

SCRIPT TITLE

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EXT. SUBWAY TUNNEL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

It's 2436 AD, and EVA, a seven-year-old ethereal-looking girl with long, blond hair is playing inside the tunnel entrance with her friends DAMON, CADOC, and BRIANNA.

The tunnel's interior is dimly & erratically lit. From deeper within sounds of a bustling crowd are heard. The tunnel's entrance is blocked by a semi-transparent glowing blue gate.

DAMON

Dare you.

CADOC

You first.

DAMON

I don't have to. I'm the oldest...

CADOC

By nine months.

DAMON

Still, I'm the oldest so I know best.

CADOC

And if I don't?

DAMON

Then I'll tell everyone you're a coward. Besides real men do it.

BRIANNA

What about me?

DAMON

Girls don't have to.

EVA

We're not that stupid.

DAMON

What would you know? You're only seven, mudpusher.

EVA

Hey! Don't call me that!

DAMON

Or what?

CADOC
Or I'll beat you!

Cadoc rushes Damon and they fall to the ground fighting. Eva and Brianna watch as they get closer to the gate.

EVA
(screaming)
Stop!

Damon and Cadoc stop fighting and look up at her.

EVA (CONT'D)
The gate.

Shocked at how close they are Damon and Cadoc scramble to get away.

SHANNON, Eva's mother, comes rushing around the corner.

SHANNON
Eva! How many times have I told
you not to play near the gate?!
And the rest of you, wait 'til I
tell your parents. Now get away,
all of you.

As the children scatter into the subway tunnel, Shannon grabs Eva by the hand and drags her away. Eva looks back just in time to see a large bug crawl near the blue gate and get fried.

EXT. MARKET - NIGHT

The Deep began when people took refuge in the subway tunnels. Over the years it expanded to become a sprawling multilevel underground city. It is a diverse mash-up of cultures and people, bright lights and dark alleys. The market is a constant hive of activity. Shannon pulls Eva through the crowd.

EVA
Oww! You're hurting me!

Shannon halts.

SHANNON
(distracted)
Sorry.

EVA
Where are we going?

SHANNON

Home for you. Back to work for me.

EVA

(whining)

I'm hungry. Can we go to Min's
please?! I am so starving.
Please! Please! Please!

SHANNON

Umm...

EVA

Please! I haven't had lunch yet
and I'm about to die of starvation.

SHANNON

Uhh...

EVA

Please! Please! Please!

SHANNON

Okay. I could use a bite too.

Still holding Eva's hand, Shannon takes Eva to Min's, an open-air crowded cafe. They find stools at the bar and sit down. At one end of the bar sits CIPHER, a ruggedly handsome middle-aged man wearing a long leather overcoat and broad-brimmed hat pulled low to hide his face. A large, well-used sword is holstered across his back. QI, Min's wife, comes up to them and leans on the counter.

QI

Hey, Eva. Hey, Shannon. How's it
going?

SHANNON

Pretty good. Just stopped by for
some lunch.

EVA

Do you have any buns?

QI

If you wanna wait a minute Min's
ready to take some out.

EVA

Yes!

QI

I think I can manage an extra one for you if that's alright with your mom.

EVA

Please! Please! Please! I promise I'll be a better girl!

QI

You haven't been one?

SHANNON

No. I caught her playing near a gate. Damon and Cadoc were wrestling and nearly touched the thing.

QI

(gasps)

Eva! You know you shouldn't be there!

EVA

I know.

QI

Well let me go get your buns.

Qi hustles away to get their order.

EVA

Geeze, I don't see what the big deal is. All the gate does is kill bugs.

SHANNON

It's so much more. When you're older you'll understand.

EVA

You always say that to me. I'm seven years old. That's practically grown up.

SHANNON

Practically, but not quite.

Shannon looks at her watch.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

(under her breath)

Damn.

EVA

What?

Qi returns with a plate of buns and two cups of water.

QI

Here we go.

SHANNON

Hey Qi. I gotta run. Here you go.

Shannon attempts to give Qi cash, but Qi refuses it.

QI

For my favorite customers, on the house. Be safe.

SHANNON

Thanks.

(to Eva)

Look, you finish your snack and go straight home. I expect your schoolwork to be done by the time I get home. Okay? And don't go near the gate. Love you, bye.

Shannon grabs a bun and rushes off into the crowd. Qi wanders down the bar as Eva devours her bun. Cipher looks at Eva.

CIPHER

You shouldn't go there.

EVA

What's the big deal? You do it all the time.

CIPHER

Yes, but that doesn't mean it's a good thing to do.

EVA

Then why did you do it?

CIPHER

It's what I do.

EVA

But why?

CIPHER

You ask a lot of questions.

EVA

But why?

CIPHER

(growing irritated)

Look kid, the gate's a dangerous place. You don't go there because it's dangerous. K?

EVA

But why's it dangerous?

CIPHER

Hells passage, kid! Why do you ask so many questions?

Qi calls from down the bar.

QI

Hey Cipher, let up, she's just a kid. You know what it's like to be a kid, always asking questions.

CIPHER

No, I don't.

EVA

Of course you do. Everyone's a kid once.

CIPHER

Not me.

Cipher tosses some coins on the counter and gets up to leave.

CIPHER (CONT'D)

Business to do. Later.

Cipher disappears into the crowd. Eva turns to Qi.

EVA

Did I say something wrong?

QI

No.

EVA

But he got so quiet and left. What happened?

QI

Look Eva, that's just Cipher for you.

EVA
Why'd he say he was never a kid?
That makes no sense. Everyone was
a kid sometime.

QI
But not everyone wants to remember
it. Now shouldn't you be getting
home?

EVA
(sulking)
I guess.

QI
Hey, I'll give you an extra bun to
take home. K?

EVA
Really?

QI
Yeah.

Qi takes a bun, wraps it in paper and hands it to Eva.

EVA
Thanks, Qi!

QI
Now promise me you'll head straight
home.

EVA
Will do. Bye!

Eva jumps off the stool and heads into the bustling
marketplace crowd. As she disappears into the crowd Eva
begins singing.

EVA (CONT'D)
(singing)
Like a candle in the dark, I will
lead you home...

INT. CIPHER'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Universal Acquisitions occupies a dusty old office in a quiet
alleyway of The Deep. Cipher, the owner, is a Broker
responsible for obtaining goods and information from the Deep
or from the Overland for a fee. EM, his sole employee, is a
young, trendy woman who serves as his secretary.

Cipher is in his office, a dimly lit, dusty room dominated by a large desk which he has his feet propped up on as he leans back in an old worn chair. Em is in the outer office.

CIPHER
You going out tonight?

EM (O.S.)
(distractedly)
Yes, Ciph.

CIPHER
Going with anyone?

EM (O.S.)
Um hm.

Em stands in the doorway of Cipher's office.

CIPHER
Who?

EM
Like you don't already know.

CIPHER
I swear I don't.

EM
You have flis everywhere.

CIPHER
No I don't.

EM
You probably knew who I was going
with before I did.

CIPHER
Not a clue.

EM
It isn't healthy for you to be
alone like this. Come out with B
and me tonight.

CIPHER
So B is his name?

EM
What do you mean? You honestly
didn't know?

CIPHER

Why use a fli when I can just ask
you?

EM

(Growls)

I can't believe you! I'm leaving
now.

CIPHER

Be safe.

EM

Always am. 'Night.

CIPHER

Night.

Em leaves the office and Cipher sits in quiet reflection,
absentmindedly twisting an antique gold ring around his
finger.