

Chapter 1.2

border patrol

An apartment halfway up Sky City Seven, facing north amongst employee housing in Paypal Neighborhood's twelve district. Rotterdam region—EU.

Ennis leans from the narrow window carefully, still draped in the dark gray sheet, monocular protruding from beneath its folds.

He comes back to record the time then moves to another window, repeating the exercise.

Three clicks away border guards thoroughly inspect parked rail cars by the southern entrance to Amsterdam's freight tunnel.

Graffiti on the outer concrete wall reads, *'Everything has its place in the heart of man, for even what he fears defines him...'*

Below it, *'Fuck off cuntorrrr!!!'*

inside the fold

The heart of Amsterdam City. Netherlands region—EU.

Long steamers drift silently through the Amsterdam CBD two wide in its narrow canals.

Several floors up, on the balcony of an exclusive coffee shop, Serrah Zenith paints the scene below.

PDA vibrating softly, she takes a moment to finish the detail at one corner of a digital canvas.

"Accept it," says Serrah, smoking a blend of coffee and herb. "Hi hi."

Her daughter's face flickers on its projected display.

Apple says, "I'm leaving college. I thought you should know."

"Oh, that sounds fun."

"Take me seriously. Jeez."

"I never presumed to do otherwise, dear."

Apple pauses. Serrah tilts the holographic window toward her, unable to read her youngest after nineteen years.

Serrah asks, "Why don't you come for a visit?"

"Negro please. I'd rather spend the night in a territory."

"Well I do appreciate your calls, but the scenery doesn't paint itself."

"No shit," says Apple, ending the call.

ace of sleeves

Three blocks from the central hub of PayPal's mag-lev network. Rotterdam region—EU.

"I'm basically looking for a bomb," Ennis tells the stranger on call. His PDA reads, 'Audio Only'.

"What kind of bomb?" asks the arms dealer.

Ennis looks around the mag-lev carriage, lowering his voice some.

"It's gonna have to be nuclear."

"Regular, or large?"

"Oh, I hadn't really thought about it. What do you recommend?"

"Well, you know what they say about, ah, it's better to need a regular and have the large, than need a large and have the regular."

"Yeah I heard that somewhere," says Ennis.

"It'll cost you though. And because I don't know you I need it all upfront."

"I'm working on it. We should be good."

Ennis pockets his PDA, vacantly staring at floating advertisements while the train descends from thirty floors up, into Rotterdam's subway system.

shooters

The unmapped public slums crammed beneath uberhighways connecting Paypal and Kruger(I.S.) territories. Rotterdam region—EU.

"What's this one?" Ennis asks the man in sunglasses.

"Fission device, one gigaton."

"Okay this may seem like a strange question, but which one puts out the most passive radiation?"

The dealer shakes his head. "You don't want that. Meteorology would register it on the flyby."

"What if I had a timetable?"

"On company satellites? Good luck breaking the encryption. Trust me, it was my job for a long time."

"Just humor me," says Ennis.

"Okay, well... I guess you'd probably be looking at something pre- twenty-fifty. Neutron bomb, ninety megaton range."

Ennis slowly nods, eyes narrowed.

The dealer seems concerned by this. "But you'd want to be damn sure you know when those birds are overhead before taking it out of the bunker. They don't have Peace Enforcement patrolling under the highways anymore, the people who have to work here really like it that way."

“Next time you see me,” says Ennis, “I’ll have the cash and relevant timetables. For now though, I’ll just take this sweet revolver.”

Ennis taps his PDA, waves it over the dealer’s home feed station. It chimes with the universal sample of a funds transfer.

The arms dealer lights a cigarette and grunts, returning his attention to the muted feed display floating above his bomb shelter’s kitchen sink.

“Volume,” he tells it, filling the cramped bunker with synth music and excited Cantonese.

Ennis leaves the room past shelves stocked with tinned food and bottled water, ascending a stainless steel ladder back to the surface.

He climbs out of an alloy blast door in the back yard of the arms dealer’s ghetto safehouse, leaving via a side gate.

Despite the daytime hour, no sunlight penetrates the massive concrete highways overhead.

Large, pale eyes watch Ennis return to his idling taxi, which peels away from the curb the moment he’s inside.

Riding in back, Ennis keeps one hand in his pocket, feeling the revolver’s shape and weight.

For as long as it takes the lights to change, he wonders what it will feel like to use it on a man.