESTFALLEN - DUSK

We see Manax547 walking to the front of his troops. Standing  
next to him is a muscular mechanoid by the name of BRONX55.  
We hear orders announced in a MECHANICAL LANGUAGE and the  
chessbot army is seen embarking onto a fleet of transports.  
In precise procession the transports leave one by one.

INT. FISK RESIDENCE - NIGHT

NIYOL

My life just got boring, again.

LAREN

(smiling)  
There's always girls.

NIYOL

Last girl I cared about ...well I  
got the crap beat out of me because  
of her.

LAREN

Ya ...I...

NIYOL

(laughing softly)  
No Laren, there is more...

LAREN

Really?

NIYOL

Ya - so Penny is feelin' all sorry  
for me at first - being a nursemaid  
and all. She then starts taking a  
liking to my brother, Sike. Six  
months later they are married.  
Sucks huh?

LAREN

(shaking his head)  
She wasn't worth any of it.

Niyol dips his flatbread into his stew and takes a big bite --

LAREN (CONT'D)

My mother had high expectations of me. She named me after the youngest of the Ahayu'da war god brothers, whose name was Matasailema. Trin was named after the eldest, Ahaiyuta. Ahaiyuta and Matasailema killed the cannibal demon A'tahsaia. My father didn't care about those traditions very much. Well, I guess he was more interested in his own direct lineage. Mother relented and let my father have his way. So he gave us names from his branches of the family tree.

NIYOL

I used to laugh my head off when your mother told us that tale. The brothers kill the demon. They make an effigy out of the hide and scare their grandmother with it. I love that story.

LAREN

It scared me to death. Especially when she would tell it by the fire after dark. My mother was radiant, and her face was lit up, even in a darkened room.

NIYOL

My name means 'wind' in Navajo, and I plan to be true to it. There was never much fear in my blood. You were always worried about what people thought of you. I have to admit that it used to get on my nerves.

LAREN

You were always more adventurous than me, that's for sure.

NIYOL

Lazy, that's what you are, but a nice kind of la--

Roger suddenly looks alarmed.

NIYOL (CONT'D)

Do you hear that?

The hairs on the back of Laren's neck stand up. Laren's dog is HOWLING, there are sounds of chickens CLUCKING, and horses STAMPING AND NEIGHING in alarm.

LAREN

Coyotes, probably. They're all over the place around here. I'll get the shotgun. It's in the barn.

Both young men run outside --

EXT. FISK FARM

-- and are startled to see - faintly - figures moving about in the darkness. Suddenly, out of the darkness LARGE MEN emerge and shove Laren and Roger to the ground. One **LARGE MAN** presses a rifle against Niyol's head.

LARGE MAN

Where are they!

NIYOL

What, the mechs?

LARGE MAN

Yes, the mechs!

The Large Man presses the rifle down harder.

NIYOL

(wheezing)

They left this morning - East - they went east!

LARGE MAN

How many?

NIYOL

A whole army of them things.

A **SUPERIOR OFFICER**, approaches the large man who is doing the interrogation.

SUPERIOR OFFICER

Mind your manners soldier, and lift that rifle up. Just get them on-board the command ship, and we'll have a talk with them then.

LAREN

Wait! You don't want my friend. He has nothing to do with this - just me!

SUPERIOR OFFICER

Don't listen to him. I want both of them on-board.

(to the other men around him)

And do try to be a little more gentle.

Laren and Niyol are forcibly raised to their feet, and escorted up a short hill. Above, in the night sky, we see the dark outline of airships hovering in the air.

INT. COMMAND SHIP - MAKESHIFT CELL - NIGHT

We see Laren and Niyol in a small, dirty room, sitting against the wall. The **CAPTAIN**, mid 40's, of the airship sits calmly on the opposite side of the room, with the Superior Officer standing over them. The Captain is content to sit quietly in the corner, while the other man drills them with questions.

SUPERIOR OFFICER

So this Manax547 shows up. It sounds like he knew a lot about your family?

LAREN

It was more like he knew stuff about my father. My dad did have some weird connections. I just don't know what they are.

SUPERIOR OFFICER

What about Manax547? What was he like?

LAREN

He was cold at first, but then he warmed up. We talked quite a bit. He acted almost human.

The Superior Officer and the Captain stare at each other with an untold understanding of the significance of Laren's comment.

LAREN (CONT'D)

So you lost something that isn't yours. Is that what this is all about?

SUPERIOR OFFICER

We'll ask the questions. Got it!

Both of the older men talk quietly to each other, and then they leave the room.

Laren and Niyol look about at the stark, iron-clad walls.

LAREN

Who are these guys? I don't remember our government having military airships.

NIYOL

They don't. I'm sure of it. Maybe these guys are pirates?

LAREN

Did you see their uniforms? They sure are a flowery bunch. Sure smells of pirates to me.

NIYOL

Wherever we are going, it can't be good.

LAREN

Whatever happens, Niyol, you got your wish.

NIYOL

What wish was that?

LAREN

Adventure, and that you're actually riding the wind, even as we speak.

NIYOL

I hate wishes.

EXT. VULTURE CLASS AIRSHIP - SOMEWHERE ALOFT

The airship suddenly LURCHES FORWARD and there is a RISING SENSATION. The dirigible increases elevation to over six hundred feet, levels off and proceeds at seventy-five miles per hour. We see it is part of an AIR FLEET heading north.

INT. VULTURE CLASS AIRSHIP - WHEELHOUSE

A crew of resolute officers man the engine room, the baffles and the wheelhouse. The weather is fair, with clouds roaming in heavy patches. In the wheelhouse, the **HELMSMAN** stands in front of a large wheel, while carefully monitoring a gyroscopic compass. The **ELEVATORMAN** maintains the assigned elevation, periodically adjusting a smaller wheel.



We see the captain arrive from the navigation room along with the **FIRST MATE**.

CAPTAIN

Adjust the rudder five degrees  
starboard and maintain cruising  
speed.

HELMSMAN

Yes, Captain.

CAPTAIN

(smiling)

We have special cargo on-board, but  
I would not worry about making this  
a smooth voyage.

The Elevatorman smiles back.

FIRST MATE

They look like just a couple of  
boys, captain.

CAPTAIN

Yes, but one of the boys is in  
association with some very old  
mechanical creatures. That makes  
him very dangerous.

FIRST MATE

What do we do with them?

CAPTAIN

Let the powers that be deal with  
them. I'm just an airship captain.

The Captain WHISTLES a tune as he heads back to the  
navigation room.

INT. UNKNOWN MILITARY INCAMPMENT - NIGHT

Blindfolded, both Laren and Niyol are escorted into a ancient  
concrete building, then through a series of corridors that  
smell of SWEAT AND GUNPOWDER.

Niyol and Laren and their handlers split into two different  
directions. After walking through another series of doorways,  
Laren is pulled into a large room --

INT. LAREN'S CELL

-- and shoved into a chair. The coverings over his eyes are removed. Laren sees a MAN and a WOMAN. The Woman --

**DANA PIXTON**, early 40's, is pacing in front of him. Behind the first, a second interrogator, waits patiently.

Dana is broad-shouldered, with chiseled features and flowing black hair. Her jumpsuit is adorned with ornate filigree, just like the men on the airship. Dana comes closer, and peeks around the back of the chair that Laren is sitting in. She checks to make sure the guards have already tied Laren's hands behind his back.

DANA

It looks like they fed you well on the command ship.

LAREN

Well enough. Where is my friend?

Dana ignores the question and grabs a handful of hair on the back of Laren's head and pulls hard.

DANA

So, what did you plan to do with all those mechs? Are you forming a coup - some kind of rebellion against the government?

LAREN

(wincing in pain)  
Do you want the truth or a lie? Why should I bother with either? You're just going to beat me anyway.

Dana shakes her head as she squeezes Laren's chin.

DANA

Beat you? I've hardly touched you, yet. I'm a patient woman. You can see that, right?

The second interrogator, **OLSEN TANNER**, late 50's, walks up from behind and inspects Laren from different angles.

Olsen appears more calculating than Dana. He paces a little more - leans over Dana and whispers into her ear.

Olsen is rough around the edges, and his eyes have a permanent look of fatigue.

OLSEN  
You wore him down for me - thank  
you.

Dana nods with a bow, and leaves the room. Olsen sits down in  
a casual fashion.

OLSEN (CONT'D)  
So you're the Mechanoid Messiah.

LAREN  
Messiah of what? We had a falling  
out and they left - end of story.

OLSEN  
Well, that's what your friend calls  
you.

LAREN  
The same friend that told me I  
wasn't much of a messiah.

OLSEN  
Messiah or not, you are in a whole  
lot of trouble.

LAREN  
You had some questions?

OLSEN  
So what were you going to do with  
all those mechs?

LAREN  
Look I told you ...they took off.

OLSEN  
Maybe you were going to meet up  
later.

Laren leans forward. His dry lips cracking as he talks.

LAREN  
I was suckered into this whole  
thing. I was trying ...to make  
Manax547 happy. I was lonely ...I  
didn't know about the others.

OLSEN  
It sounds as if the puppeteer has  
let the strings spread out a little  
too far.

LAREN

I think you are looking at this all wrong. I've been the puppet, and now you're my new puppeteer.

OLSEN

We're all somebody's puppet.

LAREN

This isn't about what I would have done with a mech army. It's about what you are going to do with a mech army - isn't it?

OLSEN

What need do I have with old broken-down mechanoids, anyway? I have a fleet of airships and a loyal army of soldiers.

LAREN

It wouldn't hurt, would it?

OLSEN

Look, Laren, we'll have more time to talk in the morning, after you have gotten some rest.

LAREN

(visibly fatigued)

I see you know my name, what's yours?

OLSEN

I might as well tell you, it's Olsen Tanner. Well, good night, Laren.

Everything is quiet as the cell doors close. Even through veiled windows, Laren can tell that it is getting dark outside.

The room is large - old - with plenty of electrical lighting. The original wood paneling has been painted over with a pale whitewash.

Laren is still strapped to the chair. As Laren tosses and turns through a fitful sleep, he is transported to --

INT. DREAMWORLD

-- a dark dream-scape, and finds himself transformed into a Zuni warrior, complete with elk headdress. In his hand is a wood bow with an arrow pulled back.

We see something moving in the darkness. It's large form slowly moves into the light --

**A'TAHSIAIA**, the cannibal demon. He is the epitome of evil.

A'tahsaia has a large hulking bear-like body, with prickly fur and an enormous mouth full of razor sharp teeth.

Laren is FROZEN, while his bow is SHAKING wildly.

A'TAHSIAIA  
(with a menacing smile)  
Why are you pointing that at me? I  
would never hurt you.

LAREN  
I can't imagine that you wouldn't.  
I know of your evil deeds.

A'TAHSIAIA  
Only rumors.

LAREN  
(frantically looking  
around)  
Where is my brother Ahaiyuta? He  
should be here by my side.

A'TAHSIAIA  
(Laughing)  
Too bad for you he's not.

A'tahsaia lunges at Laren. We see A'tahsaia's teeth growing larger within our view, and then everything goes black --

INT. LAREN'S CELL - EARLY MORNING

Laren takes in an a HUGE BREATH as he is jolted awake. He WHEEZES VIOLENTLY, and PANTS like a dog. He is still the sole figure in his cell. Laren stares at the ceiling and ponders the events of the past few days. To shake it out of his mind, he starts to sing his high school anthem.

LAREN  
(Screaming it)  
Though the Crest has fallen, we are  
full of might...  
(MORE)

LAREN (CONT'D)

When all hope is gone, we will  
continue to fight... Fight on,  
Crestfallen ...fight on! When night  
has darkened, and the enemy is in  
sight... We will raise the crest of  
glory, and fight for all that's  
right... Fight on, Crestfallen  
...fight on!

INT. LAREN'S CELL - LATE MORNING

Some time has passed and a **GUARD** and a **SERVANT** come in  
bearing a breakfast tray.

Olsen Tanner enters the room. Laren's bindings have been  
removed, and he is sitting in front of a half-completed plate  
of BACON, EGGS and SAUSAGE, along with a small piece of  
BREAD.

OLSEN

How is breakfast?

LAREN

Amazingly delicious.

OLSEN

Good to hear it.

LAREN

So what are you going to do with  
those broken-down mechs?

OLSEN

(in a mocking stammer)  
Broken-down? Well that is not  
necessarily true - is it? I believe  
they are in better shape than any  
of us can imagine?

LAREN

You have them - don't you.

OLSEN

Of course we do.

LAREN

You have no right to have them, and  
you know why, because all you want  
to do is to destroy what has taken  
hundreds of years to rebuild.

(MORE)

LAREN (CONT'D)

Our country is currently at peace, and I don't know - maybe you're bored or something, but you can't let it go now that, all of a sudden, you have a ready-made army available - despite the fact that the owning of mechs is illegal - even for the military.

OLSEN

We're not the military. We broke away from them a long time ago.

Laren holds up a sausage in the air on the end of his fork - changing the subject.

LAREN

I think I figured out something. This food wasn't prepared by your typical military grunt. It was prepared by someone more refined and, I am quite certain, a woman. This food was made with love.

OLSEN

What are you talking about?

LAREN

My mother made breakfast like this. The eggs were whisked thoroughly and then cooked on a low fire, gently peeled off the pan, and then flipped. The bacon also was slowly cooked to perfection. My mother was a jewel. She loved me, and when I was fourteen, she died - she just died - some kind of chest inflammation. When I visited the Museum of Advanced Technology in Texas, I learned that in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the condition my mother had was easily treatable. Advanced technology was wiped away by the wars of the late twenty-first century. All the advancements that mankind had made were no more; all because of greed and lust for power. For you to stand there - with that smirk on your face - and talk of armies ...there is nothing left to take or to control.

(MORE)

LAREN (CONT'D)

The land is back to the Stone Age compared to what it was as far as technology.

OLSEN

Well...

LAREN

My father loved me too, but he changed after his wife - my mother died. They had a lover's bond. He tried to teach me things - all sorts of things. I did learn a lot about farming from him, and some about mechs, but I thought he was a bore. He was a genius and a good man - he was just in his own little world because it was easier for him to love androids, than anyone human.

OLSEN

Our parents never live up to our high expectations, do they? Laren, you think our world is at peace. The government has become weak, and there are those who are plotting to take control of it. We believe our system of government would be better for the country than those of our dubious rivals. You can see that having a decentralized government has created a weak country where everyone fends for themselves. Peace is only temporary in this situation. We need to make this country mighty again, with leaders who have a greater vision of the future.

LAREN

You try to sound all noble, but in reality, you're just a warmonger. The founders of The United States of America were noble men and women, with a noble purpose. You just want to rush in and take control.

OLSEN

Fine, Mr. Fisk. You just don't understand the way the world works.  
(MORE)



OLSEN (CONT'D)

I agree that we are not the founding fathers, but we can put into action their vision.

LAREN

Wait a minute! How do you know my last name? I know for a fact that I never revealed my last name to anyone here, or on the airship!

OLSEN

How can I not? You look like a Fisk ...and you smell like one too.

LAREN

(turning red)

You --!

OLSEN

Keep that thought. We're just getting to the good part.

Olsen Tanner grabs a nearby chair and straddles it.

OLSEN (CONT'D)

You are going to do something for me, and your future country - which will be to have a little talk with your android friends, and persuade them to cooperate. They've surrendered to us; however, they haven't budged, since.

LAREN

(laughing softly)

Wow, you are so stupid. Don't you realize that you're all gunna die!

OLSEN

It is a risk - but that is every day life for people like me.

LAREN

If I help you, what do I get out of it?

OLSEN

Are you kidding? Your life of course.

LAREN

I want even more motivation.

OLSEN  
Like what?

LAREN  
You let my friend Niyol go - as in -  
go far away from here.

OLSEN  
(scratching his chin)  
Hmm ...seems reasonable enough  
...but he could reveal things about  
us - whereabouts and all that.

LAREN  
(smiling)  
Oh, also the cook - definitely the  
cook.

EXT. SEPARATIST CAMP - HALLWAY OUTSIDE OF NIYOL'S CELL - DAY

A large **GUARD** inserts a key - opens the door, and **ORDERS** the  
sole inhabitant out.

GUARD  
Get your sorry carcass out of  
there! You're free to go!

Niyol Branch emerges, blindfolded. A young lady --

**CANDACE CALDWELL**, 28, greets Niyol. She is young and  
attractive, albeit rough around the edges --

She removes the blindfold.

CANDACE  
(flashing a pair of keys)  
We need to move quickly. Your  
friend bought us our freedom.

NIYOL  
Who are you - exactly?

CANDACE  
(slight smile)  
I'm Candace ...Caldwell. I'm the  
cook - at least I was.

Niyol produces a boyish grin.

NIYOL (V.O.)  
Thank ...you ...Laren.

EXT. SEPARATIST CAMP - DIRT ROAD

We see a small all-terrain vehicle SPEEDING away into the distance.

EXT. SEPARATIST CAMP - COURTYARD

Laren is escorted by Olsen Tanner, and a small group of guards, into the light of day. Manax547 and his army stand at attention, and appear lifeless.

OLSEN  
(muffling his anger)  
Show them who is in charge.

Laren moves toward Manax547.

LAREN  
Manax547, for a short time we were friends. I hope we can be so once again, and become part of a new order. You will now have a new purpose. A purpose that will soon be revealed.

The mechanoid army remains motionless.

OLSEN  
(whispering)  
Nice speech, but you have to do something better than that.

LAREN  
(leaning into Olson)  
I don't even know what you people are called.

OLSEN  
The Liberated Peoples of North America.

LAREN  
That's a crappy name.

OLSEN  
We're working on it.

LAREN  
(straightening up)  
The Liberated Peoples of North America welcomes you to their effort to create a more noble society!

We see the mech army is still stationary.

INT. LAREN'S PRISON CELL - DAY

Laren is thrown through the door and squirms as he slides across the aging marble flooring.

OLSEN

What was that? Do you think we're playing around here?

A MESSENGER shouts from the doorway.

MESSENGER

(breathing hard)

The mechs are on the attack, sir!

Olsen Tanner rushes through the double doors and slams them behind him.

We hear MACHINE GUN FIRE - sounds of SCREAMING, and of soldiers being thrown around --

Several WINDOWS SHATTER as a concussive blast rocks one side of the cell --

Seized by intense curiosity, Laren approaches one of the large openings in the wall, and is stunned to see mechs and humans running throughout the Separatist camp. In this case the androids appear the victors as they make quick work of subduing the humans --

Laren spins around, suddenly, when the cell doors are wrenched from their hinges and thrown to the side. MANAX547 stands in the threshold.

LAREN

(stammering)

Sprung?

MANAX547

Get over here!

Laren hurries toward Manax547, but is startled to see Manax547 grab a man from within the hallway, and fling him into the cell. The man rolls on the ground several times and lands on his back. We see that it is Olsen Tanner.

Laren stares at his former interrogator, who is dying. Manax547 walks to Olsen and lays a foot against his head.

MANAX547 (CONT'D)

He won't be bothering you anymore,  
Laren.

LAREN

You don't have to kill him. He's  
pretty beat up.

MANAX547

No, I don't, but I think I will.

Manax547 pulls off a single shot from a machine gun he has  
been holding. Olsen Tanner twitches then becomes still.

LAREN

(shaking)  
How can you just finish him like  
that?

MANAX547

Just pull the trigger --

LAREN

(turning green)  
Sprung ...just stop!

MANAX547

I just saved your life. Besides, it  
was a mercy killing.

LAREN

I don't --

MANAX547

You're just like Dad - confused.

LAREN

What?

MANAX547

You never did figure it out. Did  
you?

LAREN

(groaning)  
Trin?

MANAX547

Yes, it's me ...I thought Mom's  
special omelets would have given me  
away.

Manax547 kneels besides Laren, who is trying not to throw up.

LAREN

How?

MANAX547

The magic of Remote Satellite Technology. The place I am really at ...well ...let's just say it's quite a bit more posh than it is here.

LAREN

What did Dad have to do with this?

MANAX547

More than you know --

Manax547 is interrupted by a MECH OFFICER who slips into the room.

MECH OFFICER

Sir, the Humans are ready to negotiate.

MANAX547

I will be right there.

Manax547 leans into Laren.

MANAX547 (CONT'D)

(whispering)

We'll talk later - Brother. We have so much to catch up on.

EXT. SEPARATIST CAMP - COURTYARD - DAY

The scene is dismal. Burned out buildings smolder and shattered bodies lay scattered. WAVES OF SMOKE pass by the highest ranked survivor --

**BARTON FALLGROVE**, late 40's, he is resolute, with a face that is scarred by years of warfare.

The disguised Trin arrives with a procession of mechs and his brother, Laren.

MANAX547

There are not many of your people, left.

Barton is quiet at first, then finally speaks.

BARTON

Let us proceed with this mockery.

MANAX547

Okay, then. Whatever ambitions you had - are over. You must now think about your survival. You are part of my army, now. Somewhere in your confused minds you believe you are freedom fighters. You are now subject to my will. Your leader, Olsen Tanner, wanted us very badly. So we came up with this simple plan: act stupid, fake capture, and then procure weapons - the one thing we did not possess. You may wonder what we want. We want to ensure the future; a future filled with technology. No more dark ages, no more wild-west buffoonery. Ideals are unnecessary. Advancement is essential.

BARTON

We will serve you, then ...if it means our survival.

MANAX547

Reluctant servants are just as good as the willing. We have enemies to the north that must be subdued. We will fly there, and show no mercy.

BARTON

Who is this enemy?

MANAX547

(laughing softly)

You know who they are. They are your own people.

GROANS can be heard from the human commandos.

BARTON

Olsen should have known better than to play games with the Golden City. Desiring you as allies, was folly.

MANAX547

The Golden City will prevail. You wanted to promote democracy. Well, democracy led to this. Squabbling and confusion - debate - debate - and more debating - not the necessary unwavering resolve of the enlightened.

BARTON

You expect us to attack our own people?

LAREN

Trin, this is treason against all that is Holy!

Manax547 clenches his hand around Laren's throat.

MANAX547

Shut up Laren!

BARTON

Who is this?

MANAX547

Just another slave.

Laren strains to speak.

LAREN

He's ...my ...brother ...Trin.

BARTON

Brother? Very funny. Trin is the - no way!

LAREN

(straining to speak)  
Yesssss...

BARTON

My God, he's right!

Manax547 shoves Laren to the ground.

MANAX547

Does everything make sense now, Barton?

BARTON

We've met only once, yet you still remember me?

MANAX547

Of course I remember. You were one of Olsen's closest cohorts. Olsen and I had a falling out, and we have been rivals ever since. He wanted this pathetic army, because he knew I wanted it. This time, I came myself - in disguise, and he never saw it coming.

(MORE)



MANAX547 (CONT'D)

Two completely narcissistic men,  
using others for their own goals.  
He gave you hope for a more unified  
nation - I give you a challenge.

BARTON

Submit or die, I suppose.

MANAX547

I am not heartless - just  
determined. If you come with me, I  
will give you the opportunity to  
change their hearts and bring them  
into the fold. If they will not -  
then you know what will happen.

BARTON

(breathing hard)

We will need preparation.

MANAX547

Fine. You have one week.

EXT. FREEDOM FIGHTER CAMP - AIRSHIP STAGING AREA - DAY

LAREN stands in front of racks of bombs that are being loaded  
onto a Vulture-class airship. Barton Fallgrove emerges,  
wearing a captain's uniform, and points directly at Laren.

BARTON

You look lost, Laren.

LAREN

You could say that.

BARTON

Are you fascinated with airships?

LAREN

They scare me, actually.

BARTON

That's my beauty, over there -  
Patriot's Dream.

LAREN

I didn't know you piloted one of  
these things.

BARTON

You can ride with me if you like.  
If you behave yourself, I might  
just let you steer the rudder.

LAREN

Did you forget that I'm the guy  
with the psychopathic brother?

BARTON

You didn't know, Laren. I don't  
hold a grudge. We're now brothers -  
brothers in battle, now. Besides it  
will be safer up there, at seven  
hundred feet.

LAREN

You know, very well, that my  
brother's calling the shots, now.

BARTON

Well, if it works out ...you know  
where to find me.

Laren walks over to Manax547 and stands besides him like a  
trained dog. Manax547 pats him on the shoulder.

MANAX547

This will all be worth it - you'll  
see.

LAREN

I want to ride with Barton.

MANAX547

Really? I suppose it won't matter,  
so be my guest.

LAREN

I can't believe you're agreeing to  
it.

MANAX547

You'll keep an eye on him for me,  
won't you?

LAREN

I'm a spectator at this point.

MANAX547

I'm just playing with you. Besides,  
I already know what he is going to  
do, anyway.

EXT. SOUTH DAKOTA - IN FLIGHT - DAWN

The makeshift army moves north, towards South Dakota. What is lacking in troop size, is made up by the power of the Vulture-class airships. On the ground are mechs riding in Rattlesnake Transports.

Spring rains provide plenty of good cloud cover for the airships to hide behind. This is augmented by cloud making devices installed on each airship.

INT. PATRIOT'S DREAM - WHEELHOUSE

Laren stands next to Barton in the wheelhouse of Patriot's Dream.

LAREN

Any sense of where we're headed?

Captain Barton Fallgrove is concentrating on some crude maps that lay on an elaborate wooden table.

BARTON

We should be close to the Great Lakes by now. This is all hit and miss, Laren. If we reach Ontario, then we will have passed the main group.

A voice is heard over the communication system. It is Manax547, who is commanding the airship, Torrent's of Fire.

MANAX547 (V.O.)

Captain Barton, we have spotted them on the port side!

BARTON'S POV

Barton peers through a large brass telescope which dominates the center of the cabin. The cloud generators are functioning properly, and the sky is completely overcast.

BARTON

(squinting)

Well if they're not just right there! Over in the valley about thirty-five degrees west.

Through the telescope, a MASSIVE GROUP of people can be seen camped between two large hills.

BACK TO SCENE

LAREN

Are you sure it's not a city? They could be civilians.

BARTON

That's them, my friend. Those people are no civilians, nor refugees. Do civilians have artillery and military transports? That's my people.

LAREN

So what's your plan?

BARTON

One thing I do know, is that I don't plan on being an executioner.

Barton picks up a hand set and radios Manax547.

BARTON (CONT'D)

Trin, I'm ready to negotiate surrender.

MANAX547

Dive down upon them and subdue!

BARTON

What do you mean - we had a deal!

MANAX547

Barton, if you are obedient, I will reward you with a rich future, beyond that of worldly wealth.

BARTON

Rot in the fires of Hell, Trin!

Captain Barton slams down the handset and yells out new orders.

BARTON (CONT'D)

Plan 'B' - I repeat plan 'B'!

The Helmsman and Elevatorman turn their wheels hard --

EXT. SOUTH DAKOTA - IN FLIGHT

Patriot's Dream banks and rises up and over Torrent's of Fire and opens fire. A blaze of SMOKING GUNS plummets Torrent's of Fire - shredding it's fabric skin.

EXT. SOUTH DAKOTA - PRAIRIE

Witnessing the carnage in the sky, the separatist army on the ground scatters. The mech army's surprise is blown, and they scramble to conquer the humans on the ground. Transports peel through the throng and commence their work of death --

EXT. SOUTH DAKOTA - IN FLIGHT

It's a melee in the sky as airships loyal to one side or the other, battle each other. Mutiny abounds with the mechanoid solders having the upper hand --

Flares crackle and pop like a luminescent rain, and create a sickly yellow light that hangs in the air. Two ships loyal to Trin, Sky Tiger and Wind Dancer come to his aid. They slice into Patriot's Dream --

INT. PATRIOT'S DREAM - WHEELHOUSE

Both Laren, Captain Barton, and the rest of the wheelhouse crew, hug the hardwood of the wheelhouse, to avoid the barrage of bullets which SHATTER the windows, and RIP through the helm wheel and elevator stations. The often-used brass telescope POPS APART in several places --

Laren grabs the map table and pulled himself up. He knows he has been hit somewhere by flying debris, but he is too rattled to care at the moment. He forces himself out of --

EXT. PATRIOT'S DREAM - COMMAND DECK

-- the wheelhouse to survey the damage. Bullet holes riddle fabric and metal. We hear HELIUM LEAKING from the airship's balloons --

An explosion rocks the airship and Laren falls back inside --

INT. PATRIOT'S DREAM - WHEELHOUSE

-- the wheelhouse, next to Barton Fallgrove, who is rising to his feet. The wood construction of the wheelhouse lends little protection to those inside it. The Helmsman is dead, and his body lays slumped on the floor. The Elevatorman, injured and completely delirious, flings himself out of the cabin. Laren is completely shell-shocked and also delirious --

The command ship is SINKING rapidly. A large figure jumps onto --

## EXT. PATRIOT'S DREAM - COMMAND DECK

-- the command deck - causing the metal deck to shudder. It is Manax547. The Elevatorman is surprised at Manax547's sudden arrival and slumps to the floor in submissiveness. Manax547 notices a ceremonial sword secured on the Elevatorman's hip, grabs the hilt and slips it out of the scabbard.

MANAX547

This will do nicely...

Captain Fallgrove stumbles out of the wheelhouse and is stunned to see Manax547 standing there with a sword in his hand.

BARTON

Ya just don't quit - do ya!

MANAX547

I believe in being thorough!

Manax547 gives a single SLASH to the Elevatorman, and PLUNGES the sword into Barton. Barton breathes his last breath, slides off the sword, and slumps onto the metal decking.

## EXT. PATRIOT'S DREAM - OVERALL VIEW

With the captain gone, the crew is left to their own devices. In a last ditch effort, some of the crewmen have taken the lighter machine guns off their pivots and are firing madly - some at Manax547, who pursues the gunners, and flings them over the side.

## EXT. PATRIOT'S DREAM - COMMAND DECK

In the midst of the chaos, Laren discovers that most of his back had been peppered with small wood and metal fragments the aircraft rounds had splintered off the ship. He grips the railing and feels the airship SINK even faster. With the brightness of the rising sun, he can see the approaching ground --

Laren fumbles around the command deck for anything that resembles a rope. He then remembers that Barton Fallgrove carried around a large knife. Laren returns to Barton's body, unsnaps the knife out of the sheath, and cuts a long section of support line from the ship. He haphazardly wraps the line around his body, and then secures it to the railing. Manax547 returns to Laren.

MANAX547

Good - good. Time it right and  
you'll be able to get off this tub!

EXT. PATRIOT'S DREAM - UNDERCARRIAGE

Laren struggles to lower himself from the ship. His back is searing with pain, but he is able to wrap the rope closely around himself and shimmies down it. The airship is still a hundred feet off the ground. As it plummets, Laren prepares to jump at the right time. The airship is at seventy-five feet, then fifty feet, then twenty-five feet --

The end of the rope hits hard ground, and Laren releases from it, SPINNING and FLIPPING several feet to a stop as --

EXT. SOUTH DAKOTA - PRAIRIE FLOOR

-- the airship sails over him and collides with the earth.

The wreckage is mesmerizing. Fuel cylinders erupt in a blaze of fireballs, and the fabric skin burns away - exposing the metal framing. Laren lays in agony, and all around him, the ground is littered with smoke and dead bodies. The only thing he can manage to do is look up at the sky. Lying motionless, Laren shifts in and out of consciousness.

LAREN DREAMING -- of his father, Donner and mother, Pelipa. They are still young, and his brother, Trin is there. They are all playing and laughing together, a young family with few cares.

LAREN'S POV

We see the smiling face of Pelipa Fisk.

PELIPA (V.O.)

(whispering)

Get up, Laren. It's time for  
school, Honey.

The voice of his mother mutates into the sound of machines, and of a strangely familiar voice.

Someone lifts Laren's head up, and he can hear the distorted voice of his brother, Trin.

MANAX547

Laren - wake up!

BACK TO SCENE

Manax547 gently taps Laren's head. He picks up Laren and places him on a transport.

MANAX547 (CONT'D)

I shouldn't have let him ride with that fool, Barton.

**BRONX55**, stands next to Manax547. He is considerably larger than Manax547, but obedient to Manax's will.

BRONX55

Why don't you just kill him. He is nuisance - a useless human.

MANAX547

We will spare the boy. I can't ...he's family, you know.

BRONX55

I didn't know you had these sorts of feelings.

MANAX547

I can't help it. I'm just another useless human, myself.

BRONX55

(stuttering)

Sir, I it's just that --

MANAX547

Take him somewhere - anywhere, but I want him safe - got it!

BRONX55

Yes, Sir. I will find a settlement somewhere.

MANAX547

See to it.

EXT. GOODWIN FARM - DAY

DOGS BARK and chickens CLUCK and shuffle about as Bronx55 walks up to a small farmhouse and bangs on the front door. A well-built older gentleman walks up from behind as his wife answers the door. It is the residence of **JACK GOODWIN** and **WILMA GOODWIN**.

Wilma peers through the damaged door.

JACK

Be careful, dear - I'll talk to it.



BRONX55

This human is one of your own -  
Take care of him!

Bronx55 lays Laren on the doorstep.

JACK

We will. Leave us in peace, please.

Bronx55 leaves them as requested and boards a waiting transport, which quickly speeds away. The farmer and his wife huddle around Laren.

LAREN'S POV - ON THE GOODWINS' - growing blurry - waves of blackness.

JACK (CONT'D)

We need to get him inside. Wilma get all the veterinary supplies - they'll have to do!

WILMA

Work your magic - Jack!

INT. GOODWIN RESIDENCE - GUEST BEDROOM - NIGHT

LAREN'S POV - BEDROOM CEILING

LAREN

(weak voiced)  
Where am I? ...Mom?

The face of Wilma Goodwin appears.

WILMA

Here - in our home - your safe  
...you're okay, Son ...just rest.

INT. GOODWIN RESIDENCE - WINTER - NIGHT

There is a CRACKLING fire in a hearth, flashing light and shadow in a small kitchen.

WILMA

How was your soup?

LAREN

Wonderful - as usual.

WILMA

I'm glad you liked it.

LAREN

I never thought so much cold and snow, ever existed. Crestfallen got dicey, but...

WILMA

(smiling)

I has it's charm, Laren. It takes a while to appreciate it. You haven't been to too many other places, have you?

LAREN

I never thought I'd see Minnesota, that's for sure.

EXT. GOODWIN FARM - SPRING - DAY

We see Laren working a plow and doing other various chores.

INT. LAREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Laren slides into a fitful sleep, once again into --

INT. DREAMWORLD

-- a dark cave-like space - the sound of WATER DRIPPING - bouncing off the walls. Once again we see Laren as Matasailema, dressed in Zuni armor. Trin, as Ahaiyuta, appears at Laren's side.

TRIN

Were you going to take on the demon without me?

LAREN

No. I could not do it alone.

TRIN

So true, Brother.

We hear the sound of something moving in the cave. A'tahsaia slowly moves into the light, and he is grinning as usual.

A'TAHSAIA

So, you have come to visit me, again.

TRIN

For the last time.

Trin and Laren point their bows at the demon.

A'TAHSIAIA

Why would you to harm an old soul  
like me? There is only one like me  
in existence. I am unique...

TRIN

You are wondrous ...I do admit.

A'TAHSIAIA

And beautiful. My scales - do they  
sparkle? My teeth and talons shine -  
do they not? My mane is thick and  
sharp.

A glazed look befalls Trin as he lowers his bow.

LAREN

Ahaiyuta, snap out of it! His  
deception falls on you like a  
shroud.

TRIN

His power is mesmerizing...

A'TAHSIAIA

It is good to know that someone  
knows my worth.

LAREN

You are full of lies, Atahsaia. You  
have no worth. Your breath reeks of  
death, and your hide is stained  
with the blood of the innocent.

A'TAHSIAIA

Ahaiyuta, you will become part of  
me, and my future.

A'tahsaia jumps up then descends on Trin, and his enormous  
mouth engulfs Trin, in entirety.

Before Laren can fire a single arrow, Laren wakes up gasping.

INT. GOODWIN RESIDENCE - KITCHEN - DAY

Laren and the Goodwins' are eating breakfast --

JACK

Can't help but hear you scream at  
night.

LAREN

Sorry if I wake you - too many demons.

WILMA

It'll take time.

LAREN

I've been pretty restless, as if you can't tell.

JACK

We have faith that you will figure it all out.

LAREN

I think you both know, that I will be moving on soon. I have to ...well, I wish I knew what I had to do - I just need to --

Jack grabs Laren's hand.

JACK

We understand - you need to chart your own course - we've had several children - believe us, we know...

INT. LAREN'S BEDROOM - TWO WEEKS LATER - DAY

Light streams through a thinly veiled window, as Laren looks one last look around at his borrowed bedroom, and makes his way to the front door. Wilma Goodwin turns from cooking breakfast, and smiles at him.

WILMA

So this is the day, Laren?

LAREN

I am afraid so, Mrs. Goodwin.

WILMA

My dear boy, you can call me Wilma. No ...what I am really thinking is ...that you will call me Mom.

LAREN

(smiling from ear to ear)  
I would like that very much.

Wilma pats Laren on the cheek.

WILMA

Come back when you can - you hear?

LAREN

I will.

EXT. - FARMHOUSE

Laren walks out into the front yard into the morning air. Everything is quiet except for a few chickens CLUCKING. In the distance, we see his other benefactor, Mr. Goodwin. Jack is chipping away with a hoe at weeds that had popped up around some squash plants.

JACK

How's your back, Son?

LAREN

Not bad - actually - thanks.

JACK

So where do you think you're headed?

LAREN

Somewhere west of here, I think. I'm not sure, actually. Maybe I'll go all the way to the ocean.

JACK

Somewhere without any mechs, I would guess.

LAREN

Definitely.

JACK

Well, there's a town thirty degrees northwest of here. That would be an excellent place to start. I think you need to go where there are more folks. You know - the human kind.

Laren smiles and nods his head.

JACK (CONT'D)

Ya know ...one or two of them might be female, and, one or two of them might be kind of pretty. Ya jest never know, my lad.

LAREN

Well if they are as pretty as Mrs. Goodwin, I'll be just fine.

JACK

Come here, Son.

(giving Laren a side hug)

You're going to do just fine. Just be sure to take plenty of water - oh, and here is something for the road. Jack pulls out a large roll of paper money from his overcoat.

Laren leans forward to examine the wad of cash.

LAREN

Well, I definitely don't deserve that.

JACK

Sure you do. You've earned it, my boy - now go and be happy and don't go gambling away any of that paper, ya here!

LAREN

Thank you ...Dad.

JACK

Don't thank me quite yet. I want you to have Ferris, the quarter horse.

LAREN

He's your finest.

JACK

I have others. Take him - you'll need him. This can be unforgiving country, Laren. You know some of it now, but not all of it.

LAREN

You saved my life ...I will never take another day for granted.

JACK

You weren't as bad off as you could have been - the concussion - that was kinda tricky - the rest was making sure that infection didn't get the better of ya.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

You were about as bad off as some  
of the animals I attend to, and  
some have been worse off than  
you...

Laren hugs his surrogate father.

LAREN

A miracle all the same. Goodbye  
...Dad.

EXT. MINNESOTA PRAIRIE - DAY

Laren fights through the loneliness of the night for six days until he finds a road - a well-trodden road with tire grooves and cattle hoof depressions. Laren follows it north until he sees buildings in the distance. Eventually, he can see people, chickens and horses. The first resident he comes upon --

EXT. OSWILLA, MINNESOTA - DAY

-- is a **YOUNG GIRL**, not more than six.

LAREN

(tipping his hat)  
Morning, miss.

The girl runs off.

Laren rides up to a sign which reads --

SIGN: Oswilla, Minnesota; Established: 2186 Population: 488,  
Regional Mechanoid Warfare Champions, year: 2238.

The town is genteel in architecture and in the clothing of its residents. The street is lined with well-decorated storefronts; each shop having the classic names of Bakery, Boarding House, Library, Livery Stable and the like. Laren keeps riding until he smells something delicious. He follows the smell to the bakery.

INT. BAKERY - DAY

A few townsfolk are seated and nibbling on various breads and pastries. Laren stares at the pastries under a glass counter. He spots some cornbread that he can afford. There is a **YOUNG LADY** behind the counter.

LAREN

May I have some cornbread, the one  
right there, please?

The girl is repelled by Laren's unkempt appearance, but  
remains as composed as possible.

YOUNG LADY

Sure - that will be four Republics.

LAREN

Excuse me, Miss, but where might  
there be a place I could stay a  
night or two?

YOUNG LADY

Two doors down the street - that  
way.

LAREN

(staring)  
Thank you.

Laren notices that all of the people in the bakery are  
staring at him. Laren thanks the gal behind the counter and  
walks out of the small shop. He shelters his horse, and walks  
around town for a while, before entering the --

INT. BOARDING HOUSE

-- small boarding house suggested by the young lady. The  
inside is old and musty, and a frumpy woman addresses him at  
the counter. Her name is --

**WANDA MAYBERRY**, late 50's ...laid-back shopkeeper, who tends  
to ignore the fussiness of Oswilla society.

WANDA

Can I help ya?

LAREN

I'm looking for a room.

WANDA

Where ya from?

LAREN

I've been living with the Goodwin's  
...but ...that's not where I'm  
from.

WANDA

Where might that be?



LAREN

New Mexico - area called  
Crestfallen - I'm sure you've never  
heard of it.

WANDA

Can't say that I have. Look, I  
don't get many strangers - it's  
very rare. I don't think you want  
to stay in this town very long, if  
at all.

LAREN

You're going to have a lot more  
visitors - haven't you heard?

WANDA

What in the world do ya mean?

LAREN

Don't you know about the mechs? The  
mechs from the Golden City?

WANDA

You're a funny guy. There hasn't  
been a mech around here for over  
fifty years.

LAREN

They're practically at your  
doorstep - At least two hundred of  
them, and only God knows if there  
are more. I have more to tell ya,  
but I'm really tired. I do have  
money to pay.

Laren shows Wanda the paper money, and she is surprised at  
the printing.

WANDA

This is plumb old - still good -  
but old.

LAREN

Ya, I guess they were sitting on it  
for a while.

WANDA

Well, sorry if I was a little  
judgmental.

(MORE)

WANDA (CONT'D)

Look - it's just that I don't have strangers show up here very often, and the folks I usually get are drunks from town, sleeping off the booze, or hiding from their wives, or ...you know - girlfriends. The ladies just won't step two inches into this place.

LAREN

It doesn't seem that bad.

WANDA

You haven't seen the toilets. Hey, that gives me an idea. If you clean up a little around here, I'll give you a break on the rent.

LAREN

That sounds real good. Thanks ...I really appreciate it.

WANDA

After supper you can tell me about those mechs.

INT. BOARDING HOUSE - NIGHT

It is after dinner and Laren and Wanda Mayberry are sitting at a large wooden table. Laren is finishing his story about Manax547, and his mech army.

WANDA

Right good tale. Quite outlandish, but highly amusing.

LAREN

I'm not sure what the amusing part was.

WANDA

Well, like I said before, mechs are a thing of the past.

LAREN

I wish that were the case.

WANDA

You might want to sell your story to Fredrick Herd at the edge of town. He owns the livery stables. People call him Mr. Herd.

(MORE)

WANDA (CONT'D)

He likes a compelling story. And I bet he'd pay cash money for one.

LAREN

He might even believe me.

WANDA

Seeing ...is believing, Son. Most folks in this town are set in their ways, and ya best not poke around too much. I'd clean up too, or you'll get nowhere in this dainty society. They're use to my appearance. I just don't care too much.

LAREN

I'll be careful.

WANDA

It won't hurt that ya know the Goodwin's. They sure are decent folks. I wish I hadn't looked ya over the way I did - ya, the Goodwin's. I haven't seen them for a long time. My name is Wanda Mayberry. I grew up with one of their daughters, Martha Goodwin. She lives here in town. She married a looker by the name of Krone Sanders, and they have a daughter Myra, who works at the bakery, and another daughter, Christina, who lives with her husband, David at their grand estate.

LAREN

I met her.

WANDA

Who?

LAREN

Myra - if she works at the bakery - like you said.

WANDA

(laughing softly)  
Quite the prize isn't she?

LAREN

I thought she was going to throw up, when she saw me.

WANDA

Don't take it hard, boy. She's that way with everyone. You have to pull her nose down just so she'll look at ya.

LAREN

I don't need that kind of trouble, anyway.

WANDA

Sure ya do ...it's the only trouble worth having.

EXT. OSWILLA - MAINSTREET - DAY

The next day, Laren makes his way along the small shops that line each side of Oswilla. The town isn't exceptionally large, but it is well-populated for its size.

The people of Oswilla are well-mannered, polite, and for the most part, well-attired. Laren's appearance improves quite a bit, after visiting the barber and the clothing shop.

INT. TOWN LIVERY

Laren does what the innkeeper suggests, and visits the repair shop of --

**FREDERICK HERD**, early 60's, well-built, orthogonal body, with a tendency to ponder every detail.

When Laren enters, the man behind the counter seems quite wary, being unaccustomed to seeing strangers. Laren introduces himself and Mr. Herd returns the greeting, while keeping a watchful eye. Laren offers up the story for cash money, and his offer is received.

The shop houses a wide variety of vehicles; horse carriages, wagons, and steam powered vehicles, along with the parts and equipment that support them. Again, from the beginning, Laren rehearses his story - except this time he takes his time, and spices it up a little.

MR. HERD

You said this was supposed to be true - brilliant my friend - very brilliant, but come on --

LAREN

I only wish it wasn't, Sir. Trouble is coming - it's only a matter of time.

They are interrupted by --

**KRONE SANDERS**, late 40's, a tall, austere-looking gentleman with abnormally handsome features, and a disingenuous charisma.

KRONE

Time for what?

MR. HERD

We were having a bit of a discussion.

KRONE

How's my rig coming along, Fredrick?

HERD

Not ready, I'm afraid, Mr. Krone, but come on over here, and meet this young man here. He gave me this long tale about how there are mechs roaming the countryside - quite intriguing - there are airships too - they're taking over the region, says he.

KRONE

(staring and grinning)

Liars and cheaters aren't welcome in our town, young man. My name is Krone Sanders - nice to meet you.

Krone holds out his hand to shake Laren's, but does not extend it. Laren does not reciprocate.

LAREN

Liars and cheaters aren't welcome in my town, either, Mr. Sanders.

KRONE

Oh, don't take offense. I just have dry sense of humor.

LAREN

Have you heard about any mechs in the area?

KRONE

You mean those tall metal things that walk on two feet - should I have?

LAREN

Maybe, not, but there was a battle over a hundred miles from here. Hundreds of human soldiers were killed by almost two hundred mechs attacking in airships and armored transports. They are growing in number, and soon they'll be at your door. Both of you have to warn everyone - especially you - Mr. Sanders.

KRONE)

Why me? I'm just a business man, my friend?

LAREN

Because you look important, and I think you are important.

KRONE

Well I can't say I'm not important; however, there is no proof - no messages - no news of any kind that would support that what you are saying is true.

LAREN

Well, okay then. I'll find someone else who will believe me.

KRONE

Look, Boy! We don't need no trouble-makers in this town - so I suggest you hightail it out of here before you get folks riled up.

LAREN

I mistook you for a gentleman.

KRONE

A gentleman? Even a gentleman has to say what's on his mind, now and then.

LAREN

I won't tell you what's on my mind.

Laren slips towards the door, opens it and slams it shut. Mr. Herd runs outside. --

EXT. TOWN LIVERY - STREET

-- and calls for Laren to wait.

MR. HERD

Hey, my friend. You might want this. You deserve it, you know.

Laren turns around, and Mr. Herd flips Laren a silver dollar. Laren snatches it out of the air, is tempted to throw it back, but then stuffs it into his pocket and steps out into the street.

INT. TOWN LIVERY

Mr. Herd and Krone exchanged puzzled expressions.

MR. HERD

He might be telling the truth, ya know.

KRONE

Nah, just some boy seeking attention, I suspect.

MR. HERD

I think he's a boy who has had too much attention.

KRONE

Ya think so?

MR. HERD

I know so. I can see it in his eyes.

EXT. OSWILLA - MAIN STREET

Laren heads for the --

INT. BOARDING HOUSE

-- boarding house, replaying the recent conversation back and forth in his mind. He is internally agitated - and hides his bitterness deep inside.

Laren embraces the solace of his rented room and remains there, except to do the chores Wanda Mayberry had given him. Boredom falls heavy on Laren, and he becomes restless. One afternoon, he leaves the boarding house and slips down the main street to a nearby --

EXT. TOWN PARK - DAY

-- park. There, he sits down under some oak trees, and stares at the happy people living in their ideal community. Children run and play, and the elderly stroll along the boardwalk. Laren's jealousy gets the better of him and he stares at the ground in bitterness. Yet something unexpected happens. Someone sits down next to him. Not just any someone, but the daughter of Krone Sanders. Laren looks up to see --

**MYRA SANDERS**, 18, petite, with sandy blonde hair and brown eyes, wearing a frilly white dress.

MYRA

Hey.

LAREN

(looking up slowly)  
Hey?

MYRA

(grinning)  
My dad says you're crazy - so,  
naturally I had to meet you.

LAREN

You find crazy people interesting?

MYRA

(laughing softly)  
Sometimes. Are you crazy?

LAREN

(making circles around his  
head)  
Unfortunately - yes.

MYRA

No you're not! My father is such an  
idiot.

LAREN

Why are you talking to me?

MYRA

Why would you ask that?



LAREN

Because attractive girls don't usually sit right next me and start talking to me.

MYRA

You're quite the flatterer - look I was just kidding. My name is Myra Sanders, by the way.

LAREN

Hey, it's alright. My name is Laren ...Fisk.

MYRA

My father can be a real pain in the behind.

LAREN

I kinda gave him no choice, with my crazy stories and all.

Myra cocks her head to one side and looks puzzled for a moment.

MYRA

Did you come into the bakery while back?

LAREN

Yep, that was me.

MYRA

I sure wouldn't be sitting next to that guy. You clean up real good.

LAREN

Well, thanks. No one's ever said that to me before.

MYRA

So why are you all riled up?

LAREN

The gears of change are spinning, and there are events that will take place which will put your family and community in danger.

MYRA

Like what?

LAREN

Like what I told your father.  
Armies of mechs - seeking to take  
control.

MYRA

I'm sorry, Laren, but I can't  
believe it.

LAREN

Because your father says it isn't  
true?

MYRA

Maybe.

LAREN

Don't mind me, Myra. I can get a  
little melodramatic, at times.

MYRA

Oh, I can get a little melodramatic  
myself. Ask my mother.

LAREN

I'm just another stranger.

MYRA

You're in pain. I can see it in  
your eyes. You have nice eyes, you  
know.

LAREN

I guess I haven't looked at them  
for a while. I'll have to take your  
word for it.

Laren begins to snicker, and soon they are both laughing.

INT. SANDER'S RESIDENCE - STUDY - EVENING

Myra storms into her father's office and snatches a newspaper  
out of her father's hands.

MYRA

How dare you treat that poor boy  
that way? He's just come from some  
kind of war. He has seen death, and  
you're so callous - so smug in your  
self-proclaimed triumph of success.  
He was even wounded for his  
efforts! Why, Father, do you need  
to be such a swine?

KRONE

Slow down, Myra, and never call me a swine again! War wounds - he never said he had war wounds - that could change everything!

MYRA

So I suppose if he had an arm or a leg missing that would have made it that much easier to believe him?

KRONE

Myra - you know full well that I believe in only what I can see.

MYRA

I suppose I did - Father!

Myra storms out of the room and heads to her bedroom. She nearly crashes into her sister --

**CHRISTINA PALEMOON**, late 20's, lives with her husband **DAVID PALEMOON**, on the second story of the Sanders' three-story home.

CHRISTINA

Hey, what's the matter - Sis?

MYRA

(mock whimpering)  
Father - again.

CHRISTINA

You know - Sis? I don't find Father to be as much a disappointment as you do.

MYRA

That's because he lets you stay in this opulent house, even though you've been married for over three years.

CHRISTINA

There isn't anywhere else to live in this one-horse town, that is ...well ...decent.

MYRA

You won't even play a game of backgammon or chess with me - Sis.

CHRISTINA

Well - you seem a little  
preoccupied lately.

MYRA

He's not a bad preoccupation.

CHRISTINA

He is pretty cute, in a distant  
dreamer sort of way.

MYRA

Father hates him - I know he does!

CHRISTINA

Invite him to dinner and see what  
happens. It should be fun.

MYRA

That's a brilliant idea! Actually I  
will put a bee in Mother's bonnet,  
and she will make it happen. I knew  
one day you would have a brilliant  
idea.

Christina gives Myra an evil look, but Myra does not care one  
bit. She runs to the parlor to find her mother --

INT. SEWING ROOM

-- **MARTHA SANDERS**, early 40's, just as adnormally beautiful  
as her husband, with a regal bearing.

MYRA

My father - that man!

MARTHA

Yes, fathers are always men. What  
is the matter dear?

MYRA

Well, I think you have heard of  
Father's injustice to the stranger  
in town. His name is Laren. Well,  
anyway, I was thinking we could  
invite Laren to dinner, so that  
Father can redeem himself, by  
allowing Laren to feel more welcome  
in our town.

MARTHA

You are not going through all this effort just because he's a boy, are you?

MYRA

Well - no. He is completely uninteresting. He is more of a project, to expose Father's shame.

MARTHA

Invite him over. I would like to meet this uninteresting young man.

MYRA

Okay, I will.

MARTHA

It just so happens that I'm a little miffed at your father, right now, and I wouldn't mind seeing him squirm a little.

EXT. TOWN PARK - DAY

Several days later, Myra issues the invitation to the dinner party she had worked so hard for.

MYRA

Father wants you to come to our house for dinner. Father is more humble, now. Mother and I have been making his life miserable because of you. Mother decided that she couldn't stand to be around a man that looked down on the unfortunate. I made some comments about you and - well - Mother always takes everything I say, seriously. She has been sleeping in the loft under the widow's walk. She says it's quite cozy up there. Father - and how do I say this delicately - Father misses having a warm body sleeping next to him. He has become an insomniac. They were always pecking each other - now they barely speak.

LAREN

All because of me?

MYRA  
 (giggling)  
 Yes! You're quite the troublemaker.

LAREN  
 ( chuckling softly)  
 Well, I would want any man to miss  
 a warm body because of me.

MYRA  
 (exaggerated sigh)  
 You know it's only temporary.

LAREN  
 Well, okay, Myra. It should be  
interesting - that's for sure.  
 Having dinner with your Father is  
 worth the agony, if it means I can  
 be with you.

MYRA  
 (laughing out loud)  
 Oh, Laren, don't be so pessimistic.  
 My father isn't that unscrupulous.  
 Like I said, Mother and I have  
softened him up for you. Also, my  
 older sister Christina, and her  
 husband, David Palemoon, will be  
 there as moral support.

LAREN  
 You know ...Wanda Mayberry pointed  
 out David Palemoon to me once, and  
 he seems kinda quiet to me - nice  
 guy and all, but kinda quiet.

MYRA  
 Sometimes, it's what people don't  
 say, that you need to pay the most  
 attention to.

EXT. SANDERS ESTATE - DAY

With a great deal of reservation, Laren arrives at the front door of the Sanders estate. The residence is a three-story wonder, with gingerbread trim and wrap around porches. All the other houses in the community look insignificant compared to the Sanders' home. It is obvious that the Sanders want folks to know that they are the richest people in town.

INT. FOYER

When Laren enters the foyer, he is met by Martha Sanders, wearing an evening gown. She then leads them to the dining room, where Krone Sanders sits at the head of the table.

INT. DINING ROOM

KRONE  
(gesturing)  
Sit, please...

Laren is seated opposite to Myra, with Martha sitting opposite to Krone. Next to Myra, is her radiantly beautiful, but cold sister, Christina, while seated next to Laren is Christina's husband --

**DAVID PALEMOON**, mid 30's, tall and reserved, with penetrating eyes.

Hovering around them is --

**JENNY WILDWOOD**, the maid, early 20's, who is making sure that everything is in order for the dinner.

Krone clears his throat and stands before his family and guest.

KRONE (CONT'D)  
Laren, it has come to my attention that I have been less than a gentleman concerning you. When you first came into town, I was quite rude, to say the least. I was hoping that you might forgive me, and we could make amends. You and Myra have become quite fond of each other, and you have been nothing less than a gentleman.

LAREN  
Of course I will - please forgive me for taking any unnecessary offense.

KRONE  
I do say you are quite the storyteller. Everyone in town has been buzzing about you and your take on future events. You are quite outlandish. This town can be boring, and you've put a little spark into it. Thank you, my boy.

LAREN

I do my best, sir.

MARTHA

Well, shall we eat?

Silence is creeping into the room, and Martha decides to pose a controversial question.

MARTHA (CONT'D)

So, if Laren's story is true, Krone, what course of action would you take, my love?

KRONE

Well, my dear, I suppose I would talk to the mayor, and I am sure the mayor would pass it along to the sheriff, and the sheriff would form a militia or something.

MARTHA

That is not a course of action, my dear. That is abdicating responsibility. Perhaps you could be more creative.

KRONE

If, and only if, this was a real crisis, I would make a plea to the city council and get their support. They're the only ones who have any real power in this town.

MARTHA

That sounds like a very good plan, and any husband of mine would execute that plan - and soon.

KRONE

They won't believe me, dear.

Laren's eyes widen, he tenses up as he endures the marital banter.

Myra, Christina and David have that not again expression, and it appears to Laren that Martha is barely holding back her disdain.

KRONE (CONT'D)

It is only his word...



MARTHA

I believe his word. My parents believe in him, and so do some of the people in town. Let go of all of this, Krone - we can rebuild it. You started out with nothing. Everyone around this table are all that matter.

KRONE

What do you mean - let go - We're not losing anything, but if it makes you all happy, I will talk to them in the morning, my dear.

MARTHA

(smiling)

Well - how about some dessert?

LAREN

I would like to go with you, Sir ...if you will have me? After all it is my story that you will be promoting.

KRONE

(faking a smile)

Yes - yes. You would need to be there, wouldn't you? The council just might be the ticket - yes indeed.

MARTHA

(loudly)

This dessert is delicious! Very satisfying!

The rest at the table, except Krone, snicker.

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

Krone and Laren stand before a panel of the town elite --

**CHAIRMAN REINS**, early 60's, leads the discussion.

CHAIRMAN REINS

The council will now call to order the matter - I don't know what to call this - a possible invasion proposed by the young Laren Fisk. Mr. Fisk you propose that there is an schism in our government that our community is not aware of.

(MORE)

CHAIRMAN REINS (CONT'D)

You state that you had some involvement with mechanical beings you call mechanoids, or androids, but not quite robots, as you say, and that these said creatures are roaming the land, and that they will eventually overpower us - please explain - also explain where you are --

Krone interrupts the Chairman by clearing his throat.

KRONE

Excuse me Mr. Chairman, but I believe that this young man's statement stands by itself.

CHAIRMAN REINS

Are you Mr. Fisk's council - or something? I was not aware that this was a trial.

KRONE

(stuttering)

But --

CHAIRMAN REINS

First of all, I believe that this young man is capable of speaking for himself, and second of all your appearance here does not help his cause. Your reputation as an opportunist tainted this council long ago.

LAREN

Excuse me Mr. Chairman, but Mr. Sanders came with me under duress.

CHAIRMAN REINS

(snickering)

It was the wife, huh.

The whole room erupts in laughter.

LAREN

(whispering)

Sorry Mr. Sanders.

CHAIRMAN REINS

(straightening up)

Okay, people, let's try to act professional ...Mr. Fisk, you have the floor.

LAREN

(clearing his throat)

Well ...I know I am a stranger here  
 ...there is a man from a place  
 called The Golden City. His name is  
 Trin and he is at war with this  
 nation - for what reason, I don't  
 really know, but he has an army of  
 mechs - not large mind you, but  
 very lethal. He was at war with  
 some separatist freedom fighters,  
 but he defeated them, and now he is  
 poised to dominate this region,  
 and...

CHAIRMAN REINS

What is this man's last name?

LAREN

(fidgeting)

It is hard for me to tell you. It's  
 Fisk, sir.

We hear loud groans resounding in the hall.

CHAIRMAN REINS

This madman is a relation of yours?

LAREN

He's my brother.

CHAIRMAN REINS

Why would you tell us this?

LAREN

Because this impending doom is  
 bigger than me. It is bigger than  
 Mr. Sanders, here. It is bigger  
 than this council, and this town.  
 We will all experience a life  
 changing event, soon enough.

CHAIRMAN REINS

Is there any more that you would  
 like to add to this discussion,  
 before we adjourn.

LAREN

I was there, Mr. Chairman. I nearly  
 died in a battle, and I have the  
 wounds to prove it. We fought  
 against my brother - in airships.  
 (MORE)

LAREN (CONT'D)

I was mortally wounded and my brother took pity on me and had one of his mechs leave me with the Goodwin's. They nursed my wounds ...well ...I then rode here on one of their horses. There is more to the story, but ...that's the crux of it.

CHAIRMAN REINS

Well, a very compelling tale, but I would like to see these wounds, if I may.

Laren unbuttons and pulls off his shirt - revealing his scarred back.

CHAIRMAN REINS (CONT'D)

(leaning over his desk)

Well, that's definitely no farm accident. Okay, Mr. Fisk, we will deliberate, thank you for your time.

EXT. TOWN HALL

Krone shoves Laren down the Town Hall entry stairs.

KRONE

What in blazes was that? You made a mockery out of me!

Laren straightens up dusts himself off.

LAREN

Not everything is about you, Krone!

KRONE

You leave me alone! You leave my family alone, and especially my daughter - and you never call me by my first name again - ever!

Krone climbs into his buggy and snaps the reins.

EXT. TOWN PARK - DAY

Myra finds Laren who is sitting on the same park bench they first met on.

MYRA

Where have you been? Are you avoiding me?

LAREN

I'm forbidden to see you.

MYRA

Nonsense, I'm sure Father will get over it.

LAREN

The council was indecisive. Which means that they didn't believe me.

MYRA

Who cares. I still believe you.

LAREN

Thanks Myra. I really appreciate that.

Myra begins to listen intensely to a distant sound.

MYRA

Laren, what is that? Do you hear that?

Laren slowly stands up.

LAREN

Yes, I do, Myra, and I hope I'm wrong about what that sound is.

Myra reaches for Laren's hand.

MYRA

Let's go find out what it is.

A rumbling noise can be heard in the distance. The rumble grows louder, as Laren and Myra run towards it --

INT. OSWILLA - MAINSTREET

Soon the townsfolk are pouring out of shops and offices, intensely interested in whom or what might be approaching their town --

In a gush of dust, a machine rushes along the main street of town, and comes to an abrupt stop. The engine of the metallic creature thrums, and thick smoke pours out of its central stack.

It is a Rattlesnake transport.

Laren, Myra, and the townsfolk are moving closer to the machine. Their curiosity turns to fear as a hatch, located on the top, flops open, and a particularly large android machine pops out - a mechanoid, holding a high tech rifle.

When the dust clears, Laren and the townsfolk can see several other mechs disembark the spine of the beast-like machine. The mech troops spread across town.

The large mechanoid points a thick metal finger at Laren. He is --

**KYROS724**, android pilot, hulking and curious.

KYROS724

Where are we?

LAREN

Well, you happen to be in the fair town of Oswilla, Minnesota. I have not made your acquaintance, yet.

KYROS724

Acquaint...?

LAREN

Your name?

KYROS724

(staring)

Kyros724 ...and your name?

LAREN

Laren Fisk.

KYROS724

I know you. You're the human who repaired us.

Laren walks closer and casually sits on the front of the transport.

LAREN

(nodding his head)

That I am.

KYROS724

We hoped you had died in this wilderness.

LAREN

I almost did ...but I am still here, and it would be nice to know what you are going to do with me.

KYROS724

We have subdued the north, and it seems they would rather fight for us, than die. What to do with you and this town? I would prefer to kill you - kill all of you. You were a traitor to my people; however, because you are the master's brother I will refer to the master himself for further orders.

We hear the townsfolk gasp when Kyros724 talks of securing the region.

LAREN

You will, hopefully spare this poor hamlet in the meantime - I did repair you.

KYROS724

I will only spare your life and those around you, if you and they will cooperate. Mind you this, Bronx55 told me that he had definite plans for you, if you and he ever crossed paths again.

LAREN

(sighing)

I will remember that ...pardon me. There someone I need to talk to.

KYRS0724

Be my guest.

Laren walks over to Krone who is looking very humbled.

LAREN

I am not going to say, I told you so. I will leave that up to Mrs. Sanders.

Myra comes up from behind and clings to her father.

MYRA

(shaking)

Daddy, tell me everything is going to be okay!

KRONE

It will be honey. Don't you mind.  
Laren and I will work this out  
together.

Krone leans into Laren, and whispers.

KRONE (CONT'D)

A thousand apologies would not be  
enough, but I hope you won't mind  
if I save a little face, here?

LAREN

(smiling coldly)  
No, not really.

Laren walks back over to the resolute Kyros724.

LAREN (CONT'D)

So Kyros724, what happens now?

KYROS724

I will transmit to Commander  
Bronx55, and we will wait for his  
instructions.

LAREN

We just wait for Bronx55 to come  
and slaughter the town in person -  
is that the deal?

KYROS724

Something like that.

Laren shakes his head and then walks to the Town Hall. He  
pauses and looks backward. The entire town is following  
behind him.

INT. TOWN HALL - AFTERNOON

The humans huddle around wooden tables and a well-stoked  
fire. The people of Oswilla press Laren to tell his story  
again, from the ill-fated meeting with the mechs, to his  
escape and flight to their humble village. This time Laren  
keeps the descriptions to a minimum --

**KAREN WHIPPLE**, early 40's, stands up. Her disdain is quite  
visible.

KAREN

Laren - that's the name - right -  
Why didn't we know about this?



CHAIRMAN REINS

Don't go on blaming, Laren. He tried to warn us - we just couldn't swallow it - it was just --

LAREN

Mr. Chairman, it doesn't matter anymore. We have to think about what to do now!

KAREN

What do we do now?

LAREN

I wish I knew - but one thing I do know is that Mr. Kyros out there, has not been able to contact his leader for some time now. I think the mechs have spread themselves too thin, or else we would be dead, by now. They don't know what they are doing - and you know what? That buys us some time.

Krone's older brother, **TOM SANDERS**, early 60's, joins in the conversation.

TOM

Where did they come from?

LAREN

Some place called The Golden City.

TOM

I've heard of it. When I was just a boy, my father took me to the first Technology Exposition, in Denver. I saw things that you would not believe existed. My father knew a man there who was a scientist. He worked on the exhibit, and he told us that there was a place where the old technology still existed and, for the most part, thrived. It was a city called Athenaeum. Maybe, just maybe, those mechs are searching for that particular enclave where they could create even more mechanoid armies and - you know - try to rule the world, or what's left of it.

LAREN

It makes sense that Athenaeum is this golden city I've heard about. I do hope Tom, that you are wrong about the mechs creating even more armies. The ones I've met played dumb - even helpless. Now they have human troops - more than I can count. Oh - I almost forgot about the airships - about twenty of them.

A **CRYING WOMAN**, in the middle of the hall, pops up.

CRYING WOMAN

What do we do, Mr. Fisk? We can't just sit here and wait for them to murder us!

MARTHA

We can do nothing for the moment, but plan. We need to keep our heads and make rational decisions. Right Laren?

Krone, who sees the opportunity to grandstand, stands up next to his wife.

KRONE

We are going to beat these things! We will see the somber faces of this town beaming once again. Are we going to let them beat us - no!

TOM

(shouting)  
Hear, Hear!

MARTHA

(shouting)  
Hear, Hear!

The whole room follows suit, and there is spontaneous cheering.

KRONE

We all need to work together to find a weakness in the mech defenses...

At the other side of the hall, we see a YOUNG MAN waving to Laren. Laren excuses himself and makes his way through the crowd to meet --

EXT. TOWN HALL

-- the young man, who leads Laren outside the great hall and into the open air where there were a few young people waiting to greet him.

The young man who escorted him outside, is --

**NICK RALSTON**, 25, mid height - clad in a vest and bowler hat, with a jovial nature. Next to him is --

**LORI WILDWIND**, 22, red headed, and full of fire. Her beauty is matched by her horsemanship.

Hugging the wall is --

**TODD LINDSTROM**, 18, tall and lanky. He has an awkward grace that the ladies adore.

Next to Todd, is --

**BLISTER BUCHANAN**, 28, short and stocky. He is brawny, and takes a fall off a horse with unnerving ease.

NICK

My name is Nick Ralston, This beautiful creature over here, is Lori Wildwind - is she wild? Well, yes she is! You might have met her sister, Jenny Wildwind, or her brother, Rick. Jenny is the obedient one - does as she's told - being a maid and all at the Sanders' place. Rick is a terrific shot, with a steady hand and popular with the ladies.

Nick gives Lori Wildwind a squeeze.

NICK (CONT'D)

This one's mine and you best keep your hands off of her. She's agreed to marry me, so that means she doesn't have a spec of sense in her.

Lori Wildwind smiles and gives Nick a peck on the cheek.

LAREN

(laughing)

I'll watch my hands. Who are your friends, over there?

Laren points to Todd and Blister.

NICK

Come on over, fellas, and meet my friend Laren, here.

Nick gestures to Todd and Blister as they slowly make their way to Nick and Lori.

NICK (CONT'D)

This here is Blister - Blister Buchanan, and this here is Todd Lindstrom. They're my chums.

Laren gives them a couple of quick nods. These four seem like the roughest hooligans that Oswilla could come up with.

NICK (CONT'D)

So you use to run with the mechs, eh!

LAREN

I guess you could say that. Currently I'm trying to figure out how to destroy them.

NICK

Man, you came to the wrong town if you want to eliminate mechs! There is a town southwest of here called Crossfire Crater - now that's a town that could take on mechs - everyone is toting a piece, you know. They are fortified and well-armed. Todd's cousins live over there - the Trask's - they're a real wild bunch. The entire town is paranoid - have been for years.

LAREN

How far away is this town of paranoids?

NICK

Only fifty miles.

LAREN

Why hasn't anyone told me about this place before?

NICK

(laughing)

That's because Crossfire Crater and Oswilla aren't exactly on speaking terms. They're old chessbot rivals.

LAREN

Well, they're going to need to fight together whether they like it or not. What is going to be extremely difficult will be transporting everyone from Oswilla to Crossfire. If the city is walled, we should be able to hold them off from there. Mechs have wicked skills, but they can't jump over walls - at least, I don't think they can.

NICK

(shaking his head)  
Yer' crazy! Crossfire won't accommodate us, and how are we going to get past them mechs, Laren?

LAREN

Yes, you have a point there.

LORI

(smiling seductively)  
Maybe if I do a little dance number it might distract them.

Laren whole body shakes, as if struck with lightning.

LAREN

(shouting)  
Why didn't I think of this before?

BLISTER

You got an idea, Laren?

LAREN

Ya - I've been looking at this all wrong. Lori, you were joking about distracting them. What if it's not about distraction...? Maybe, it's about disruption - yes, disruption!

Laren crouches on the ground and makes a little sketch.

LAREN (CONT'D)

Here is the head of your average mech. Here we have the brain disc stack and then the power source.  
(MORE)

LAREN (CONT'D)

One thing I learned from my father's journals, was that an electrical field is created by the particle accelerator unit located within the upper torso. The field, flows up the neck to the cerebral brain stack, where it helps stabilize the rotating data discs that make up the stack. If you disrupt the field, you confuse the mechanoid. The shielding to the brain stack is designed to withstand a certain amount of punishment from enemy fire, but not any strong fluctuations in the field.

(breaking into a smile)

Todd Lindstrom looks completely confused. Everyone else is trying to maintain an illusion of comprehension.

LORI

So how do we disrupt the field?

LAREN

Magnetism - even a low yield would work, theoretically, but we need a source.

TODD

Magnets are going to defeat the mechs?

LAREN

Exactly. I have to find Mr. Herd!

Laren runs back into --

INT. TOWN HALL

-- the grand hall and finds Mr. Herd against a wall, listening to Krone give his speech. Laren is able, quite easily, to coax him outside.

EXT. TOWN HALL

MR HERD

Not that I don't mind missing that blowhard's speech, but what is going on here?

LAREN  
 (breathing hard)  
 Do you have any magnets?

MR HERD  
 Ya, maybe - I could maybe pull them  
 off of a generator - why?

LAREN  
 It's for the mechs - to disrupt the  
 electromagnetic field in their  
 brain stack - we might be able to  
 confuse them.

MR HERD  
 Slow down, boy - you're confusing  
 me!

LAREN  
 The mechs have a strong magnetic  
 field that keeps neural  
 transmissions flowing to --

MR HERD  
 -- the brain. I'm starting to  
 follow you.

Mr. Herd grabs Laren by the shoulders.

MR HERD (CONT'D)  
 If we can disrupt the transmission  
 ...then - follow me.

Mr. Herd leads Laren to --

INT. MR. HERDS WORKSHOP

-- his workshop.

He is searching for something across layers of shelving. Mr.  
 Herd's fingers fall onto an item --

A SMALL JAR - with BLACK SAND in it.

Mr. Herd finds a second item, which ends up being --

A SMALL MAGNET

Laren opens the jar and stirs the inside with his fingers.  
 The sand feels gritty, like black gun powder, but doesn't  
 stick to his fingers.

MR HERD

Laren, pour some of that out onto  
the table, please.

Laren does as requested, and Mr. Herd grabs the magnet and swirls it around in the sand. Slowly, the sand clings to the magnet and forms formations that resemble blackened ice crystals.

MR HERD (CONT'D)

This here is magnetite. See how it  
reacts to a magnetic field?

LAREN

Where do we get the stuff?

MR HERD

About twenty-five miles west of  
here, you'll find an abandoned town  
and an open pit mine. People use to  
mine for iron ore there. There are  
exposed fields of iron ore tailings  
which are not hard to spot, because  
they are a bright orange-red. The  
stuff you will want to find will be  
as black as this - as much as you  
could ever want.

LAREN

(smiling)

You have saved us all Mr. Herd.

Laren runs back to --

EXT. TOWN HALL

-- Nick and his gang.

LAREN

We need someone to ride to the  
abandoned mine and collect as much  
of this black sand as possible -  
then get back here quick.

NICK

Todd here is the best rider in town  
and has a mighty good horse.

Todd slaps Blister on the back.



TODD

Well, Blister here, is just as good a rider as me - my horse is more agile though - quick as lightning.

BLISTER

Well mine is more of a work horse than a prancing pony.

LORI

It's pretty obvious we need one rider to hightail it to Crossfire Crater, and one to collect the ore - and it should be pretty obvious to even you two yahoos, which one of ya should take on those tasks.

TODD

I'm glad she's your girl, Nick.

LAREN

So we are agreed, friends?

NICK

Sounds good. It will be a miracle if these two can get past those mechs - but you know - I think we're past the point of being safe about these things.

The group is looking pretty pleased with themselves, when Myra shows up, looking a little miffed.

MYRA

What are you doing out here?

LAREN

Just doing a little planning.

MYRA

I don't think you're taking this serious enough, Laren.

LAREN

Well, hold on Myra, we found a way to defeat the mechs. We're not just shooting the breeze over here.

Nick and his group are rolling their eyes at the scene.

LORI

Why don't you give her a hug or something? Looks like she's been missing her man.

MYRA

Excuse me?

Lori walks over and pushes Myra.

LORI

Little rich girl goin' to take me  
on!

Laren gets between the two girls to prevent a fight. The arms of the Lori and Myra are flying in all directions around Laren.

LAREN

Nick, a little help here!

Nick also wedges his way in between the two quarrelsome gals. Lori takes her last parting shot and backs away.

LORI

(sticking out her tongue)  
Nick, let's give these two some  
alone time.

Myra is spitting mad and kicks some dirt at Lori.

LAREN

Hold on there Myra, I think we  
should discuss this in private.

Myra folds her arms and stamps one foot.

MYRA

Fine!

Laren and Myra both walk behind --

EXT. TOOL SHED

-- a tool shed.

LAREN

Myra, are you okay?

MYRA

Okay? No I'm not okay. My whole  
world is falling apart.

LAREN

I don't think it has to ...fall  
apart ...that is.

MYRA

So, what do you think is going to happen to us?

LAREN

I don't know for sure; however, there is something I do know.

MYRA

What?

Laren caresses Myra's cheek.

LAREN

Your father is right about one thing. Those things out there do have a weakness, and if we can exploit it - then - well, we just may have a chance.

MYRA

Like what kind of weaknesses?

LAREN

Like the fact, that, the way a mechanoid thinks is extremely linear. Like all mechanical things, they only have one plan and one course of action. Their minds are not all over the place, like some females, I know. Oh, and another thing, they don't have delicate skin or those large, perfect lips ...like ...you have.

MYRA

(giggling and sneering at the same time)  
Are you trying to be romantic?

LAREN

Your lips sure are pretty when you spread them out with a smile.

MYRA

Do you love me, Laren?

LAREN

Ya, I suppose I do...

MYRA

Don't you want to kiss me?

LAREN

I don't really know how...

Myra tenderly presses her lips against Laren's.

MYRA

That is, lesson number one.

Laren savors the moment.

LAREN

Lesson number one ...did I pass?

MYRA

(smiling)

You did alright ...

Laren breaks out into an awkward smile.

LAREN

I guess we need to go inside -  
they'll be wondering about us.

MYRA

Ya, I suppose Lesson number two can  
wait a little bit longer.

Myra Takes Laren's hand and leads him into the town hall --

INT. TOWN HALL

-- where everyone in the room stares when Laren and Myra  
reenter the great hall.

The tension, which had hung in the air, has been replaced by  
jovial conversation. Fear has been replaced by hope.

Laren and Myra find Mr. Herd chatting with Wanda Mayberry,  
and join them at their table.

LAREN

Mind if we join you?

MR HERD

(chuckling)

I forgot how impetuous young people  
are. Please do.

Myra kisses Mr. Herd on the forehead.

MYRA

(smiling)

We'll grow out if it, eventually.

MR HERD

We'll see.

(caresses Myra's cheek)

So I guess we are committed to the plan?

LAREN

(leaning back)

It's better than listening to Krone ramble on - sorry Myra.

MYRA

Believe me, I understand.

MR HERD

So when do we start?

LAREN

We already did.

EXT. OSWILLA - ALLEYWAY - DAY

The next morning, Todd Lindstrom departs for Crossfire Crater and Blister Buchanan begins his search for the magnetite sand.

Laren waits until they have left, to tell Krone of the plan Nick Ralston and his posse have set in motion. Krone comes unglued and FISTS the top of Laren's shirt.

KRONE

(turning beat red)

What do mean they're riding out of town? God help you if those boys get themselves shot in the back! You don't speak for this town. This is my town - boy! You've already done a marvelous job of putting it in harm's way.

LAREN

(straining to speak)

They'd rather get shot in the back than do nothing. You can't hide behind your money anymore Mr. Sanders! We're running out of time! We need Crossfire Crater.

KRONE

(eyebrows flared,  
loosening his grip a  
little)

(MORE)

KRONE (CONT'D)

Of course, you never have been to Crossfire Crater, because if you had, you would know why it's called Crossfire. Those people are trigger-happy!

LAREN

Well, at least they have weapons to defend themselves. What do we have? A handful of ancient bolt action rifles that can't shoot straight anymore. Krone, our world is going to change, dramatically. It hurts me mightily that I had a hand in it, but I can't sit back and see this town get slaughtered. Whether or not you like it, this is also my town, now, Mr. Sanders!

Krone released his grip completely. He haphazardly pats Laren on the head, and strains to collect his thoughts, as he smooths out Laren's shirt.

KRONE

Alright, Laren - I wish I had a better plan. You're probably right, but mark my words - if anything happens to my family, then you'll be shot dead in the street.

EXT. OSWILLA - OUTSKIRTS

Todd and his horse are poised at the edge of a small gully. Todd coaxes the horse to perform a heroic leap. As horse and rider sail through the air, they are exposed to the watchful eye of an nearby mech --

The **MECH GUARD** who spots them responds with an explosive sprint, and brings an assault rifle to the ready. He fires off several rounds, which fall far ahead of Todd --

The mech becomes confused by the uneven terrain, and grows reckless with his targeting. He fires off another BURST that goes right over Todd's head as he closes in --

Todd finds a rocky gully and rides through it the best he can. The mech proceeds behind, but finds the trail difficult, and periodically stumbles to an almost prone position. Todd takes advantage of this weakness in the mech's design, and slows the horse down to avoid fatigue.

In desperation, the mech fires off a volley of rounds until it has depleted its ammunition.

Todd notices that the mech is out of ammo. He looks back, and sees that the mech is pretty much stuck in place. Todd coaxes his horse out of the gully and doubles back. The mech has wedged itself between some rocks, and is flopping around like a fish out of water. Todd unhooks his rope and lassos the head of the android. He spurs the horse; and it bolts, causing the head of the android to come clean off.

TODD

You think you're fast, huh, you stupid mech! Yihaaa - that's one for our side! Now I have something to show the folks at Crossfire Crater!

Todd unleashes the rifle from the clutches of the dead mech. The rifle is quite elaborate, being manufactured at the height of the technological era. He straps it onto the saddle, and continues his journey to a town with a very bad reputation.

EXT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - NORTH GATE - DAY

When Todd finally arrives at the walled city of Crossfire Crater, he cannot get over how much the city looks similar to a very large fort. There are wooden buttresses, timber-carved crenelations and massive paneled gates. He walks his horse up to the front gate and yells a greeting.

TODD

(shouting)

Well hello there to the people of Crossfire Crater!

Three husky guards, **LIEUTENANT DOUGLAS**, **SARGENT WESLEY**, and **MASTER SARGENT ANDREWS** peek over the wall --

LIEUTENANT DOUGLAS

Who the devil are you?

TODD

Name's Todd Lindstrom. I'm from Oswilla - ever heard of it?

LIEUTENANT DOUGLAS

(laughing)

Why would we give the time of day to a namby pamby like you?

TODD

This might change your mind!

Todd, grabs the head of the mechanoid, and like Perseus holding the head of Medusa, displays it to the guards. All the guards shrink at the sight of it.

SERGEANT WESLEY

Where did you get that?

TODD

(grinning)

Pulled its head off myself, just yesterday.

MASTER SERGEANT ANDREWS

That's cursed - we ain't lettin' you in here with that thing.

TODD

You will if you want to trade with me - for this!

Todd pulls the assault rifle off his horse. The guards are entranced by the ancient weapon.

SERGEANT WESLEY

That's a fine piece, that is.

LIEUTENANT DOUGLAS

A fine piece indeed!

The three watchmen deliberate while Todd grooms his horse. All three of the husky men finally come to an agreement.

MASTER SERGEANT ANDREWS

If you hide that head, you may come in. Do ya have the magazines for that rifle?

TODD

Only one - sorry no rounds.

MASTER SERGEANT ANDREWS

Oh - we have rounds, young man. We have rounds.

The twin heavy wooden gates open.

Todd lays the rifle on his right shoulder, and holding the reins of the horse, leads him through the gate.

INT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - STREETS

Once they pass the wall, the town opens up to Todd's view. He can scarcely take it all in. There are hundreds of people.



Todd admires the ladies, who stare at him strangely.

The buildings in Todd's view are all heavily fortified, almost to the brink of absurdity. Everyone seems to have a side arm. There are guards with bolt action rifles, and everyone wears some kind of uniform, even the children.

The three guards descend a flight of stairs and huddle around the rifle.

MASTER SARGEANT ANDREWS

So what's your asking price?

TODD

First, let me tell you what my predicament is.

SARGENT WESLEY

Predicament?

TODD

Would you believe there is an army of mechs out there, as we speak?

LIEUTENANT DOUGLAS

Mechs? Come on, you don't expect us to believe that?

TODD

(pointing to the covered  
up mechanoid head)

Ya, what about this?

MASTER SARGEANT ANDREWS

You found that thing, right? That's old - a relic? We have two of those things hanging up in our saloon.

TODD

(shaking his head)

No - they're coming this way, I'm afraid - something for you folks to shoot at, I 'spect.

The guards huddle and deliberate.

TODD (CONT'D)

You help us out - you get the rifle  
- clean trade.

The guards almost startle Todd when they start shouting in unison, "To the Town Hall!".

A bell is rung, and everyone in town begins to assemble into well-rehearsed formations. All three guards are dragging Todd by one arm.

LIEUTENANT DOUGLAS

Come with us to the Town Hall, and meet the mayor. He is quite a sensible gentleman.

They soon come to the steps of one of the largest buildings in Crossfire Crater.

EXT. CITY HALL

The structure is quite imposing, and has a multi-tiered roof, with machine gun emplacements on each tier.

TODD

What are you people preparing for?

MASTER SARGEANT ANDREWS

Another world war, of course. The last few were downright nasty, don't you think?

INT. TOWN HALL

They enter the lavish front entrance, and pass several well-attired guards with long sniper rifles.

The interior is beyond anything Todd had seen before. Stained glass, deep hardwoods, and emblazoned brass adorn every surface.

On a low stand sits a gentleman in a black suit and vest, with a tie and a black top hat. It is the mayor --

**LEVITICUS VICTOR**, early 60's, short, stalky, and well-attired.

Next to him, on either side, are TWO ATTENDANTS clad in similar attire.

MAYOR VICTOR

Yes - yes, for what purpose have you assembled us, Andrews.

MASTER SARGEANT ANDREWS

This young man here says that war is upon us, Mayor Victor. Mechanoids, Sir, and he brought proof. Bring forth the item!

Holding the head in a sack. Master Sargent Andrews walks forward and unveils the android head for all to see. The head glistens in the light of the hall.

TODD

Not just mechs sir, but also the human soldiers under their control. Thousands, according to my friend Laren.

MAYOR VICTOR

So where is this threat, currently?

TODD

Northeast of here - they are spreading throughout the region. There's a group of them guarding Oswilla, as we speak.

MAYOR VICTOR

(chuckling)

Oswilla? You're joking? Guarding what? The library or the ice cream parlor?

Everyone from Crossfire Crater starts laughing.

TODD

(fake laughter)

No - I think it's Mrs. Beakstrom's School for Young Ladies.

MAYOR VICTOR

You have to agree that your story sounds ridiculous, young man.

Todd tells them about Laren and his connection with the androids.

MAYOR VICTOR (CONT'D)

So his father was a Mechanoid Master, eh. He must have been the last one, ever. Puppeteers we use to call them. So he's a puppeteer's son.

TODD

And he's real smart too. He can fix all sorts of stuff. In fact, he's the one who figured out how to defeat them.

MAYOR VICTOR

So how is that to be done?

TODD  
Magnetism.

MAYOR VICTOR  
Really?

TODD  
Messes with their heads - confuses them.

MAYOR VICTOR  
Well, I think a .50 caliber machine gun would mess with their heads as well - don't you think? A grenade might do the job, too.

TODD  
(smiling to appease the crowd)  
Ya - that would do it. So when do we take off for Oswilla?

MAYOR VICTOR  
Take off? I was told to leave your fair little town of Oswilla and never return - too wild, they said - we're a refined and cultured community, they said. So I packed up my people - we skedaddled out of your fancy little town, and I haven't been back since.

TODD  
(acting cordial)  
Well I'm officially inviting you back. No hard feelings, I hope.

MAYOR VICTOR  
Not going to happen, young man.

TODD  
Well, I would like to have my head back, if you don't mind, and I will burden you people, no longer.

MAYOR VICTOR  
(snickering)  
You can have your fool head back, albeit you're not going anywhere. In fact, you're now a permanent citizen of Crossfire Crater. Be sure to pay your taxes.

TODD  
 (looking around for  
 support)  
 You're kidding - right? Somebody,  
 please tell me he's kidding!

MAYOR VICTOR  
 That's the law here. If you come  
 in, you don't go out. You have a  
 good day, and thanks for visiting  
 me.

Todd looks around for a while, a little disoriented, and  
 walks to the front door. He sees the guards, and they rush up  
 to him.

SERGEANT WESLEY  
 (with bowed head)  
 Well, I guess we lose out on the  
 rifle, don't we?

TODD  
 I want you to have it. I trust you  
 can share it amongst the three of  
 you. You earned it - you tried and  
 all. Besides, I don't want to have  
 to lug the thing around, anyway.

MASTER SERGEANT ANDREWS  
 (shaking Todd's hand)  
 That's most sportin' of you - thank  
 you, Todd - that was your name,  
 correct?

Todd pulls the ancient rifle off his horse, and sets it on  
 the ground in front of the three guards. Each of the men  
 scramble to get a hold of the prize.

Todd fetches his horse and secures it at a livery. Next he  
 heads to --

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

-- the Sheriff's office. The sheriff --

**SHERIFF STRIKER**, early 40's, seems to be the friendly sort,  
 and unusually relaxed for a resident of Crossfire Crater.

Todd walks in looking rather somber.

SHERIFF STRIKER  
 I take it you just talked to the  
 mayor.

TODD  
Sure did - but --

SHERIFF STRIKER  
I'm the sheriff. It's my business  
to know these things. Well, you  
have my sympathy. So what can I do  
for ya, young man?

Todd hands the mech head to the Sheriff.

TODD  
I was wondering if you would mind  
holding onto this thing for me?  
It's gotten me into a lot of  
trouble, already.

SHERIFF STRIKER  
Well, let's see what have here. A  
bag of gear, and your ...metal  
cranium-thing ...anything else I  
can do for ya?

TODD  
(under his breath)  
Ya, tell me where I can find the  
back door of this place.

EXT. CITY HALL - EVENING

Todd Lindstrom sits down on the front steps of City Hall, and  
watches the people passing by.

A group of YOUNG BOYS stop and stare at Todd. The **GROUP  
LEADER**, speaks for the rest.

GROUP LEADER  
Lost or somethin'?

TODD  
Something like that.

GROUP LEADER  
You don't look like you're from  
around here.

TODD  
Not exactly.

GROUP LEADER  
This is the biggest city in the  
world.

TODD

Really?

GROUP LEADER

Oh ya, we got gunmakers, an armory - oh, and sixty-inch caliber cannons. Even larger is a whopper - the Thunder Cannon - forty-two inch bore.

Todd looks entranced.

GROUP LEADER (CONT'D)

It floats on a huge crater lake created by a huge bomb blast - a gazillion years ago, and when it goes off - kaboom - a mile away - your dead!

TODD

That would be a long ways.

GROUP LEADER

You've never heard of the Thunder Cannon?

TODD

I hear stories, but I wasn't sure they were true.

GROUP LEADER

Are you homeless?

TODD

I'm afraid yes - wait a minute. Do you know the Trasks'?

GROUP LEADER

The Trasks'? Trask Precision Shooters - if we miss a shot you get your money back? They're famous.

TODD

They're my cousins.

GROUP LEADER

Wow!

TODD

Do you know where they live?

GROUP LEADER  
You kidding? Of course - we'll take  
you there.

EXT. TRASK RESIDENCE

Todd and the young gang of boys arrive at a two-story hacienda that is positioned next to the main coal house.

We can hear gunfire in the distance.

TODD  
Thanks fellas.

GROUP LEADER  
Don't make a scene about it.

TODD  
I have some Oswilla money, here if  
you want it.

GROUP LEADER  
Oswillian clinkers are no good  
here.

Todd holds out two shiny coins.

TODD  
It's gold.

The leader of the gang grabs the coins from Todd's hands.

GROUP LEADER  
Thanks Mister!

The boys run away laughing with the delight of their good fortune.

Todd sees, a handle on the wall next to the door, labeled:  
bell.

Todd tries pushing the handle in, and then up & down. He finally realizes he has to pull it out. BOOCLANG! The bell rings out in deafening tones. The door cracks open, and a young woman appears --

**BONNIE TRASK**, late 20's, a short tempered, rugged beauty with dark eyes.

TODD  
Is this the Trask residence?



BONNIE

Sure is. What ya want?

TODD

May I talk to Marcus Trask? I'm his  
cousin from Oswilla - distant  
though it may it be.

BONNIE

Whatever - come in. We were in the  
back practicing our sharpshooting  
until you showed up.

EXT. TRASK RESIDECE - SHOOTING RANGE

Todd isn't surprised to find an expansive shooting range in  
the backyard. Bonnie walks up to the tallest man that Todd  
has ever seen --

**MARCUS TRASK**, late 40's, extremely tall, well-built, with a  
kind face.

Next to him is --

**SANDI TRASK**, late 30's, curvaceous and dark-eyed.

BONNIE

This here's our disruption. The  
tall man makes three strides over  
to Todd.

MARCUS

May I help you somehow, stranger?

TODD

Yes - I believe you can. My name is  
Todd Lindstrom - I'm your cousin,  
and I'm in a bit of a pickle.

MARCUS

Really - where ya from?

TODD

Oswilla.

MARCUS

(hugging Todd sideways,  
and almost crushing him)  
Really? Well I'll be ...you're my  
cousin, eh? All the way from  
Oswilla!

TODD  
 (wincing)  
 Sure am.

MARCUS  
 Well, welcome - welcome, Todd. My name is Marcus Trask, and this here is my wife, Sandi - pretty isn't she - and that young lady over there is my sister, Bonnie. We're performers, and this is our testing grounds. So what's your pickle?

Todd tells the story one more time, including the part about being kept from leaving the city. Marcus listens intently, with a lot of yeps and uh hus in between key parts.

MARCUS (CONT'D)  
 Sounds like a real mess to me. I wish I could help ya, but as you know, nobody leaves the city except to gather raw materials for the factories.

BONNIE  
 (wryly)  
 Well there you go. You can smuggle him out of here on a hauler, Big Brother.

SANDI  
 Why don't you bring the town here?

BONNIE  
 Squatters - here - are you kidding?

TODD  
 Well, your laws do say that anyone that enters the town, stays.

BONNIE  
 Ya, right. Mayor Victor's heart would flip over like a flapjack!

MARCUS  
 How many people are we talking about?

TODD  
 About five hundred.

MARCUS

Well if it was only temporary - to save those poor people's lives and all.

TODD

What a clash of cultures that would be.

MARCUS

Sounds like a good plan to me.

BONNIE

You're serious? You trust this guy?

MARCUS

(poking his finger into  
Bonnie's forehead)

Look here, Sis. These people aren't aliens from another planet - they're family, and just because you like being a loner don't mean the rest of us look at life that way. Now I'm going to tell you what to do - you're going to get your good for nothing brother, and you, and him are going to put your reprobate brains together and think of a way to make it happen, ya hear?

Bonnie backs up in an attempt to regain her dignity, and straightens herself up.

BONNIE

Alright, Brother, I see I'm going against the grain. I still think yer all crazy in the head.

MARCUS

I am and will be, Little Sister, and I'll love ya till the day I die.

BONNIE

Ah, shut up!

Bonnie leaves to find her other brother, THOMAS TRASK, one of the most feared men in town.

EXT. SOMEWHERE WEST OF OSWILLA - DAY

As Blister rides west, he crosses old roads that have not been used for over three hundred years. He continues on and passes through a small town, long abandoned.

EXT. UNKNOWN TOWN - AFTERNOON

He stops to rub down his horse, and take a look around. The scene is not a pleasant one. There is battle damage, everywhere. Some corpses are buried, while others remain littering the streets.

Blister pokes around and salvages whatever he can. He becomes extremely curious and enters --

INT. ABANDONED MAYOR'S OFFICE

-- the Mayor's Office. There is the mayor sprawled across his desk, with his hand on the keyboard of a small computer. The Mayor has a bullet hole through in his head.

Blister examines the computer, and looks through the deteriorating computer manual, which is replete with vivid images of the computer in action.

On the desk, he also finds a cell phone, and when he realizes what it is, quickly walks backward as if it is cursed.

BLISTER  
(to himself)  
Momma says that the phone of the  
hand was the devil's tool.

Blister walks away, and goes to inspect the office walls, which are lined with books. He collects some of the more portable volumes, along with some of the extremely fragile magazines.

Blister leaves the Mayor's office --

EXT. UNKNOWN TOWN

BLISTER (V.O.)  
I've got to get out of this death  
hole.

EXT. SOMEWHERE WEST OF OSWILLA - EVENING

We see Blister camping by a stream and reading by firelight, selected periodicals from his treasure trove.

We see images of fashion, dating, and art. Some have nothing but images of death.

After another night of sleeping on the hard ground --

EXT. SOMEWHERE WEST OF OSWILLA - MORNING

-- Blister rummages around some more - picking up dirt, and after examining it, he drops it and kicks at it with his well-worn boots.

After a lot of yelling and cussing, Blister settles down and lays amongst some tall grasses. He then here's the GRIZZLY voice of a --

**MOUNTAIN MAN**, early 70's, tall and muscle-laden.

MOUNTAIN MAN

Who might you be?

Blister nearly jumps out of his boots and scrambles to get to his feet. Standing in front of him is a statuesque stranger.

BLISTER

What are ya doing - scaring a man into the next world?

The Mountain Man does nothing more than stare at him.

BLISTER (CONT'D)

Where did ya come from?

MOUNTAIN MAN

This here's my land?

BLISTER

I don't mean to be trespassing on your land, Sir, it's just that I'm from Oswilla, and I'm plain lost. I'm looking for black sand from a mine.

MOUNTAIN MAN

Oh that place - it's over yonder - not too far.

BLISTER

You live here all by yourself?

MOUNTAIN MAN

Not entirely. There are folks  
strewn throughout these hills. Most  
keep to themselves, though.

BLISTER

(tipping his hat)  
This may sound funny, but ya be  
savin' some lives if you were to  
show me the way.

MOUNTAIN MAN

Got anything for trade.

Blister hands the gentleman two extremely old, but very  
readable children's books that he had found along the way.

The Mountain Man thumbs through the children's books and  
smiles.

MOUNTAIN MAN (CONT'D)

Follow me up here a spell.

INT. OSWILLA - TOWN HALL - SIX DAYS LATER - EVENING

The Town Hall is alive with restless activity. With a CLANG  
AND A BANG, a strange, but familiar object is seen rolling  
along the floor. Krone and a couple of other men have to lift  
their legs to avoid it as it hits their table.

TODD

Strike!

Krone and the others look down at the floor. The head of the  
decapitated MechenEZ mechanoid is staring up at them.

TODD (CONT'D)

I managed to bag that one myself!

The entire hall becomes ablaze with the sounds of amazed  
townsfolk.

Krone picks up the head, holds it in one hand.

Following Todd through the front door are Marcus and Sandi  
Trask, along with several other assorted residents from  
Crossfire Crater.

TODD (CONT'D)

Aren't ya glad to see your kinfolk?

ELDERLY MAN

I think kin is not a word that I would use.

The hall erupts in SHOUTS of agreement.

TODD

These folks came here to help you, and this is the way you treat them?

Karen Whipple rises up and stands on a bench.

KAREN

Are you people crazy! Our town is under siege and you're all fighting over old news?

**VELMA WILKES**, early 70's, retorts.

VELMA

Some things never die, Miss Whipple...

KAREN

Velma! This is life and death.

VELMA

I can't help it. There's too much past between us.

KAREN

The truth is, we need to get organized. We need to put aside our petty differences, and get organized - right, Krone?

Krone, put on the spot, struggles to find something to say to match Karen's boldness.

LAREN

I've seen these guys in action. We've been lucky so far - we need to get prepared. We need some real leadership, and now. Miss Whipple has my vote.

TODD

Yup - I've seen just one of 'em in action, and well - if yer not on a horse you better forget it.

KAREN

(reacting to Laren's comment)  
(MORE)

KAREN (CONT'D)

Real leadership - so true, Laren -  
I guess - but, maybe we need to  
hear from the Mayor, who is the  
designated leader of this town, not  
the richest.

The Mayor --

**PERCY BARNES**, late 60's, fidgets - not use to speaking for  
himself.

MAYOR BARNES

(blushing)

Maybe we should put it to a vote.

KAREN

We all know how it will play out.  
Pride will win - stubborn pride...

MARCUS

Why don't ya all shut up, or I'll  
shoot each and every last one of  
you stupid people. Yer all moving  
out of, here - see! You're goin' to  
my town - because, as if you  
haven't noticed, this place ain't  
too safe at the moment. Now pack up  
your belongings and let's  
skedaddle.

Laren cautiously pulls Marcus aside.

LAREN

Sir?

MARCUS

Name's Marcus Trask.

LAREN

Yes - Mr. Trask - how do we get  
them there. We're talking forty or  
fifty miles, correct?

MARCUS

(scratching his chin)

Well - yer right. Those mechs will  
be on us like Pharaoh on the  
Children of Israel, when they find  
us missing.

VELMA

(laughing)

Why don't ya just shoot the mechs  
with your fancy gun, there.



MARCUS

Because if we shoot just one of them, the rest will descend on us like a plague of locusts.

TODD

Ya, I got lucky because the one I decapitated was out of range to transmit. They probably don't even know he's missing. I probably popped it off before he could even think about it.

A puzzled Blister Buchanan enters the hall and gestures to Nick. Laren spots him and makes a bee-line over to him. Blister looks completely exhausted.

LAREN

Well aren't you a sight for sore eyes!

Blister is carrying some heavy sacks.

BLISTER

I had a hard time finding this stuff - and my poor horse - am I too late? It looks like a funeral in here. My horse hauled in a ton of this stuff.

LAREN

(to Blister, then Mr. Herd)

Believe me, you're right on time, my friend. Is this the right stuff, Mr. Herd?

MR HERD

Yes, it does look like it. This buckle is made of iron - Let's test it out.

Blister throws the bags on a table and opens one up.

Mr. Herd pulls off his belt, and dips the buckle into the bag of sand. The black sand swirls around the buckle. Everyone is amazed.

Blister blows a sigh of relief, as well as Laren.

All around them, townsfolk are bickering about what to do next. Mr. Herd raises the bag in his hand.

MR HERD (CONT'D)

(shouting)

Friends and Neighbors ...I have in my hands the answer to our dilemma. Our mutual friend, Blister Buchanan, here, was nice enough to brave the wilderness to the west of us, to retrieve it. In this bag is magnetic sand that, when applied properly, will render any mechanoid - well - stupefied and unable to function. We will need to work together to make full use of this stuff. Once the mechanoids are immobilized, we will be better positioned to plan a retreat, or stay where we are, if we are entirely successful.

KRONE

Magic sand? Is that what we're left with? It might as well be magic beans.

MR HERD

Well, come up with a better plan yourself, then!

KRONE

Well, I suppose, I don't ...have one...

MR HERD

And neither does anyone else in this room - magic sand it is!

INT. OSWILLA - MERCANTILE - DAY

MR HERD

(whispering)

Bring it down ...just a little.

Mr. Herd is giving directions to Nick Ralston.

They are both kneeling behind a window inside the mercantile. Nick is holding a long brass drain pipe that is stuck through a small chipped out area of the window and is pointed directly at a sentinel mechanoid. Inside one end of the pipe is the black sand; magnetite.

MR HERD (CONT'D)

Try to straighten it up - okay that will do - giv'er a try.

Nick blows gently into the pipe, and the sand spreads out and swirls around the head of the mech warrior. Nick takes in a deep breath, while Mr. Herd holds in his.

NICK  
(whispering)  
Do you think it worked?

From outside, they can hear some kind of commotion: the scraping of the ground, and then there is a LOUD THUD.

MR HERD  
Well I'll be...

NICK  
(laughing)  
I can't believe it!

Both men fling open the front door of the mercantile, and nearly trip each other up trying to get over the threshold at the same time.

Outside they can see the mech sprawled out on the dusty ground. The magnetic sand sticks to it in clusters.

Marcus and Laren are waiting in the wings and rush in.

MARCUS  
That thing's still twitchin' - but not for long. Get in the store there and grab a pickaxe.

NICK  
How many more of these things do we need to spray with this stuff?

LAREN  
About eighteen left.

NICK  
I think we should bag the one by the livery, next. A lot of those mechs are out in the open, though.

MARCUS  
Oh, I think there are ways around that.

LAREN  
I just realized something when Todd told me about the mech he destroyed.

MR HERD

What was that?

LAREN

That most mechs don't have  
multifunction algorithms.

The faces on the three men surrounding Laren go blank.

LAREN (CONT'D)

Our ancestors called it multi-tasking - meaning, most mechs can only think one thing at a time. When the mech chased Todd, it should have transmitted to Kyros724 at the same time; however, it didn't have the ability to do so. Kyros724 is different because he's a pilot - he's designed to be multifunctioning. He has receptors all over his body that allow him to drive any vehicle there is; planes or tanks - you name it. You do so much as look at him funny, he's going to know something's up.

MARCUS

So why don't we target him next?

MR HERD

Because if we set him off, it will be better if he has no troops to command. Is that what you were thinking, Laren?

LAREN

Absolutely.

MARCUS

You scientific people give me a headache.

MR HERD

Well you would be justified in saying that - scientific people always create things that come back to bite us. The best scientists work constantly to clean up their own messes - isn't that correct, Laren?

LAREN

Well, I guess I'm a little older and wiser, now...

MR HERD

Well I think it was a good thing that they came to you. If they didn't, it would be most likely that anyone else involved would not know how to defeat them. You have to look at this logically. You're the one who figured it all out - remember? It just might be that you were meant to figure it out.

LAREN

That would be a comforting thought, but --

MR HERD

Just trying to help you feel better about things - my friend. So how do you think we should do it, Laren?

LAREN

We have to have the element of surprise. It takes a few seconds for the sand to work its magic.

MARCUS

What we really need is a distraction. You said it, yourself, they can only think of one thing at a time.

LAREN

In theory, yes, but...

SANDI

We have to take the risk.

Marcus drags the deactivated android into the mercantile.

MARCUS

Mr. Scientist, you discuss it with the other scientist. I'll go along with whatever you come up with.

MR HERD

(to Laren)

Well, right now it's just a lot of talk.

LAREN

Marcus, I think we should follow your lead on this one. I have a feeling you've got something brewing in that head of yours.

MARCUS

Yes - I have an idea that just  
might work.

EXT. OSWILLA - WEST EDGE OF TOWN - DAY

We see Todd ride his horse across the line of sight of one of the mechs, which triggers a pursuit. With the android engaged in the hunt, Lori Wildwind closes in from behind, on a second horse. She is holding a cup full of magnetite in her hand, which she aims, then throws it onto the back of the mech's head.

EXT. OSWILLA - SOUTH EDGE OF TOWN - AFTERNOON

We see the group attempting to bag their ninth mech. This time, the mech becomes aware of the second rider early on, SWERVES SHARPLY to the left and almost collides with Lori. The android self-corrects and almost catches up with Lori, who is forced to slow down in a hurry --

Nick hits his target at a difficult angle, but manages to spray the android sufficiently. The android then suffers from the effects of the magnetite sand.

The group takes a break after their well-earned victory.

LORI

I hope we don't come up against  
another one like that. That one was  
a little smarter than the rest.

NICK

That's some riding Lori! If I knew  
you could ride like that, I would  
have sent you to Crossfire Crater  
instead of Todd.

LORI

(smiling and blowing a  
kiss)  
You're just saying that because I'm  
your girl.

NICK

(pretending to catch the  
kiss)  
Maybe.

Nick catches the kiss as he sees Todd go instantly pale.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 What's the matter - jealous?

TODD  
 Shut up - just everyone shut up for  
 a minute!

Todd is already off his horse and is kneeling on the ground.  
 Some of the horses are shifting around, nervously.

NICK  
 Todd, Have you gone loco - what's  
 up?

TODD  
 Nick, just shut up - do you hear  
 that? Do you feel it?

Everybody positions themselves around Todd and remain  
 motionless.

MARCUS  
 (whispering)  
 May the Lord have mercy on us - I  
 feel it too.

SANDI  
 (moaning)  
 No! I thought these poor people had  
 a chance, Marcus!

MARCUS  
 Nick - Laren - collect all them  
 tech rifles - Lori - the back door  
 is completely cleared - get  
 everyone moving out of town. Todd,  
 Sandi, and I will get the horses  
 hooked up to the buggies.

NICK  
 Sorry - what I said Todd!

TODD  
 I know - now get!

Laren and Nick run to the mercantile.

EXT. MERCANTILE

Lori runs for the town hall where most of the people in town  
 are bunked down.

EXT. TOWN HALL

Kyros724 is standing in the center of --

EXT. MAINSTREET

-- the street, with a small group of his fellow mechanoids beside him.

The mechanoid keeps looking around for the rest of his guard units.

EXT. WEST EDGE OF TOWN

Todd and Marcus feverishly hitch horses with buggies, with a few of the townsfolk helping them.

INT. MERCANTILE

Both Laren and Nick are startled when Marcus and Sandi show up with their long rifles.

MARCUS

Did you think I would miss this turkey shoot?

LAREN'S POV

Across the street can be seen the faces of other townsfolk, peering through storefront glass - holding their own weapons.

Laren spots Krone, David Palemoon, and Rick Wildwind are hunkered down behind the corner of the library.

EXT. MAINSTREET

We see a transport rumbling into the center of town, followed by an army of humans.

INT. MERCANTILE

Marcus Trask gives some last minute orders.

MARCUS

We're both moving to the roof of the library. Folks are piling into those buggies and are mostly ready to go.

(MORE)



MARCUS (CONT'D)

All we have to do is keep the mechs busy until they get out of town. When you've done what you can, get out of here and get to Crossfire Crater.

LAREN

Maybe if I talk to them - I'm sure their leader is searching for me --

MARCUS

Hey - this is everyone's fight now - it's their fight - not just yours. You're in a safe place - stay here - good luck to you.

Marcus runs out the back door.

Lori runs in and grabs Nick, and they kiss, maybe for the last time.

Time has stopped in its tracks ...

...then we hear the voice of a mech, coming from the street --

**BRONX86**, as hulking as Bronx55, but with different markings.

LAREN'S POV

BRONX86 (O.S.)

Where's Laren Fisk? Where is the Puppet Master, Laren Fisk? Bring him forth, or suffer the consequences!

Another voice answers, but from someone entirely unexpected --

KRONE (O.S.)

I'm Laren Fisk!

Laren peers - crouched - through the bottom of the window. He sees Krone walk into the center of the street, with his hands to his side. Krone is all decked out in his best attire - a raven black suite and hat, with silver embroidery. Two gleaming revolvers are strapped to his waist.

LAREN

(whispering, then shouting)

Curse you, Krone - get out of there!

BRONX86 (O.S.)

You're not Laren Fisk!

KRONE (O.S.)  
You're absolutely right! The name's  
Krone Sanders, and I'm stopping ya  
right in your tracks!

EXT. MAINSTREET

Krone whips out the two six guns, and unloads every chamber into the mechs --

Chaos ensues. Glass falls in sheets from storefront windows. SCREAMS penetrate the air as BULLETS ZING like hypersonic bees in every direction.

EXT. WEST EDGE OF TOWN

The townsfolk, positioned in their buggies and wagons on the other side of the melee, prod their horses and make a run for it. Steam-powered jalopies follow behind.

Many townsfolk have already set out on foot, and when they hear the commotion, they crouch down in any available ditch or gully.

EXT. MAINSTREET

The **SHERIFF** and his **DEPUTIES**, who are only a few feet away, make an attempt to unload with everything they have, but are gunned down in mid-stride by Kyros724 wielding a machine gun.

The Sheriff's Office, a sandstone block building, is ripped to shreds.

Old firearms, fired by the old and young, are sticking out of every available window.

EXT. ROOFTOPS

Marcus and Sandi, who are hunkered down in a sniper position, take several shots at the Bronx unit. All the rounds do nothing more than PLINK off a few of his communication sensors.

EXT. MAINSTREET

Blister has fashioned a tube with a bellows, and is busy sending clouds of magnetite sand in all directions. Others have handfuls of it, and while risking their lives, fling it as close to the enemy as possible.

The lucky ones have shotgun shells filled with it. Most are successful, but some are too close to the fray and end up sacrificing their own lives.

EXT. NORTH SIDE OF TOWN

The human troops, who were conscripts to the mechanoids, cower under such opposition, and hide in several locations.

EXT. ALTERNATING VIEWS OF OSWILLA

The magnetite has taken its toll on the majority of the mechs. Several mechs fall over, and others stagger in the street.

EXT. MAINSTREET

Kyros724 and Bronx86 become flustered as their subordinates begin to drop like flies --

A barrage of gunfire descends on Bronx86, who succumbs and falls face first --

Kyros724 decides to make a run for it, and does his best to dodge and weave through the onslaught. He is covered with magnetic sand, which takes its toll, a hundred yards later, as Kyros724 falls prey to its effects --

Krone lays dead in the street - torn up, with his family kneeling by his side. Myra is hysterical. Unsure what to do, Laren leaves her to her grieving. He slips out of sight into an alleyway.

Nick and Todd are watching the spectacle on the other side of the street

NICK

(whispering to Todd)

The man always had to be the center of attention. To him, it must have been worth dying for.

TODD

(shaking his head)

He'll always be a hero in my mind.

EXT. OSWILLA - MAINSTREET - EVENING

A shell-shocked Myra is sitting alone on a bullet-riddled bench in front of the library. Laren slowly slides in next to her.

They sit in silence for some time, until we hear Myra expel a large sigh.

MYRA

Why did he do it, Laren? He just walked out in the street like a fool.

LAREN

(putting his arm around Myra and kissing her forehead)

I wish I knew. To make you proud - to be the leader that he truly wanted to be. It was his ...shining moment.

MYRA

He was a good man - deep down ...I know he was.

LAREN

He rallied the town and the town won. Good men do things like that. He's a true hero, now.

Myra CALLS OUT to her father, as if he was simply lost in the dark.

MYRA

(sobbing)

Daddy! Oh daddy, please come back to me. I love you!

An afternoon breeze blows through the main street, as Myra projects all her hate on a nearby mech. She begins her onslaught by gouging at the eyes with a sharp piece of debris - her screams penetrating the air.

Laren stands to the side, and when he feels he cannot watch any longer, he tries to flee. However, he is frozen. Overcome by a cascade of emotions - mostly for the love of his life, Myra, who is in the deepest of pain. Laren slumps onto the bench and sobs uncontrollably.

EXT. OSWILLA - EASTERN OUTSKIRTS - DAY

We see the town of Oswilla bury their dead. There are songs sung and farewell speeches given. Myra and her family place flowers on Krone's grave.

As a show of respect for his bravery, the bodies of the other deceased townsfolk are buried around Krone like the spokes of a wagon wheel. Krone Sanders is now the hub - the name they will forever rally behind.

EXT. OSWILLA - MAINSTREET - DUSK

Four days later, some of the townsfolk, including Laren, walk around the decimated mechanoids, which remain in heaps along main-street.

LAREN

(looking at Bronx86)

I thought this one was Bronx55. At least I was hoping.

TODD

An old enemy?

LAREN

More like someone who could make my life a living hell, if he chose to.

LORI

I don't think that most folks want to stay around here any longer.

BLISTER

We're definitely too exposed here.

MR HERD

I am sure that everyone will agree to take a vote this time around.

LAREN

A vote would be nice, Mr. Herd, but I know where I'm headed, and I will be going with Myra's family, if they'll have me.

MR HERD

I'm pretty sure they would. Oh, forget the vote - you're absolutely correct, Laren. I'm following you to Crossfire Crater.

LAREN

Don't follow me - follow Todd -  
he's been there before.

TODD

(grinning)

I sure have - and there's someone  
in the town of Crossfire, I met  
there, whose face I'd like to see  
when we all show up.

EXT. OSWILLA - MAINSTREET - NIGHT

In the cool of the night, a small patrol of mechanoids enters  
from the north into the town of Oswilla. It is now a ghost  
town, the populace having long since evacuated.

MARTHA (V.O.)

We can rebuild it...

Along the town's center fairway are the decimated bodies of  
mech warriors. Bronx55 and Manax547, now stand at the scene  
of the skirmish, which had ended the lives of those mechs,  
and some of the townsfolk who had lived there.

BRONX55

How is this possible?

MANAX547

It should not be in any way  
possible.

Manax547 kneels down, zeros in on the black sand, then steps  
back quickly.

MANAX547 (CONT'D)

They have figured out a way to  
interrupt our vestibular systems.

BRONX55

Yes, I see. They have coated them  
in some kind of magnetic material.

The magnetite sand has formed crystalline-like formations on  
the areas of the dead mechanoids where electromagnetic fields  
are the strongest.

A **FOOT SOLDIER** unit appears, after a reconnaissance.

FOOT SOLDIER

The humans have moved south.

BRONX55

What is south of here, Vice  
Regency?

MANAX547

Closest settlement is the relic town of Crossfire Crater. It has been long abandoned after one of the old wars - according to our records. Obviously there must be a reason they have pursued that course of action! He must be with them. We should not have shown him mercy! I want all these units collected and saved for parts. They won't need them anymore --

EXT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - NORTH GATE - DAWN

The gates of Crossfire Crater loom in the distance. The weary eyes of those who had fled from Oswilla, feel a sense of relief, as well as dread.

Laren Fisk holds Myra tenderly. It has been a fifty mile journey from Oswilla over some fairly rough country. Marcus Trask has led the way to his hometown, and is now concerned about how they will be received.

MARCUS

My boys and I will make sure our plans are still in place ...so stay here for the mean time. There is a crick just a ways yonder, northwest of here. Have Blister or Todd fetch some water, but don't let anyone see you.

Marcus leaves with his kinfolk for --

EXT. WEST GATE - DAY

-- the western gate. When they reach their destination, they find a hauler parked off to the side of the main road. They can hear two men arguing behind the hauler --

**THOMAS TRASK**, late 20's, young and devilishly handsome, and --

**WALLACE GIMP**, early 80's, but spry, hauler driver.

WALLACE

Well, in all my days, I have never experienced such treachery in --

THOMAS

(hissing)

You better shut up, or things won't go well with you, old man. All you have to do is drive that thing up to the gates, like you have a million times before, and when you get the nod, drive on through.

Wallace gulps as Thomas Trask's eyes bare down on him. Thomas grabs one of the driver's arms and escorts him to the cab. Marcus is there to greet them.

MARCUS

Are we ready, Thomas?

THOMAS

(stroking his goatee)

'Spect so, Marcus. I just hope old Wallace here doesn't do anything stupid.

MARCUS

You're not going to be doing anything stupid, are you, Wallace?

WALLACE

Well ...no - I suppose not.

MARCUS

Good then - I guess we're ready to go, then. When them Oswillians get here, we need to load up as many as we can possibly fit into this bucket. The rest will ride in their rigs or walk alongside.

EXT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - WEST GATE - DAY

It takes another half hour to position the refugees from Oswilla. Thomas and Wallace climb up into the cab, and Thomas places a pistol onto the dashboard. Little does Wallace know that the firearm isn't loaded.

Thomas points at the gate, and Wallace brings the hauler to life. Black smoke billows from the stacks, and Wallace works the gears and pushes on the accelerator. The vehicle trudges forward, but bounces noticeably from the lack of weight.

As the hauler reaches the gate, Thomas ducks down to keep from being seen by the watchmen --



When the checkpoint is reached, the gates open as planned; however, Thomas can see that Wallace is trying to signal to the watchmen. Thomas notices the change of expression on the faces of those in the tower, and he pulls himself up into the passenger's seat.

THOMAS  
 (pointing his pistol at  
 Wallace)  
 Curse you, Wallace! Put it on full  
 power, you toad!

The hauler trudges forward at full speed as WARNING BELLS can be heard in the distance --

Thomas can see the militia congregating on both sides of the rig. The ragtag hordes from Oswilla dart forward by whatever means they have, in order to clear the closing gates. Someone positions a buggy between the gates and lets loose the horses --

Both gate doors come to a stop - pinned-up against the buggy. Those behind it are forced to abandon whatever they were riding in, then climb over the pinned buggy, in order to get within the walls.

EXT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - STREETS

The hauler is finally forced to a stop by more approaching militia men, and Thomas descends from the hauler with his hands up.

**GENERAL CRAIG KRIEG**, mid 50's, is the picture of military perfection, arrives on horseback.

GENERAL KRIEG  
 What's the meaning of this -  
 Wallace?

WALLACE  
 (squealing)  
 They forced me, General Krieg!

GENERAL KRIEG  
 Who are these people, Wallace?

WALLACE  
 They're a bunch of rabble from  
 Oswilla - I was forced by gunpoint  
 to parade them in.

THOMAS

(grinning)

Would that be my number one  
headache over there, Thomas Trask?

WALLACE

Yes - yes - it was him - he made me  
do it.

GENERAL KRIEG

So where's your fool sister -  
Bonnie.

Bonnie presses her way through the crowd.

BONNIE

I'm no fool - you dressed up  
peacock!

GENERAL KRIEG

Show some respect for the military,  
young lady! Are these people  
seeking sanctuary, or is this some  
kind of circus?

MARTHA

Sanctuary, sir.

GENERAL KRIEG

Why would the people of the pretty  
little town of Oswilla want to come  
here?

MARTHA

Androids - I'm afraid.

GENERAL KRIEG

(laughing)

Yes - I have heard this story  
before, from Mayor Victor. Some  
young man named Lindstrom, told him  
the tale, a while back.

TODD

That would be me.

GENERAL KRIEG

You know you all can't stay here.

TODD

But it's your law, General. Anyone  
who walks within the gates is not  
permitted to leave.

General Krieg becomes flustered and converses with one of his Lieutenants. They are engaged in an active conversation for a few minutes, then General Krieg trots his horse forward a few steps.

GENERAL KRIEG

(ordering, then riding  
off)

We will have a town meeting about this. In the mean time, you're all under arrest. Lieutenant-General Smithers, march these people to the pavilion and lock the doors.

The people of Oswilla are escorted at gunpoint to the town hall. Those that had never been to Crossfire Crater are flabbergasted at the sheer size and complexity of the large city.

INT. TOWN HALL - AFTERNOON

A large group from Oswilla file into the town hall.

MAYOR VICTOR

(sneering)

I thought I had seen the last of you, young man. So you're trying to use our own laws against us? Who do you think you're dealing with?

TODD

We had quite a battle against the mechs, Sir - and there are more mechs moving this way. We found a way to defeat them, but it is not without risk.

MAYOR VICTOR

In my town, we don't use the word risk. Life is a risk - young man. Bringing these people here was a tactical decision, and I respect that - bold move - bravo to you - young man. It isn't every --

Laren strides up to the Mayor's desk, which causes Mayor Victor to pause in mid sentence.

MAYOR VICTOR (CONT'D)

Who are you, to interrupt these proceedings?

LAREN

You've heard of me. Fisk is the name.

MAYOR VICTOR

Did you say Fisk? Are you the Puppeteer's Son?

LAREN

I'm afraid so.

The mayor is interrupted by one of the guards.

GUARD

Mayor, Sir, there are mechs on the horizon - quite a large group of them.

MAYOR VICTOR

(smiling devilishly and removing his lavish cloak)

I was getting bored sitting at this desk. Fire up the battle call! Get the cannons warmed up! We'll have ourselves some target practice!

(pointing to Laren)

You, there. Stay close by!

EXT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - STREETS

The whole town comes alive - cannons find their trajectory - the militia take their places along the city wall, including some people from Oswilla --

The mechanoids become aware that they are being watched, and reposition themselves for battle. From the center of town can be heard the CONCUSSION AND WHIR of an enormous cannonball being fired. It SWOOPS over the wall and pounds into the formation beyond. The concussive shockwave rocks the valley. Several columns of androids are torn apart by the impact.

BLISTER

(taking a huge breath)

Wow - What was that?

TODD

They call it the Thunder Cannon.

## EXT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - PRAIRIE FLOOR

The mechanoids, finding themselves exposed out, and in the open, board their Rattlesnakes and speed directly for the city --

The militia proceeds to lay down suppressive fire, but they are unable to maintain an aim on the advancing androids, who manage to close in on the city.

## EXT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - OUTER WALLS

When they reach the city, the mechs take up an offensive posture, and concentrate their efforts on breaching the wall. We see that more mechs have been added to their ranks --

Those on the wall are doing their best to pin down the mechs below with gunfire --

SOLDIER

(screaming)

They have rocket launchers!

Several explosions rock the city wall and sections of ramparts blow out into the city commons.

**LIEUTENANT DOUGLAS**, early 40's, rallies the throng.

LIEUTENANT DOUGLAS

OFF THE WALL!

The wall is clearing, as a melee takes place around the breach --

The people of Oswilla are doing their best to spray the mechs with magnetite sand --

The towns folk do what they can to stay out of range, retreating into the LABYRINTH OF STREETS --

## EXT. STREETS

The militia responds by moving up some large machine guns that overwhelm the advancing mechs. Thousands of Crossfire residents shoot from open windows and gun emplacements to defend the streets --

## INT. CITY HALL - BELL LOFT

The mayor, who is held up in the City Hall, watches the battle from the bell tower. A MESSENGER rushes in.

## MESSENGER

More mechs south of us, sir! The General is pounding the horizon. Luckily the west and east entrances are holding!

## MAYOR VICTOR

I just don't get it. Most of the mechs were destroyed after the chess battles. Where are they coming from? Get that Fisk boy up here!

Laren is located and unceremoniously dragged up a flight of stairs to face the mayor.

## MAYOR VICTOR (CONT'D)

They say - Fisk, that you're somehow part of this dilemma.

## LAREN

My friend, Todd tried to warn you. Anything I could say to you now is pointless. So if you don't mind, I'm going to go help my friends. Oh, and by the way, you might want to position yourself somewhere else. The mechs are climbing all over the back door of this place - just a suggestion - Mayor.

## MAYOR VICTOR

(trying to escort Laren  
downstairs)

Okay - you're right - you're right - I didn't listen. I do know a safer place, though!.

Below, in the great hall --

INT. CITY HALL - GREAT HALL

-- the mechs are trying to shoot their way through the main entrance.

INT. CITY HALL - BELL LOFT

## MAYOR VICTOR

Everyone - get down to the basement! This position is compromised, along with the rear entrance!

LAREN

You all can hide up in here. I'm  
going out on the roof.

MAYOR VICTOR

Curse it, Boy - you're going to get  
yourself killed!

Laren runs down the stairs. Halfway down he breaks out a  
window that gives him access to the lower roof --

EXT. CITY HALL - ROOF

There, he runs along the shingles, while avoiding sections  
that had been riddled with bullets, and broken through --

INT. CITY HALL - BASEMENT

Mayor Victor makes his way down the stairs to his reinforced  
basement. His protectors have ignored his orders and are  
paying the price with their lives. The guards use grenades,  
but they are not enough to stem the tide of the onslaught.

Some of the humans follow Laren through the busted-out window  
and onto the roof.

EXT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - ROOF

Laren can see that someone in town has rigged a hauler with a  
spreader that is spraying magnetic sand at the advancing  
mechs. The effect of it is apparent, when mechanoids begin  
staggering in all directions. The mechs beyond the wall do  
not fare much better, as multiple barrages of mortar rounds  
clear vast groups of them --

Laren crawls down a drain pipe --

EXT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - STREET

-- and looks for anyone he knows as he staggers through the  
streets. He chokes on suffocating smoke until someone spots  
him, huddled in an alleyway. It is Blister Buchanan --

BLISTER

(moaning)

Over here, Laren!

Laren joins Blister, who hands Laren a small caliber assault  
rifle.

BLISTER (CONT'D)  
Keep it on single shot. Most of the  
rounds are gone.

Blister has an unnatural smile.

BLISTER (CONT'D)  
Crazy day, eh, Laren?

LAREN  
We wouldn't have gotten this far,  
if it wasn't for you...

BLISTER  
(wheezing)  
Desperate times, they say.  
Unfortunately, my lower half is  
having a problem.

Laren turns his head to see blood covering Blister's legs and torso.

LAREN  
I'm so sorry, Blister...

BLISTER  
(heavy sigh)  
With all these bullets flying  
around, odds are that I was going  
to get hit by one or two. What I  
really hate is that I didn't take  
out more of those mechs.

LAREN  
(tenderly, moments before  
the tears)  
You did just great, my dear friend.

BLISTER  
Tell me, my friend, are you ever  
going to ask her to marry you?

LAREN  
(crying)  
Myra, sure am, my friend.

BLISTER  
Good...

Laren can hear Blister try to say something else, as he hugs him close to himself. Blister is now going into shock, and is sweating profusely. The blood loss is too great, and Blister is soon unconscious.



Laren cannot hold back the tears, and sobs uncontrollably. Rage fills his heart, and he forces his grip away from Blister, who is now dead.

Laren rests in the shadows. He feels numb. He turns to Blister once again; who has that forever gaze, and closes Blister's eyelids with his fingers.

EXT. CROSSFIRE CRATER - STREET - EVENING

The shooting eventually stops, and the city becomes eerily quiet. The mechanized army of Manax547 has somehow prevailed and is marching through the streets with impunity.

Laren cannot hold still and he runs back towards the Town Hall with the assault rifle clenched in one hand. He knows Bronx55 or Manax547 will be there, sitting upon the throne of power.

Laren runs up the steps while the androids, standing guard, ignore him. He is ready to unload the rifle on whatever will now be in place at the mayor's chair.

INT. CITY HALL

Inside the town hall, seated behind the large wooden desk, is the new mayor of Crossfire Crater. However it isn't a mech, but a human male. The man at the seat of power is wearing business attire. He looks familiar. It is as if Laren is staring into a broken mirror.

Trin is there, sitting in the mayor's seat. Mechanoids stand on each side of him with rifles in their hands.

LAREN  
(whispering)  
Trin...?

TRIN  
It's me - in the flesh. This time.  
I don't need a costume.

LAREN  
I can't believe I'm seeing you like  
this -

TRIN  
It's time we moved on to bigger and  
better things. We can even get to  
know each other better.

LAREN

(screaming)

You're a part of their family now,  
not mine! You made that decision a  
long time ago! There's someone I  
love, Trin. I have to find out if  
she's okay!

TRIN

Don't worry, Brother. I'm sure she  
is ...but ...I'm afraid you won't  
be seeing her for a while. You need  
to come with me and --

LAREN

(eyes on fire)

Who do you think you are? I'm not  
going anywhere!

TRIN

There is a place that you need to  
see, Laren. It is a part of our  
family legacy. Our father had a  
hand in it, in his early years, but  
he grew uncomfortable with some of  
the unforeseen consequences --

Trin has failed to notice the rifle Laren is holding behind  
him. Laren jerks it up to his shoulder and aims it directly  
at Trin.

LAREN

(growling - trigger finger  
shaking)

You're not my brother! You're some  
kind of sick, twisted freak! You  
seek to destroy everything I ever  
cared about. You can't control me -  
like some puppet - like some mech --

Trin stands frozen with fear as he watches the barrel of the  
rifle being zeroed-in on his head --

Trin does not say a word - In Trin's eyes, Laren can see  
Trin's pleading for mercy --

Laren is shaking; adrenalin pounding him on every side --

In a moment of clarity he is able to see past his anger.  
Laren throws the rifle at Trin and barely misses him - a mech  
grabs his arm, and Laren howls with anger.

LAREN (CONT'D)

(screaming)

I wish I could kill you, but I  
can't!

Trin exhales and slumps into the chair once used by the  
mayor.

TRIN

(shaking as he proudly  
straitens himself up)

Put him in with the former mayor  
until we set out for Athenaeum. I  
want him treated exceptionally  
well. Even though he considered  
killing me, he is still my brother.

LAREN

(wailing voice trailing)

Trin, You're going to burn in Hell!

TRIN

(fighting to ignore  
Laren's wrath)

Oh, and his woman, whoever she is -  
find her, but don't harm her.

EXT. CITY HALL

Trin shrugs off his near death experience, and walks out the  
front doors of City Hall to witness the mechanoid's victory.  
The streets are littered with bodies and debris.

Bronx55 emerges out of the smoke. His chest and the left side  
of his head are bullet-ridden, but it does not seem to affect  
him.

BRON55

The entire city is secure, Sir. The  
humans proved to be a formidable  
enemy. We have lost hundreds of  
units.

TRIN

We can make more. There will be  
little resistance from now on. I  
doubt there is another town, in the  
whole of North America, like this  
one.

BRONX55

I hope not, Sir.

TRIN

How well do you take orders,  
Bronx55?

BRONX55

I feel I have followed orders quite well.

TRIN

There had been times when you acted on your own.

BRON55

Leaders have to make difficult decisions.

TRIN

I have to have total confidence in you, before I can make my next decision.

BRONX55

You may trust in me completely, Sir.

TRIN

Good. You will, from now on, be my Field General. I have other duties that I need to attend to. Bronx55, be sure to be in constant communication with me.

BRONX55

Yes, Vice Regency ...thank you!

TRIN

Bronx55, that is a title that I am no longer referred to. I am now President Fisk of The Incorporated Territories of North America. I hope you will remember that.

BRON55

(walking back into the smoke)

Yes, of course - Mr. President.

Trin decides to visit Laren before making preparations to return to his thrown of power, in Athenaeum.

The basement bunker of --

INT. CITY HALL - BASEMENT - MORNING

-- the City Hall fortified basement has been breached. Laren now sits next to Mayor Victor in silence.

Trin arrives and sits across from them.

TRIN

So this is the former mayor. He doesn't look like much.

Mayor Victor looks away in disgust --

TRIN (CONT'D)

(staring at Laren)

So why didn't you kill me, Laren?

Laren thinks about it for a while and then stares back, deep into Trin's eyes --

LAREN

Because Mom loved you, and I'm not a killer, unlike you.

Trin squirms --

TRIN

I love ...loved her too. Father let her die ...because he did not want to expose the Brethren of MechenEZ, by allowing her to receive advanced medical attention. That was a decision that would torment him.

LAREN

How do you know that? You were never around.

TRIN

There is more to this that you will ever know about. Believe me - I know what happened to Father, because I bore the guilt straight into his soul.

LAREN

Is it worth your soul, Trin? The deception and the bloodshed?

Trin smiles with a distant look in his eyes.

TRIN

Yes, I believe it is, Brother. Just you wait and see.

LAREN

You sure are destined for the Fires of Hades, aren't you.

TRIN

I suppose, in the end, we are all masters of our own disasters, more or less.

EXT. THE EDGE OF A VAST DESERT - DAY

The scenery has changed. Trin and Laren ride in a large all-terrain vehicle. To Laren, it seems to be an endless dirt road. He is in the back of the vehicle - quiet and distant.

In the distance we see sliver of buildings hugging the edge of an expanse. It is the end of the road.

The automobile stops, and all exit the vehicle, except Laren.

TRIN

Get out, Laren.

Laren, reluctantly and slowly pulls himself from the vehicle - the raw sunlight stinging his eyes.

LAREN

Just tell me one thing. Is she okay?

TRIN

Yes - I know that for a fact. My people were even told to leave her alone.

(waving Laren on)

Come and meet your future.

A strange grouping of buildings lay before them. One building stands that is different from the rest. It is the size of an airship hangar, but is more like a large bunker, being constructed of solid concrete. It rests on the edge of a great precipice.

The perimeter of the hangar is a barbed wire fence, with guard towers manned by a squad of watchful soldiers, both human and mechanoid. Trin exudes an air of superiority. He is still wearing the elaborate business suit, with shiny leather shoes and a vibrant blue tie. He looks like a Wall Street tycoon from the twenty-first century.

## EXT. CONCRETE HANGAR

Trin, and his entourage, pass through all the check points with ease. A small access door, located to one side of the massive hangar doors, is opened for the group, and everyone shuffles inside. The hangar is empty except for a few heavy cranes and pulleys. There are also a few military vehicles scattered around. Massive access doors line the floor.

LAREN

What an impressively empty building.

TRIN

We use this hangar to bring supplies in from this end of the city.

They enter a small shuttle bus which quickly brings them to an elevator.

## INT. ELEVATOR ENTRANCE

TRIN

(smiling like a magician,  
seconds before pulling a  
rabbit out of a hat)

Are you ready?

The doors of the glass elevator open, and the group walks inside.

## INT. GLASS ELEVATOR

As the elevator quickly lowers, Laren stares through the glass. Through it he sees, a city, nestled in an abandoned open-pit copper mine. The city is shining, complex and mesmerizing. Laren's knees buckle, and he slides down the glass - hugging the bottom of the elevator.

TRIN

Behold Athenaeum, the city of our future - your future; named after Athena, the Greek Goddess of civilization. It is the repository of all of human knowledge from our long past.

LAREN

The past is all here?

TRIN

(eyes sparkling)

Yes, my brother. It is the largest time capsule ever created. Almost all of every kind of technology that ever existed before the great wars, exists here - along with some new additions.

LAREN

So you want to unleash it on to the world?

TRIN

No - I think reintroduce is a better term.

The elevator comes to a stop, and the doors open and everyone files out into --

EXT. TRANSIT STATION

-- a large transit station. There are automobiles of every kind, on long crisscrossing roads. At first glance, the city appears to function perfectly, but it does not appear to be entirely real - like a movie set.

LAREN

How do you fuel all this madness?

TRIN

Well - we do not use fossil fuels anymore. See that roadster over there - the red one. In its time, when it was on the market, it was a gas guzzler. It's now powered by a particle accelerator along with everything moving past you. No more energy shortages.

LAREN

If this is all so appealing, then why all the mechs? Why not just wave the carrot, so to speak, and rely on consumer demand?

TRIN

(as if rehearsed)

Because we tried that, and it failed. Sometimes you cannot just show consumers the door - you have to kick them through it.

(MORE)



TRIN (CONT'D)

You cannot have envy if the neighbor doesn't have anything for you to envy - that's an extremely significant element. This isn't merely about supply and demand. It's about the flow of goods and services - a system where everyone benefits. You can only create a higher standard of living, by doing it this way.

LAREN

What about the poor? You know as well as I that not everyone benefits. Envy creates war - a necessary part of the equation, I suppose you will say, Brother?

TRIN

Doesn't any of this make sense to you?

LAREN

I don't know anymore. I use to dream of cities like this, but -

TRIN

Would you like to drive the roadster, Brother? It's a tremendously enjoyable experience. Maybe you would rather try out a more high performance sports-car.

LAREN

You know full well that I don't know how to operate any of those vehicles.

TRIN

I'll teach you. I'll teach you, everything.

LAREN

I bet you will.

TRIN

You just don't know yet how much you need it in your life - to drive down the open road - the future in your hands - it's exhilarating.

FLASHBACK

We see a commercial ad that Laren had seen at the Museum of Advanced Technology. A couple is riding in a convertible with the top down - rock music blaring as they speed along a desert highway. Laren remembers the smiles on the couple's faces. The woman leans into the man, and the man wraps his arm around the woman.

EXT. FANTASY DESERT HIGHWAY - SUNSET

Laren starts to imagine it - save that this time it is Myra sitting next to him - smiling. Hair flowing across their faces, as the wind gently caresses them. The sun slowly sets before them. It is the fantasy of absolute freedom - no cares and no worries - just the setting sun and the open road before them.

Laren opens his eyes --

BACK TO SCENE

-- and struggles to grapple with the reality before him.

TRIN

Marvelous - isn't it. Imagine the power harnessed to make it all work. Think about all the human toil in the pursuit of a single building or automobile. High technology was almost all destroyed. It is a miracle that there were great minds who worked tirelessly for several generations to preserve it.

LAREN

It is marvelous, brother - but how do you manage all of it?

TRIN

With a strong hand, Laren. Power isn't just about dominating, it's about control - maintaining civilization's precarious balance.

LAREN

(staring at Trin)  
I don't see balance or control,  
Trin. All I see is you.

FADE TO BLACK