

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION
ENGLISH EXTENSION COURSE 2 MAJOR WORK
IDENTIFICATION TAG

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**ATTACH THIS CARD SECURELY TO EACH PART
OF THE PROJECT. DO NOT PIN.**

r e d

s k i e s

p r e - c r e d i t s

FADE IN

-on the exterior of an airplane. We're looking in through a window at a man who's staring out at us.

Past him we can see the cabin of the airplane. It looks like the first class area; all gleaming modernity and comfortable furnishings. The lights are off, except for the small light above the man's seat. Hold for a few seconds, and then-

CUT TO

-the interior of the plane. Now we can see that this is definitely the first class area; everything looks new and modern, and it's relatively empty. Apart from the man, there are only about four other people, and they're all sleeping. He's the only one awake, staring fixedly out the window.

(Important: we can't see what's outside the window. I mean, obviously we should be telling ourselves that it's sky, but all the same, we can't see it. Only the foreground should be kept in focus.)

Hold on this for a few beats, and then a flight attendant comes up the aisle and stops at the man's seat. The uniform she's wearing should be identifiable as a uniform, but unlike any uniform we've ever seen on any flight attendants Subtly different. Black, and all that.

Attendant

Are you alright, sir? Could I get you something to help you sleep?

The man barely registers that she's there at first. After a few seconds, he glances briefly at her, and then returns to the window.

Man

No. How long till we land?

Attendant

A few hours. Are you sure you wouldn't like something to help you sleep? We have all the leading brands of cortical suppressants...

Man

No. Thanks.

She hesitates for a moment, and then walks away. Hold on the man for a few beats, and then-

CUT TO

Now we're in an airport. We're in the main terminus. This room is huge, with massive walls and gothic arched ceilings; there is the sense here of something modern interacting with something old, as though this place had been here for centuries before it had been put to its current use. The gothic architecture contrasts with the chrome-and-silver high technology of the information terminals and booths that are dotted everywhere across the room. An immense banner depicting a stylized 'SX' hangs on one wall. The other walls are taken up with massive windows (taller than they are wide; this makes the ceiling seem higher) that stretch at least a hundred feet up. Through the windows, we can see a fairly anonymous city; it looks exactly as we would expect any large city to look today, except maybe a bit cleaner. No smog, or clouds. The sky is brilliantly, almost supernaturally, blue.

As large as the room is, it's still filled with people. They mostly look like the kind of people who travel first class; affluent, well dressed. Black seems the most common colour of clothing, although a few people are dressed more garishly. Armed guards with the same 'SX' on their uniform as on the banner are scattered around the edges of the room. The few service counters in the terminus seem swamped by people; even though this airport looks different to the ones we're used to, it should still have the same familiar chaos.

Suddenly, in the midst of all this jostling, crowded humanity, something catches our eye; it's the man from the flight. He makes his way through the crowd, not talking to anyone, toward a baggage carousel. After a few seconds, he picks up a carry-all and throws it over his shoulder. Then, he heads toward the steel doors that mark the exit.

As he walks across the room, the view that we see through the windows flickers very briefly, for no more than an instant; enough to tell us that we saw something, but not enough for us to be sure what it was.

When he reaches the exit, the camera stays in position directly behind him as he walks out of the airport terminus.

The city that we see beyond the doors is like a twisted parody of the one that we saw through the windows. The building that houses the airport terminal occupies a place high enough for us to gain a panoramic view of the city; the diseased slums, the decaying, crumbling hulks of skyscrapers that list along the horizon, the Escher-esque coils of freeway twining back and forth around everything like an insanely complicated spiderweb, the neon, the haze the rain-slicked streets cascading down into the city.

But what draws our attention away from the city is the sky.

The sky is covered with clouds that are the dull, angry red of a burn, shot through with patches of a lighter crimson. Radiance spills down from this immense cloudbank onto the city below, almost penetrating the haze of neon that covers the city in a perpetual umbra of dull, washed-out light. Rain, tinged slightly black with whatever acid pollutants run through the cloud, falls in a thin, continuous spray that layers everything with an almost imperceptible sheen of grime and discolouration.

The street that the airport terminal is in looks like something out of a warzone. There are literally thousands of people in this one street alone, and it looks as though they're in the middle of a riot. The majority of them look crazy, or diseased, or homeless. For the most part, they're dressed in rags, or in the stained remnants of suits, or in ragged tatters of

shredded plastic. They're all fighting with each other in what looks like a savage brawl; some of the moderately futuristic cars that are in the street have been overturned, while some are little more than burning hulks.

The man surveys all of this for a few seconds, and then sets off into it's midst, apparently unconcerned as to his well-being.

Hold on him vanishing into the crowd, and then fade to the credits.

After the credits-

Black screen. As we watch, the following slowly fades in one line at a time-

b e r l i n

d e c e m b e r 3 1 s t / 2 1 9 4

1 0 : 0 7 : 3 8 p . m .

The seconds continue to tick over on the clock.

After a few seconds, the words fade out, returning us to the black screen, which then fades into-

1 – EXT – CITY – AERIAL SHOT

We're gliding through the air of the city that we saw in the pre-credits sequence. The glow of the neon mingles with the rain to create a kind of haze; smoke and pollution run thick through the air as we fly between corroding skyscrapers. Once again, the sky grabs our attention.

2 – EXT – PLAZA

We're looking at a plaza similar to the large street we saw near the end of the opening sequence, except this one looks like a war is taking place in it.

The plaza is huge; the towering hulks of the skyscrapers that form it's perimeter dwarf the crowd contained within it, even though they number in the thousands. Fires burn everywhere, mirroring the open wound of the sky above; sleek attack craft, armed to the teeth, make passes over the crowd, occasionally firing down into it. The harsh neon from the skyscrapers mingles with the poisonous light of the sky, casting a weird radiance over everything.

The crowd moves with the sinuous grace of a single organism; the rhythms of the various brawls and confrontations taking place are almost hypnotic, partly due to the fact that they're happening on such a massive scale.

Spread throughout the crowd are squads of people dressed similarly to the armed guards we saw in the opening shot, but with more armour and bigger guns; there can't be more than a hundred of them, and it looks like a dozen or so of them are being killed every minute. The survivors have grouped together into small squads, and are making last stands.

Which isn't to imply that these guys are the only ones being picked on. It looks to us as though people are savagely tearing each other apart for pretty much no reason at all. It looks as much like open war as a riot. As we watch, a missile arcs up in a lazy spiral from an unseen launcher somewhere in the crowd and hits one of the attack craft, which explodes; the burning hulk of it crashes down into the crowd, plowing a furrow through it.

The footage that we see switches back and forth between a few different formats; a handheld camera in the crowd, a camera mounted on one of the attack craft, etc...

A voice-over enters on the soundtrack.

Voice

Each day, the insanity deepens; as the crowds taste the blood shed by their own hands, it seems that that they'll never stop. Each day, the blood soaks a little deeper into the firmament of the city; each day, the lights grow brighter, the fires grow higher, and the number of lives already lost increases.

The voice is that of a woman.

Here, on the sixth day of the riots, it seems as though there is no end in sight; if anything, tonight's New Year's Eve celebrations will mark the culmination of the bloodiest week in the history of Berlin.

3 – EXT – ROOFTOP

We're on a rooftop overlooking the plaza. The body that belongs to the voice is standing centre shot; it's a reporter-ish looking woman dressed in a more stylish variation of the uniform worn by the guards in the building and the soldiers in the crowd. She's got a microphone and is speaking directly to the camera. A heavily armed soldier stands on either side of her; more soldiers are at the edge of the roof, firing down into the crowd. She's speaking directly to the camera.

What sparked the riots off is unknown; a simple argument, a misplaced word, a bar-room brawl spilling out onto the streets; two days ago, the death toll was placed at ten thousand. Where it lies now is anyone's guess.

She gestures at the plaza behind her.

This is only one of dozens of scenes all over the city as the loyal and dedicated officers of the SX Corporation try to suppress the riots; as they put their lives on the line to safeguard the well-being of others.

This is in harsh contrast to the soldiers emptying their assault rifles into the crowd; as we watch, some of them throw grenades. One rigs up a missile launcher.

What will happen later tonight is anyone's guess; when the clock strikes twelve, will any of us still be standing?

This is-

Her words are swallowed as a one of the attack craft flying directly over the building we're on is hit by a missile; it performs a brilliant airburst as it's fuel tank explodes. Pieces of it begin to rain down on the reporter and the soldiers. One apparently hits the camera, because the picture cuts out and jumps to static. Static which fades to-

1

r o o f t o p

1 | CU - MAINTENANCE HATCH

The hatch is set into the ground; it's the kind that opens up onto a rooftop. We hold on it for a few beats, and then it opens. The man from the plane climbs halfway out and then looks cautiously around. Once he's satisfied, he climbs all the way out.

The camera pulls back, and we see that we're on the rooftop of some kind of tenement building or skyscraper. Whatever this place is, it looks deserted or abandoned; junk and debris lie everywhere, and parts of the roof have caved in, exposing gaping holes that open into the buildings interior.

The sky looks the same as we saw in the opening sequence, except that no rain is falling. The man looks around cautiously again, and then heads for the edge of the roof.

2 | EXT - ROOFTOP

We follow the man as he heads to the edge of the roof and looks over it at the city below. (Important; this should be a slow tracking shot from a few feet over the man's head, looking down on him from above; That way, we get the desired effect, which is that we only see the city directly below us. We don't get a panoramic view of the skyline.)

Our bird's eye view of the city below gives us the impression that we're in the same city as the one we saw in the opening sequence. The building we're on is one of the tallest around; the other buildings, tenements and skyscrapers alike, form decaying canyons of steel and rust. A thick haze of neon-laced smog hovers about halfway between us and the street, hundreds of feet below. We can dimly see the rioting crowds.

3 | EXT - ROOFTOP

The camera follows the man's gaze as he looks up at the city.

As tall as this building seemed to be, it's dwarfed by the immensity of the rest of the city. Massive skyscrapers crowd together against the dull, crimson sky, with the largest one in the centre of the city, just like we saw before. Some of the buildings are in flames, and some have been rotted down to a skeletal framework by the acid rain and corrosive winds. The dull rumble of distant explosions can be heard; as we look, one floor of a nearby skyscraper explodes outward in a hail of shrapnel, and a dozen people tumble out, falling to their deaths on the streets, hundreds of feet below. Attack craft armed to the teeth patrol the skies, drifting between the rusty canyons and performing attack runs on several skyscrapers.

4 | EXT - ROOFTOP - POV (?)

We're looking at the man through someone's eyes as he walks toward the centre of the rooftop.

After a few beats, the camera pulls back, and we see the person whose eyes we were just looking through; it's a girl, in her early to mid twenties. She has short-cut hair dyed dark

blue, and her clothes are in tatters. She watches the man until he walks out of sight, and then she begins to follow him.

The camera follows her as she tracks the man across the rooftop, toward it's centre.

Finally, he finds a relatively large clearing amidst all the junk and debris. When he stops, she stops too; she hides behind the edge of a small maintenance building.

The man moves to the centre of the clearing and removes a tripod from inside his coat; he sets it up under the glare of the massive cloud bank that covers the sky. Then, he takes a large black, metallic cylinder out of his coat and attaches it to the tripod so that it points straight up. Finally, he takes out a small keyboard and attaches it to the side of the device. He taps something on it, and a lens on one end of it projects a transparent stream of flickering light into the air before him. He taps at the screen, making some selections from menus that we can't quite see. Once he's done this for a few seconds, the cylinder atop the device emits a thick ray of incandescent white light, shooting it directly upward into the red sky. The ray casts a harsh light on the area directly around the man. The holographic screen begins to display rapid streams of data.

5 | EXT - ROOFTOP

We're watching the girl from the front as she watches the man; the shimmering white light plays across her face and the wall next to her. The camera slowly zooms in until her face is in CU; she's obviously intent on what she's seeing.

Suddenly, her eyes go wide. The camera pulls back again to reveal that a black-gloved hand has been clamped across her mouth. Terrified, she tries to look around, and the camera pulls back again to show us who has a hold of her.

This guy looks similar to the other man, he one from the plane; they're dressed alike, but this guy is taller, and he looks colder. He's stereotypical bad guy material.

He turns the girl to face him, and then holds a finger to her lips, motioning for her to be quiet. Then he gestures at someone behind him.

The camera tracks around to show us that there are four men hiding behind the maintenance building; again, they're similarly dressed to the other men, but they look more like henchmen.

At a gesture from the leader, they all produce weapons; shotguns, pistols, submachineguns, etc.

The leader nods again, and at his signal, they all spring out from their hiding place to confront the man in the clearing while he's preoccupied with whatever he's doing.

Except, from the look on their faces, we can tell that something's wrong. The camera pans around to show us what they're looking at; the clearing, empty except for the device in the centre, spewing it's ray of white radiance.

Suddenly, a distinctly heard click breaks the silence. Before the men can whirl around, there's a gunshot, and one of them goes down with his head in ruins.

6 | ACTION MONTAGE

The men and their target duel around the rooftop. This should be a wildly exaggerated shootout in the fashion of John Woo; think The Killer, or Hard Boiled. It's important to stress, though, that there shouldn't be any humour. This is all deadly serious.

At some point, the girl is thrown aside; she's left lying stretched out against the wall of the maintenance building. She killed one of the bad guys; she shot him just as he was about to shoot the man from the plane.

After the end of the action scene, when the bad guys have been disposed of, the man from the plane walks up to the girl and points a gun at her head.

M a n

I hope you haven't been too distracted to think of at least one good reason why I shouldn't shoot you.

G i r l

I shot one of them.

M a n

I shot *four* of them.

G i r l

I saved your *life*

M a n

And now I'm saving yours.

He turns and quickly makes his way to the hatch where he first emerged onto the roof. Just as he's about to climb down into it, we hear voices coming up toward us; he quickly pulls out a grenade and throws it into the hatch. After it emits a blinding flash, we hear the voices yelling in surprise and pain; then he closes the hatch and bolts it. He quickly runs back to where the girl's lying. As he runs past her-

G i r l

Hey!

He stops and looks at her in surprise.

M a n

Still here? In a few minutes there's going to be some very angry, half-blind cops running around up here shooting at anything that moves.

G i r l

I can't move. My leg's broken.

She gestures at it; it's twisted at an odd angle. He hesitates for a few beats.

M a n

Alright. I'll get you somewhere where that leg can be treated.

He picks her up and smashes open the door of the maintenance building, revealing a shadowed room within.

7 | INT - ELEVATOR ROOM

Dim neon lights flicker into life as the two enter. He puts her down against a wall and then moves over to one of the dead and lifeless viewscreens that litter the walls.

G i r l

What are you doing?

No response. We can hear the sound of people running.

G i r l (cont.)

Whatever it is, it had better be quick.

The man keeps ignoring her. He rolls up his sleeve to reveal a small metallic port in his wrist; as we watch, an input jack extends from it. He places his hand over the viewscreen and inserts the jack into a port. The screen flickers into life, and he begins to tap at the screen.

After a few seconds, a humming noise is heard, and the sound of the elevator approaching can be heard.

M a n

Nothing up here works anymore. I had to tap into the city's power grid and siphon of some power.

The elevator doors slide open. The man moves over and helps her up.

8 | INT - ELEVATOR

This isn't like any elevator we've seen. It's larger; the size of a small room, and it has three rows of dusty, torn chairs fitted with rotting restraint straps. Nothing looks in good condition.

The man and the girl stagger into the shot. Just as they do, the door behind them in the elevator room slams open to reveal a cop; he's dressed in high-tech black body armour with a small 'SX' insignia embossed on it.

C o p

They're in here!

Before the cop can do anything else, the man turns, pulls a pistol with his free hand, and shoots the cop right between the eyes. Then, just as a group of similarly dressed cops appear at the door, he pushes a switch on the control panel inside the lift. Just as the cops raise their assault rifles, the heavy doors slide shut. The heavily muffled sound of the bullets hitting the door can be heard.

M a n

Reinforced steel alloy. Don't make them like that anymore.

He sets her down in a chair and begins to strap her in, unconcerned by the sound of the cops' rifles.

G i r l

What are the straps for?

M a n

Rapid deceleration. The elevator freefalls for a couple of hundred feet, and then it's caught near the bottom of the building by magnetic repulsors. It's the express elevator; doesn't stop until it hits the bottom. If you didn't have these straps to hold you down, you'd be crushed to a pulp. As it is, it's going to do something awful to your leg.

He finishes strapping her in and moves off to examine the control panel. Then he takes a seat in a row facing the panel and begins to strap himself in, leaving one arm free.

G i r l

Wait. How are you going to trigger the controls?

He raises his free arm to reveal that he's still holding the pistol. He points it at the control panel.

Man

Hold on.

Just as he's about to fire, the elevator doors fly open to reveal the squad of cops standing there. They raise their rifles, but the man fires first. The control panel explodes into sparks, and the lift drops into freefall.

9 | ELEVATOR SHAFT MONTAGE

This is a series of shots in the elevator and in the shaft as the lift drops. As it flies past the various floors, we can see that many of them are little more than the skeletal remains of what was once obviously a massive building. The twin glows of the harsh neon from the city and the burning red of the sky pour into the lift from gaping holes in the various floors as the lift passes them, causing a strobe-like effect.

Finally, as the elevator nears the bottom, we see a series of massive rusty coils set into the bottom of the shaft begin to glow red. The elevator slows, and eventually stops, right at the ground floor.

10 | INT - ELEVATOR

The man rips his way out of the rotten straps. His free arm is oddly unbroken. He unstraps the girl, whose leg looks like it has a few extra fractures. They limp out of the lift.

11 | INT - LOBBY

The lobby is massive, with arched high ceilings and all that; the place is in ruins, though. Junk is strewn everywhere, and the walls are old and cracked. They move toward the arch that forms the main entrance of the place.

He sets her down in the doorway.

Man

Wait here. I'll be back in a minute.

He moves off into the street outside.

12 | EXT - STREET

If this city looked like a warzone from above, it looks like pure hell from ground level.

The street resembles the one we saw in the opening sequence, except there seem to be even more people here. They're dressed in every style, from conservative to cyberpunk. It's pretty obvious that there's a riot or battle of some kind going on. People tear at each other in bloody brawls with and without weapons, fighting everybody, not just the legions of cops that have waded into the massive melee. Everything's backlit by the twin haloes of neon and the burning sky. Light from errant fires spills over everything as well. The man looks from left to right, scanning the area. He then quickly makes his way through the chaos to one of the few untouched cars lying here and there. A pair of garish punks are trying to break into it; he decks them with a well aimed punch and a kick, and then breaks into the car himself.

13 | INT - CAR

There's no steering wheel, just a palm shaped indentation on the dashboard. The man fiddles with something under the dashboard and then places his hand in the indentation. The car hums and rises a few feet into the air, the tyres retracting. The car speeds off toward the building where he left the girl. As we look through the man's point of view, we see a squad of cops heading right toward him. The doorway where he left the girl is between him and them.

14 | EXT - STREET

The cops point at the car and then break into a run, levelling their assault rifles. The car screams toward them; just as it reaches the doorway where the man left the girl, it swings around so that the doorway is shielded. Then, the man leans out of the door and pulls a pistol from his coat; this one looks different; more futuristic. Just as the cops pull up short, the man fires the gun, and it shoots a small sphere of hissing, spitting green energy toward the cops. The ball hits the lead cop, and expands into a sphere of crackling green energy, enveloping the cops. They seem to freeze. The man gets out of the car and drags the girl into the backseat. Then he gets in and drives off, navigating through the crowds.

2

h o t e l

1 | INT - HOTEL ROOM

This place is old and run down, much like everything else we've seen so far. There's little more than a bed, a table, a few chairs, and a computer. Another door opens into the bathroom. Curtains are drawn over the window; every now and then a cop car or a chopper swoops past, sending a wash of blue light from its sirens across the room. The girl's lying on the bed with her leg stretched out at an odd angle. After a few seconds, the door opens and the man enters. He's carrying some kind of package. He crosses over to the bathroom.

2 | INT - BATHROOM

He places the package down on the sink and unwraps it to reveal a small tank about the length of a forearm; the tank is made of some kind of transparent material, and it's filled with a bluish-green liquid. There's a small keypad set into the side of the tank. The man taps something on it and the tank begins to glow softly. He moves back into the main room.

3 | INT - HOTEL ROOM

The man sits down at the computer and turns it on. He begins to access the data net.

Man

Relax. It'll take about ten minutes.

Girl

You could've taken me to a hospital.

Man

My accounts are frozen. I can't touch them. I wouldn't, even if I could; it makes it too easy for people to find me. I had to pay for *that-*

He gestures toward the bathroom.

Man (cont.)

-with cold, hard cash. Which makes me almost as easy to find. Cash is very conspicuous. Besides, a hospital wouldn't have been any good.

G i r l

The riots?

M a n

More like a full blown war. New Year's is always pretty bad, but this is something else; this is worse. Things will peak around midnight. They always do, Still-

G i r l

What?

He shakes his head.

M a n

Nothing. It feels different this time.

The girl doesn't say anything. She's confused. She doesn't know what he's talking about.

M a n (cont.)

What were you doing on that rooftop?

G i r l

I don't remember.

M a n

You don't remember?

She looks confused. She's not the only one.

G i r l

No. The first thing I remember is seeing you on the roof. Before that, there's only haze. I think I remember someone saying something.

M a n

What?

G i r l

I don't know. A number. Twenty-one-sixteen-three, I think. Everything else is blank.

The man shoots her a startled look.

M a n

You don't remember anything? Who you are? Where you're from?

G i r l

No. Just the number. 21-16-3. What is it, a date?

M a n

No. It's nothing.

But it's obvious from the look on his face that it's something. He swears at the computer.

M a n (cont.)

This is too slow.

G i r l

What are you trying to do?

M a n

Find out how they traced me here.

G i r l

Who's they? The men on the rooftop? Why were they after you?

Man

Don't ask. And they're still after me.

Girl

But you killed them.

He laughs, but there isn't much humour in it.

Man

They don't die that easily. Trust me.

He pulls a small leather case out of his pocket and opens it; it contains a lead with a long silver jack at either end, and a small device that looks like a half a pair of glasses, with one black polarised lens.

He hooks the device over one ear and positions the lens in front of one eye. Then, he plugs one end of the jack into the computer. After this, he reaches up and removes his left eye (the one without the lens over it) from it's socket. He places it on the table.

Girl

Oh god! What are you doing?

Man

I need to work faster; I have to be hardwired into the network.

We can now see that his eye socket has a metal port in it, leading back into his skull. He reaches up and plugs the long, thin jack into the port. There's an audible click as he shoves it in. After a few seconds, the lens over his good eye projects another small holographic screen into the air before him; this one, however, seems only to be covered with beams of striated light.

Girl

You know, I just realised that I don't even know your name.

Silence.

Girl (Cont.)

I believe that's the signal for you to *tell* it to me, right?

Silence.

G i r l (Cont.)

Oh come on! What am I going to do, turn you in? I'm on your side; I *killed* one of them for you!

M a n (under his breath)

Twenty-one-sixteen-three,

G i r l

What?

M a n

Nothing.

She slumps back, exhausted.

G i r l

So how does that thing work, anyway?

M a n

The sliver of metal that's embedded in my brain at the moment is connected to the terminal. It's amping up the power of the computer, making it work faster and handle more data than it usually could. Since the monitor can't show what I need at the resolution I need it, this lens on my ear is spliced into both the computer's imaging system and my visual cortex. It's re-interpreting the data that the terminal is receiving from the link-up and broadcasting it as striated light waves on this holographic screen. There's a decoder implanted in the cognitive section of my brain that reads the waves and assembles them in coherent image streams. A sensor in my right eye is linked to the network and allows me to make commands and selections without moving.

G i r l

You could've just said 'You won't understand.'

Silence for a few seconds.

M a n

Found it.

G i r l

What?

M a n

They traced me by the credit transfer I used to pay for the flight in.

He takes out a small black wallet and opens it to reveal several elongated microchips. He selects one and snaps it in half. Then, he disconnects everything and puts his eye back in.

M a n (cont.)

Should be done now.

He gets up and walks off into the bathroom. He returns a few seconds later, carrying the tank. He crosses over to the bed and sets it down, after which he sits down next to the girl.

Her leg is exposed; the entire shin is shattered beyond repair.

M a n (cont.)

Painkillers still working?

She nods. He takes a small object from it's casing on the side of the tank' it looks a little like a scalpel with a pistol-grip, except that there's no blade. He places it over her knee joint and presses a small stud at it's base.

The device emits a thin beam of green light which severs her leg just below the knee, where the damage begins. The wound is cauterised as it's created.

Then, he opens the tank to reveal a replacement leg (from below the knee joint). He removes it and places it in the position of the old leg. Thin threads of flesh quickly begin to knit together between the two.

M a n (cont.)

Doesn't hurt?

She shakes her head.

G i r l

No. Tingles a bit.

The man places the old leg in the tank, seals it up, and replaces the tool. Then, he places the tank in the middle of the room, taps a few buttons on it, and stands back. A few seconds later, there's a bright blue-white flash, and the tank self incinerates, leaving behind only a very small pile of blue-grey ash. Then he goes back to the chair next to the computer.

M a n

It'll take a few minutes to heal.

G i r l

What was with that swirly green light show back on the street?

M a n

Time dilation projectile. Experimental, very dangerous, and very illegal. Slowed down their perception of time compared to ours. Made five minutes of our time seem like twenty to whoever was inside that bubble.

G i r l

I was surprised that you didn't just shoot them. You seem to shoot everybody else you meet. Except me.

M a n

Ran out of bullets. One of the hazards of shooting everybody you meet.

He gets up.

M a n (cont.)

Well, that's that. Your leg'll be better in a few minutes. I have to replace the equipment I lost on that rooftop, and then I'm leaving the city. I doubt we'll ever see each other again.

He moves toward the door.

Girl

That's *it*? Not even a goodbye? Wait-

He stops.

Girl (Cont.)

You know I'll just follow you once my leg's better.

Man (under his breath, almost speculatively)

Twenty-one-sixteen-three...

Then he leaves without looking back. The girl slumps back on the bed in exasperation.

3

s t r e e t s

1 | EXT - CITY - SIDE STREET

We're back on the streets now. It's raining again, the same faintly black rain that we saw in the opening sequence. We see the man emerge from the doorway of a building even more run down than the others; this is the hotel from the previous scene. It's situated in a side street that leads into a large plaza. The main riot action in this area seems to be taking place in the plaza; this street is relatively quiet. The immense tenements that form the other side of the street cast the rest of it into shadows; the only light is shed by the burning hulk of a chopper lying in the middle of the street, The light of the flames flickers over the man's face as he heads toward the plaza.

2 | EXT - CITY - PLAZA

The plaza is huge, and the riot here's still in full swing. This place is filled with even more people than the street from the last scene. Several choppers lie ruined and smoking here and there, along with various cars and armoured transports. Squads of heavily armed police are ploughing their way through the masses, but are being beaten back due to their sheer number. The black rain beats down on everything. The man emerges into the plaza and begins to make his way through the crowd. He seems to avoid all the trouble around him.

3 | EXT - CITY - SIDE STREET

Back at the hotel now, just like the first shot. Now the girl comes out of the hotel; she looks a little dazed and is limping slightly. She looks around and heads off in the direction that the man went.

4 | EXT - CITY - MONTAGE

This is a montage of shots in which the girl follows the man at a distance; just as she always seems on the verge of losing him, she suddenly catches sight of him again. She tracks him through the plaza and through some more streets before he comes to a bar; she hangs back as he enters. She then looks through the bar's large, neon-laced window (which is oddly unbroken, despite the riots). The camera follows her as she looks in; we see the man cross to the bar and talk to the bartender, who gestures over at a man seated in a shady corner of the bar, apart from everyone else. The man's face is lit only by the neon haze filtering in through the window. He looks like the stereotypical black-marketeer, though, from what we can see; conspicuously well-dressed and unharmed in this seedy place. The two men talk to each other for a few moments, and the man from the hotel shows the black-marketeer the small wallet that we saw contained credit chips. The two then leave the bar; the girl quickly ducks back out of sight as they emerge. They set off in a direction that leads them further into the heart of the city. The girl follows at a discreet distance.

Eventually, they reach another plaza, similar to the other one, but slightly smaller. The conditions here are similar to the other plaza. The two men weave their way through the

crowd toward one of the tenement buildings that line the plaza. The black-marketeer and the man enter, and we lose sight of them.

The girl looks around uncertainly. She's not quite sure what to do now.

(This would be a good time for some shots of the riots around her; add some colour.)

She has a narrow escape as a group of rioters shoot down a chopper that crashes down right where she's standing. She jumps aside at the last minute and dives to the ground.

After a blinding explosion as the chopper's fuel tank blows, she gets up, her face painted yellow and orange by the flames. Suddenly, she catches sight of something that makes her start.

5 | EXT - CITY - PLAZA (POV)

Now we're looking through her eyes. We see the guy who was leading the men on the rooftop; he's standing about twenty feet away from her in the crowd, just staring at her and smiling softly. He appears unharmed,

6 | EXT - CITY - PLAZA

She looks confused; then, she glances at the building that the two men went into.

Following her gaze, the bad guy looks at the building, and his smile widens; then, he gestures to someone behind him. He points at the building.

Suddenly, the black marketeer and the other man emerge from the building; the man is carrying a duffle bag over his shoulder. It looks like he's just replaced his equipment.

The girl screams and begins to rush toward him; he looks up, at her, and then at the bad guy; their eyes meet. The bad guy just smiles, as bad guys do.

The same squad of men that we thought were killed on the rooftop step forward and arrange themselves in a loose arc about twenty feet from the two other men; they're carrying large, powerful assault rifles. They level them, and the two men freeze.

All is quiet for a second.

Then, the bad guys open fire; their aim is wide, but it doesn't matter. The guns are powerful, and there's four of them. The bullets cut through the crowd, flying straight through the bodies of the people in between; the black marketeer goes down first, blood spraying from his pulped and liquified corpse. Then, the other man is cut to pieces; as we watch, he's thrown backwards, red arcs flying everywhere from the hundreds of bullets flying into him.

The girl screams again; the men stop firing after a few seconds, and move across to grab her. Before they haul her off, she looks up again to see the chief bad guy standing in the same spot he has been all along, still staring at her.

4

c a p t i v i t y

1 | INT - HOLDING ROOM

This room is small; it looks like a jail cell. There aren't any furnishings at all; just four walls and a door. The girl is curled up in a corner.

Suddenly, the door opens, and a guard enters. He roughly helps the girl up and pushes her out the door.

2 | INT - CORRIDOR

We follow the girl as the guard herds her down a corridor toward a lift. The corridor is well lit, and this place seems clean and in good repair, distinctly unlike anything else that we've seen so far. They reach the lift and enter.

3 | INT - CORRIDOR 2

The lift doors open to reveal a different corridor; more spacious, cleaner, more sophisticated looking. This is obviously an important place. People dressed in uniforms bearing the 'SX' logo move here and there. The guard pushes her off down the corridor.

4 | INT - ROOM

The guard pushes her into a room at the end of the corridor; she looks around in surprise.

The room is huge, with cavernous high ceilings. The 'SX' logo is prominent. A massive table stretches the length of the room. Scattered around the rest of the room on various dais and raised platforms are large computer workstations with uniformed people working at them. They all seem to be jacked in the way that the man was back in the hotel room.

One wall of the room is taken up with a truly massive window that gives a panoramic view of the entire city.

The chief bad guy is sitting in a chair at one end of the massive table, framed against the window. He looks up as the girl enters. The guard pushes her toward him.

As she approaches, one of the technicians turns and says something to the chief bad guy; we overhear the technician call him 'Mr White.' He answers the technician's question curtly, and then turns his attention back to the girl.

She stops a few feet in front of White, hesitating; he motions for her to sit, which she does.

G i r l

Why aren't you dead?

W h i t e

You'd be surprised at what it takes to kill me.

There's silence for a few beats. He keeps staring at her.

Girl

So why didn't you kill me too? Why am I here?

White

I need to know what you know. What did he tell you?

Girl

About what?

White

About what he was doing on that rooftop. About who he was. About anything. Just talk.

She stares at him blankly for a few seconds.

Girl

How can you be so sure that he's dead? You got shot up and you lived.

White laughs.

White

Do you know what the difference between a soft-nosed bullet and a hard-nosed bullet is?

She shakes her head.

White (cont.)

A hard-nosed bullet penetrates the body and flies straight through. It's designed for velocity. Whereas a soft-nosed bullet is tipped with a soft metal; it makes a small hole going in, but it spreads out as it travels through the body. It flattens out. Makes an awful mess coming out. We filled him with a couple of hundred of those. Your friend had some- extraordinary –abilities, but no-one is that extraordinary. He's dead. Even if he was alive, he wouldn't come for you. He'd drag himself out of the city as fast as he could crawl; and crawl is about all he would be able to do. Forget him.

Jump cut to-

5 | EXT - ROOFTOP

Sudden change of scene here. We're on the rooftop of a relatively small building. An attack craft is lying on a launch pad on the roof. It's not a chopper; it looks closer to a jet, except much more heavily armed. Two pilots dressed in the ubiquitous 'SX' regalia are standing at the edge of the roof, looking out at the same crowded plaza from the end of the last scene and joking with each other.

6 | ? - ?

Everything's black. We can't see anything; all we can hear is a loud hum. Suddenly, the blackness lifts; a door in front of us slides open, and we see the rooftop from shot 5. We see the attack craft lying on its launch pad, and the two pilots at the edge of the roof. We seem to be in an elevator, and we seem to be looking through someone's eyes. We move forward, and then cut to-

7 | EXT - ROOFTOP

The two pilots move around the plane, each on a separate side. The pilot we can see is joking with the one that we can't; but all of a sudden he's not getting a response. We hear a dull snap.

8 | INT - ROOM

We're back in the room, looking at White.

White

He's dead and gone.

Cut quickly to-

9 | EXT - ROOFTOP

The pilot from shot 7 moves nervously around to the other side of the plane, calling his partner's name. Suddenly, he sees something offscreen, and his eyes go wide; he reaches for the gun at his side, but he's too late. The camera averts its gaze, and we hear another dull snap.

10 | INT - ROOM

Back to White.

White

He's only so much flesh and blood now.

11 | INT - ATTACK CRAFT (POV)

We're inside the attack craft. We hear the cockpit crack open, and someone we can't see climbs in. The cockpit shuts again, and we see a black gloved hand smeared red with blood stab at the controls. The plane's interface lights up.

12 | INT - ROOM

White gets up and starts pacing the room.

White

Who are you?

Girl

I don't remember.

White (surprised)

What?

Girl

I don't remember anything. I don't remember who I am. I don't remember how I ended up on that rooftop.

She's speaking in a dull voice; it's obvious that she's been strained near to breaking point.

I do remember one thing, though.

White

What's that?

She looks up at him and meets his gaze.

Girl

Twenty-one-sixteen-three.

White looks taken aback. The colour drains slightly from his face. It's obvious that he's shocked; this means something very important.

Suddenly, he looks past her, out the window.

13 | INT - ROOM (POV)

We're looking through White's eyes; he's staring out the window at the cityscape. An attack craft is approaching the building. It's about two hundred metres away.

14 | INT - ROOM

White turns to one of the technicians.

White

What number is that craft?

Technician

Two-seven-oh-one, sir. It's off course, though. It should be bombing the slum sector.

White's eyes widen in understanding. Before he can do anything else, the camera pans around to show the window; the craft is much closer now, speeding directly toward us. White turns to run as the attack craft screams in through the window, shattering every inch of glass in it, sending massive sheets of it cascading to the ground.

The girl dives out of the way, over to the far edge of the room. The craft skids to the side and grinds to a halt near the centre of the room, which is in ruins now; most of the workstations have been smashed, and several of the technicians are dead.

The aircraft's cabin cracks open, and a figure stands up; amidst all the smoke and fire, we can only see that it's wearing black. It raises a gun and quickly shoots all of the other technicians as they're reaching for their weapons. White just stands there, taken aback.

Once the technicians have been dispatched, which only takes a few quick seconds, the figure jumps down from the cabin and strides toward White.

As it dramatically emerges from the smoke, we see that it's the man. Or maybe that should be the Man. He's battered and bruised, and his flesh is hanging from his bones—quite literally—but he's alive. Half of his face has been scraped away to reveal a metal plate.

White goes for his gun, but he's gotten over his shock too late; the man puts a pistol to his head and fires. White goes down.

Then, the man turns and looks around. He sees the girl, and quickly walks over to her, grabs her, and pulls her toward the attack craft.

G i r l

How...?

M a n

Not now. There isn't time.

As he drags her up to the craft, she turns and looks at White's body. The bullet hole in his head is already knitting itself together and healing over.

The two of them climb into the cockpit, and the man quickly manipulates the controls; the craft rises a few feet into the air.

At that moment, a squad of heavily armed guards charges into the room. They stop a few feet away from the craft and open fire with their rifles.

The craft swivels around so that it's rear is pointing at the guards and it's front is pointing at the broken window. The man hits the afterburners, and the craft screams off into the distance, but not before spewing four contrails of red-hot flame from it's four jets that fry the guards.

15 | EXT - CITY

Hold on the jet burning off into the distance until it recedes from sight.

5

w a r e h o u s e

1 | INT - ABANDONED WAREHOUSE

This is another large, cavernous space. It should unconsciously suggest to the viewer that this is a kind of twin- and opposite –to the room from the previous scene. The attack craft lies in the centre of the large space. The man and the girl sit near it.

Girl

Why did you come after me? You could have just left.

Man (enigmatically)

Twenty-one-sixteen-three.

Girl

What does it mean? That guy seemed almost as surprised as you when I said that number to him.

Man

White. That's the seventh time I've shot him in the head.

Girl

That's not funny.

Man

I'm not joking. I wish I was. Just once, I'd like him to die when I kill him.

Girl

Speaking of which-

Man

Why aren't I dead?

He touches the exposed metal of his face. The flesh is already starting to knit together.

I have certain...unique abilities.

G i r l

Are you human?

M a n

Only too. I heal quicker than other people- much quicker. Certain parts of my body have been replaced. Certain modifications have been made. But I'm still here.

He taps his head.

M a n (Cont.)

I was taking atmospheric readings.

G i r l

What?

M a n

On the roof. I was taking atmospheric readings. That's what the equipment was for. It collects data on the density and composition of the Burn.

G i r l

The Burn?

He looks surprised.

M a n

You really don't remember anything, do you? The Burn. Aurora Ignatus. The Burning Light. That's why the sky is that colour. Like a fire. It's been that way for centuries. You honestly don't remember?

She shakes her head.

M a n (cont.)

Then you don't know about the Glass Desert either, do you?

She shakes her head again.

M a n (cont.)

Back in the late twentieth century, a defence satellite carrying four dozen nuclear warheads went haywire up in orbit; it went out of control and crashed in an area known as the Tanami Desert, in the Northern Territory, in Australia. Thing is, the satellite was equipped with an experimental- well, it was experimental *then* –technology called cascade amplification. Same stuff that helps me heal so fast. It amplifies the natural power of something exponentially; so, instead of four dozen warheads, you have four thousand. Forty thousand. Forty *million*.

To cut a long story short, the explosion is a thousand times worse than anybody could have predicted. The entire Tanami desert is subjected to such intense temperatures that it turns to glass. It's still there. It's like a giant, glittering scar carved into the side of the earth. The radioactivity's faded, though; the cascade amplification affected that too. Anyway, a decade later the first signs of the Burn appear; officially, it's caused by the intermingling of the massive radioactive fallout from the satellite's impact and the gases released from the Antarctic ice cap by global warming. Gases frozen for millions of years.

So there's this patch of cloud; small at first, localised. But it spreads. Blocks out the sun, filters through all the most harmful frequencies of radiation while bouncing almost everything else back into space. It's like a second atmosphere. That's why cancer was up three hundred percent last year, and we're discovering new forms of it each day.

Within a decade, it covers the entire sky, coast to coast, hemisphere to hemisphere.

Within five decades, blue sky is a memory. Within a century, a legend.

The space program falls into ruin and is cancelled; the Burn prevents conventional means of communication between Earth and anything in orbit or beyond. The one mission launched, almost a hundred and twenty years ago, loses contact and goes missing.

And that's when SX shows up.

G i r l

Who?

M a n

The corporation. The people who had you.

They started out small in the late twentieth, but as the Burn grew, they became more powerful; their influence began to extend. They did everything, from organising ruthless

corporate takeovers, to fighting actual wars, all just to extend their influence. One by one they slaughtered their competitors; now they're the only ones left. They're more powerful than the governments now. Hell, they *are* the governments. You want to live, you pay SX for the filters that block out the cancers, for the machines that purify the air, and for the rotting tenement that you live in. Otherwise you die.

G i r l

So what's with the atmospheric readings?

M a n

I used to work for them; for SX.

Their head office is in Los Angeles; it's so large that it occupies most of the city now. There's a massive skyscraper there, the largest ever built; it's kilometres tall. There are special gravitic engines built into it's core that keep it from imploding in on itself. You know there are banks of computers that stretch as far below Los Angeles as the skyscrapers do above? Kilometres and kilometres of nothing but ancient, dusty mainframes, slowly humming and working.

The collected wisdom of the human race is stored in there; everything. *Everything* So I went looking. I didn't know what I was looking for, but I found it anyway.

G i r l

Found what?

M a n

A file. Hidden deep in the oldest section of the databanks. And that's *old*. I found it by accident. It made a few things clear to me.

G i r l

Like what?

M a n

SX created the Burn. The satellite didn't go haywire; it was sabotaged.

G i r l (shocked)

But why? Why would they do something like that?

M a n

I don't know. But they're planning something. They have a plan, and it's a big one. So I resigned. Disappeared. I was shattered for a while; my whole life had been wasted. Destroyed, just like that. The press of a button, the opening of a file, and all of a sudden I wasn't the same person anymore.

After a while, I got sick of wallowing in self pity.

G i r l

So you joined the resistance?

M a n

There is no resistance. There's only me. I had my body modified; I'm as much machine as man now.

So for the past year I've been travelling around the world, collecting atmospheric samples from over four thousand key areas. Once the Burn is mapped to it's full extent, and SX is exposed, then the work on a cure can begin.

The data I've been collecting is priceless. It's the future of the human race. I can't carry it around in conventional form; written down or in a file. Too dangerous. Too easily destroyed, no matter how many backups there are.

So, the data is encoded in my DNA. It's transcribed into my blood. Where I go, it goes, and it's virtually undetectable unless you know precisely what you're looking for.

There's a side effect, though. About three months after I began collecting data, the chemical chains carrying it inside my blood mutated. The data is uncorrupted; it's still there, and it's still retrievable. But it's killing me.

She looks surprised.

M a n (cont.)

I'm dying. Slowly, but it's happening.

But at the same time, what's killing me is keeping me alive; it's virtually impossible for conventional weapons to kill me. The retrovirus has boosted my system to superhuman levels. I heal so fast now that it's like I was never hurt. White and the other high-ups at SX have the same ability, but theirs is artificial. Mine's a natural mutation.

He stands up.

Girl

Where will you go now? What are you going to do?

Man

I'm going to ditch this plane. Then I'm going to buy myself a new identity and get the hell out of Berlin. I've got work to do.

She hesitates for a second. But only a second.

Girl

You know you're taking me with you?

He shoots her a look.

M a n

You mean that I'm going to *let* you come, right?

G i r l

But of course.

She gets serious.

I have to find out who I am. I can't just wander around with no memory, right?

He considers this for a moment and then nods.

M a n

Right.

He turns again and moves toward the plane. She quickly moves after him.

G i r l

Hey! You still haven't told me your name.

He turns again.

M a n

My name's Flynn. James Flynn. More importantly, what's yours?

She looks at him blankly for a few moments.

I've got it. Lethe.

G i r l

Lethe?

F l y n n

Lethe. In ancient Greek mythology, the river Lethe stripped away a person's memory when they drank from it.

G i r l (speculatively)

Lethe...hey, that's not too bad.

They climb into the cockpit; Flynn seals it and prepares the craft for liftoff.

L e t h e

Wait. You didn't tell me what any of this has to do with twenty-one-sixteen-three either.

The craft lifts off and hovers a few feet above the ground. Without looking at her, he replies casually-

F l y n n

Twenty-one-sixteen-three is the serial ident code of the file I found in Los Angeles. The one that I'm going to use to expose SX and their whole damn empire.

Hold on her shocked face as the mystery inherent in this becomes apparent; how did she know this? Why is this the only thing that she remembers? What's her connection to SX? Who is she?

Then, cut to-

2 | EXT - CITY

Hold on the plane as it burst through the top of the rotting warehouse and screams away over the burning city, silouhettted against the red skies.

Reflection Statement

Every creative process invites subsequent reflection; once the dust kicked up by the act of creation has settled, it's much easier to see the shape and form of what you've brought into being, unclouded by that nagging little voice in the back of your head that constantly feeds you ideas while you're writing and urges you to change things around with a manic disregard for what seem to fit.

Well, I'll get off my soapbox. Here's the final product, the completed pilot script of *Red Skies*, compared against the guidelines that I set for myself way back when I first wrote the rationale and set the parameters for the work to be done.

'The proposed final product...is to present a teleplay for the pilot episode of a science fiction show to be hypothetically featured in the lineup of the American Sci-Fi Channel'

Well, something with this kind of a scope would never get off the ground at a commercial TV station; you'd have to present it to a specialist network that wouldn't be afraid to spend money on the development of the show's various aspects.

As such, I think that this first draft satisfies that; it's not a situation or milieu that's been developed by television, which means that it's that all important commodity; something *new*. As such, any creative deficiencies could be treated with an overdose of style.

'...will feature a completely self-contained plot, with a cohesive and readily identifiable beginning, middle, and end...;

The initial story- boy meets girl, boy saves girl, boy gets shot to pieces, boy returns from dead and saves girl again, boy and girl embark upon heroic crusade against injustice –is self-contained. It has a beginning (the rooftop battle and the subsequent escape), a middle (the hotel room, plaza, and control room sequences) and an end (the warehouse).

'...but will also contain threads of a continuing plotline that could possibly become the basis of a continuing series.'

That's definitely in there. Several important things are left unexplained; who is this girl, really? Why has she lost her memory? How does she know that number? What's the backstory of Flynn and White?

Any of these could easily become the basis of an idea that could then be developed into a plotline for a future episode of the show.

'The proposed audience will likely consist of...males aged between eighteen and thirty who have an interest in science fiction.'

I think that males aged between eighteen and thirty would be interested enough to check out the pilot; after all it has guns, action, a girl, a cool soundtrack, an excess of

style...and definitely those who have an interest in science fiction would tune in, simply for the variety offered by a departure from the everyday norm of crews travelling the galaxy in starships in the far future.

'Other aspects of the show will be developed...including music.'

I think that I've successfully integrated the music that I've chosen with the script. It's not gratuitous, it serves a purpose, and it adds to the dramatic meaning and impact of what's contained within the script.

The hardest aspect of the creation of the script was not the gestation of the original idea; that came almost supernaturally quickly, springing into being virtually fully formed. Instead, it was trying to fit a cohesive story into such a brief running time. Thirty minutes! The pilot of a science fiction series usually runs ninety! Two hours, with ads! There's always that constant struggle to strike the right balance between too much detail and too little; but, on the other hand, just because a description is lengthy or inordinately detailed, that doesn't mean that the shot it's describing is long. It could be no more than second or two.

But anyway...you end up having to make compromises in the places that you would least like to, but as much as you fight against it, acquiescence is inevitable; even with the malleability of time in a screenplay, it's still necessary- even vital -to shave every inch of fat off of a script just to meet the prescribed running time limit. Stuff that you'd love to have kept in- extra dialogue, additional scenes, plot twists -has to be taken out to make room for the basic story. It's one thing to tell a story with style, but it's quite another to tell one that makes *sense*.

It's analogous to a rollercoaster ride; accelerated beyond all hope of control, letting things lead you where they will, hoping desperately that things come together. You end up skating a fine line between a story, with all the colour and embellishments that entails, and just a script, which lies there, lifeless and inert, devoid of life through lack of detail. And then there's the originality issue; you have to make up your mind as to whether the fact that an idea has been done before damns it to creative hell, or whether quality lies not in the originality of a piece, but it's execution.

What I have written is cliched. It is the subject of a thousand second-rate cyberpunk potboilers. It does not have an original bone in it's body. But nevertheless, it's *mine*; it's my interpretation of this topic that everyone beat me to. *Red Skies* is me swallowing my influences and combining them to create something which has a resonance for me; and giving something resonance for one person is the first step, because from there there's the possibility that someone else will see that same resonance, that same *meaning*, or, if they don't they'll find one of their own.

I mean, really, at this point in the history of our culture, I should think that the issue of originality is a moot point...everything worth doing has been done, and it's only very occasionally that you get a genuinely original idea. Once one of *those* turns up, it's immediately swamped by a thousand imitators.

So, in conclusion, I think that what I've written lives up to what I set out in my proposal. It may not be the most intelligent, or the deepest, or the most original piece of it's kind,

but it's executed with moments of style and flair, and would have genuine appeal for fans of the genre...I offer it not as something revolutionary, but rather something familiar given a fresh coat of paint.

1077 WORDS