

ticket to war

The abandoned urban wasteland just outside of corporate territories. Netherlands region—EU.

Ennis waits in the doorway of a condemned firehouse, concealed by its shadow, watching the destitute and miscreants shuffle by on their Friday night chemical hunts.

One of the homeless stops when he spots Ennis there in the dark, pulling back his hood to reveal a clean-shaven face.

A hint of dress shirt collar and striped Windsor knot are visible beneath his torn sweater.

The faux hobo shows him a coffee mug, rolled-up envelope stuffed into it.

“Do I... take it?” Ennis asks.

The messenger sighs, cautiously looking up and down the block before returning his attention to Ennis.

“What are you retarded?”

Ennis snatches the envelope, pocketing it as the guy moves on.

He waits half a minute then walks the other way, snaking through the open-air drug markets of lower Rotterdam.

the job

One of three HR recruitment centers inside Yamaha’s Four District. Berlin region—EU.

The suit he wears is worth €99 but it could easily pass as lower-end brand name. It folds and grabs in all the wrong places, itching him, but Ennis remains motionless in the chair.

Behind his desk, Pico Tennerman reads over the CV on its display, scanning for points of interest.

“I see here that you studied in Canada,” says Tennerman.

“Is that going to be a problem?” Ennis’s eyes dart to the window and back.

Tennerman chuckles. “Only if you’re a Maple Leafs supporter.”

“Who?”

“Uh, they’re a hockey team.”

“Laser hockey?”

Tennerman frowns. “/ce... hockey.”

Outside, an automated washing rig rises into view then hovers in place, mechanized scrubbers tending to Tennerman’s floor-to-ceiling windows.

“So...” Ennis leans forward, hands flat to the desk, “do I get the job or what?”

“I’ll be honest with you Mr. Pryce, nothing on your CV stands out. You’re not quite *wowing* me. Why should Yamaha hire a guy like you to liaise with MoD?”

The maintenance platform slams into Tennerman’s window, startling the executive.

“Sheezus... damn nearly—”

It hits again, this time breaking the safety glass, plowing through it. Tennerman leaps from his high-back leather chair as the shattered window collapses around him.

The rig keeps coming, settling against the heavy desk before powering down.

“Well that’s weird,” says Ennis, also getting to his feet. He walks around the desk, leaning over the errant machine.

“Can you see what went wrong?” asks Tennerman.

Ennis kneels beside it, tearing duct tape from the engine housing. “Not quite. There’s something taped to it though.”

“Is—a bomb?” Tennerman takes another cautious step backward.

Ennis rises from behind the desk with the prized revolver leveled at his potential employer.

“What kind of shit is this?” asks a nervous Tennerman, half-raising his hands. “How did you get that past Security? You... what? Planned all this?”

“Sorry, but you’re not exactly *wowing* me either, Bob.”

“Pico.”

Ennis shoots Pico in the neck, then crosses the room to put another round in his chest.

While Tennerman bleeds out on the floor Ennis tosses his weapon through the window, exiting via the main door.

Walking to a bank of elevators Ennis tells the secretary, “He said give it ten minutes before the next guy.”

blind spot

Ennis waits in the hired utility a block behind where uberhighway ends and sky begins.

In its cradle on the dash, his PDA counts backward from 74 seconds. Eyes adjusting to the light.

When the counter hits zero he floors it, roaring out of the projects and back to society. The PDA counts down again, 119 seconds.

He leans forward over the steering column, noticing gray clouds roll across a horizon bloated by industry.

Rattling about in back, secured hastily by chains, the ninety-eight megaton neutron bomb makes Ennis feel empowered for the first time in six years.

Today corporate might and private borders seem slightly less insurmountable to the man who aches for home enough to wipe it off the planet.