

The Potrero Complex

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MISSING: A teenaged girl with lanky, blonde hair and a sunburst tattoo on her cheek.

The holographic posters, brighter than day itself, lit up the air on every block of Main Street. They were the first thing Rags Goldner noticed as she and her partner, Flint Sten, arrived in Canary.

The girl's name was Effie and she was sixteen.

Effie's pixelated image beamed down at Rags like a celebrity unaware that her fifteen minutes of fame were up. Rags refused to give a damn about the missing girl who, after all, she didn't know. Nor did she know much about the town, Canary, where the driverless ShareCar she and Flint had leased for their move had brought them. But missing kids make news, and as Canary's newly imported one-and-only newspaper editor, Rags knew she'd be expected to do something about it.

Which meant she wouldn't control the news hole on day one. Which meant all kinds of people would come at her to do one thing or another. Rags hadn't been in town five minutes and already she could tell things were going to get complicated—and complicated was the very thing she and Flint were trying to get away from. Damn all the politicians and peacekeepers and their gatekeeping bullshit, she thought.

As the car made a final turn toward its programmed destination, Rags's twitch flared up: the muscles in her upper left cheek and the outer corner of her left eye performed an uncontrolled little dance.

"Ah, crap," she said. "Turning Main Street into Times Square won't help them find the girl. What a waste. And all that light pollution." She stretched her face, willing the twitch to stop.

Flint held up his dataphone and aimed it at one of the digital posters as they cruised by. The static image of Effie sprang into augmented-reality motion: she turned her head, blinked, and laughed.

"Stop doing that, Flint," Rags said. "Just don't." *No way that girl, out there somewhere, is smiling.*