

Script

EXT. DESERT ROAD - NIGHT

Two military hummer vehicles drive down a rocky road. A military truck travels between the two vehicle escorts. All the vehicles have a logo of a lion's head with two swords crisscrossed behind it. The words "EITORIAN DEFENSE FORCE" are printed under the logo.

Close on the leading vehicle.

INT. HUMMER VEHICLE - CONTINUOUS

GEMMA, a woman in her mid 20s, a tough as nails soldier drives the car. RAPHAEL, a man in his 30s, rides in the passenger seat, fiddling with his weapon.

Gemma touches a small circular metallic device implanted in her temple, A MILITARY ISSUED INTERCONNECT. From her point of view we see a map of the road they are traveling through. It's clear that she's the only one who sees it.

RAPHAEL
Since when do archaeological
artifacts require military escorts?

Gemma touches her temple again and the map disappears.

GEMMA
Since we're in disputed territory.

RAPHAEL
Thanks for the late breaking news,
Staff Sargent Gemma

GEMMA
Welcome.

Gemma leans forward and looks at the destroyed city they just entered.

GEMMA (cont'd)
Will you look at that!

EXT. DESTROYED CITY - NIGHT

The convoy drives through a city ruined by war.

INT. HUMMER VEHICLE - NIGHT

Gemma shakes her head at the scene.

RAPHAEL
First time through the valley of the
dead?

Gemma looks at Raphael. He has his helmet off, set beside him.

GEMMA
Charming. And put on your helmet.
Will ya?

Raphael chuckles and looks at Gemma with a smile.

GEMMA (cont'd)
What?

RAPHAEL
Was just thinking how cute you look
in uniform.

GEMMA
Raphael, this isn't the time.

Raphael reaches in his pocket and takes out a small box.

RAPHAEL
No time like the present, I always
say.

He opens the box. There is an engagement ring inside.

RAPHAEL (cont'd)
Staff Sergeant Gemma Antoni, will
you marry me?

Gemma is taken by surprise. Her tough as nails demeanor drops and she giggles in excitement.

But before she can answer an explosion flips the car over.

EXT. DESERT ROAD, MAYHEM - LATER

BANG, BANG. Machine gun fire is deafeningly loud.

Gemma crawls out of the car wreckage, dragging the unconscious Raphael out with her. He has a nasty gash on his forehead, but when she checks his pulse she sighs in relief.

Soldiers from her battalion exchange fire with the advancing enemy.

Gemma touches her temple. From her point of view we see a satellite image. She zooms in with a gesture from her hand. We see enemy forces closing in on their location. She swipes the image away.

GEMMA
Damn it. Where did they come from?

Gemma reaches inside the car and grabs a radio.

GEMMA (cont'd)
Seventy fivers ground force to
Eitorian command: We're under heavy
attack. We need air support

Gemma sneaks a look beyond the car wreckage.

GEMMA (cont'd)
Stronglandian regiments are
advancing from the South and the
West. We're pinned ...

A grenade flies over and lands a few feet away from her.

GEMMA (cont'd)
Crap.

Gemma lunges for the grenade and throws it as far away as she can. It explodes in mid air.

Gemma finds herself launched off her feet. The shockwave lifts and slams her into the car wreckage. *CRACK*, her head hits the metal violently. Even though the helmet she wears provides some protection, Gemma drowns in a cloud of white

EXT. WHITE SPACE

Gemma stands in white space, eyes closed.

GEMMA
I can't keep remembering this.

RAPHAEL (O.S.)
It's okay. Let's forget about it for
now

Gemma opens her eyes. The whiteness rolls back like a fog, revealing her surroundings.

RAPHAEL
We have a very important event to
celebrate today.

EXT. ANCIENT CITY, ROOF TOP - NIGHT

Gemma stands on a roof top in front of a table with a birthday cake. Raphael steps into view.

RAPHAEL
(sings)
Happy Birthday to you ...

EXT. ANCIENT CITY, ROOF TOP - MONTAGE

Montage:

- Raphael sings Happy Birthday to Gemma
- Gemma blows out the candles in the shape of the number
- Raphael gives Gemma a present
- Gemma laughs and hugs Raphael
- They sit and have dinner, holding hands, having a good time.
- They dance.

EXT. ANCIENT CITY, ROOF TOP - LATER

Gemma and Raphael sit on the edge of the roof, feet dangling. Gemma rests her head on his shoulders.

GEMMA
I needed this.

RAPHAEL
You know I'll always be here for
you.

Gemma snuggles closer to Raphael. He puts his arms around her shoulder.

Gemma contemplates the view.

GEMMA
This is amazing. Eitoria, what? Two
thousand, three thousand years ago?

Raphael smiles, mischievously.

RAPHAEL
Are you sure it's Eitoria?

Gemma looks around and spots a distinguished watchtower.

GEMMA
Yeah. The south watchtower is right
there.
(points to an open
area)
Liberation square.
(points to a river
running to the
south)
The River Wild. It's Eitoria
alright.

RAPHAEL
Oh, but haven't you read "The Road
to Strongland"? After two
Stronglandians rescue an Eitorian
Count's son, he gives them their
land back.

Gemma laughs.

GEMMA
That's a Stronglandian fairy tale.
And we know, all Stronglandians are
liars.

Raphael looks off to the distance.

GEMMA (cont'd)
Because of them I keep reliving my
nightmare over and over.

RAPHAEL
You don't have to relive it on your
own. We can do it together.

Gemma looks at Raphael.

GEMMA
You really want to?

RAPHAEL
Yes.

Raphael extends his hand to Gemma and Gemma takes it. They both close their eyes.

EXT. DESERT ROAD, MAYHEM - NIGHT

Three military jets fly overhead. The ground shakes with falling bombs. Gemma's eyes fly open. Her vision is hazy.

GEMMA
Raphael. Raphael.

Gemma looks around in panic.

RAPHAEL
Gemma, I'm here. I'm here.

Raphael holds Gemma's shoulders, reassuringly. She hugs him.

GEMMA
Are they still out there?

RAPHAEL
I think our jets took them out.

GEMMA
What about our payload?

Gemma pick up her rifle and heads over to the truck they were protecting.

RAPHAEL
There is nothing there.

Gemma arrives and checks the truck and indeed, there is nothing.

GEMMA
That's not possible. How did they
empty the entire truck?

RAPHAEL
They didn't. Our whole mission is a
decoy. It must've been.

GEMMA
What?

A few bullets ricochet off the metal body of the truck, forcing Gemma and Raphael to duck behind it. Raphael exchanges fire with the hidden enemy.

RAPHAEL
A helicopter is coming for us. We
have to get to the retrieval point.

Gemma points the rifle mounted light at the ground. There are track marks, as if something got dragged out of the truck.

GEMMA
Look at this. They got something.
Maybe the truck wasn't carrying what
we thought.

Gemma taps her MILITARY INTERCONNECT. From her POV we see a satellite image of their location. Gemma gestures with her hand and the image zooms to their location. She sees herself and Raphael behind the truck. A few meters away are a group of Stronglandian soldiers, congregating around a box.

Before Raphael could do anything. Gemma takes a hand grenade, unhooks the pin and throws it over. It explodes and Gemma bursts out from her hiding position.

RAPHAEL
Damn it. Gemma.

EXT. DESERT

Raphael goes after her. They fire at silhouettes in the distance taking them out.

They jump over a hill and find a couple of Stronglandian soldiers trying to scramble away, but they shoot them down.

A few feet away there is a large box with the Eitorian Defense Logo, a lion's head with two swords crisscrossed behind it. Gemma points at her eyes then at the box.

They approach it carefully. The sound of an approaching helicopter reaches their hearing.

RAPHAEL
Gemma, that's our ride outta here.
We don't wanna get stuck behind
enemy lines.

But Gemma isn't listening. She rushes over the other side of the box, while Raphael holds the fort.

There lays a YOUNG STRONGLANDIAN SOLDIER, not more than seventeen years of age, unarmed, wounded and terrified. He holds his hands in front of him for protection.

Gemma points her rifle at him. The light blinds his eyes.

RAPHAEL (cont'd)
Take him out.

GEMMA
He's just a kid.

Gemma looks inside the open box and sees a computer server. A couple of wires connect the Eitorian computer to a device the young Stronglandian soldier holds. She snatches it away from him. On the screen are the words "UPLOAD 30% COMPLETE". Gemma tears the wires and chucks it aside. She points her rifle at the kid. The Stronglandian closes his eyes in fear. A tear rolls down his cheek.

RAPHAEL
Finish it up. We need to hustle.

GEMMA
Damn it.

She lowers her gun down and takes a timed explosive from her belt. She sets the timer to one minute and throws it inside the server box.

EXT. DESERT

An explosion lights up the night sky.

Gemma and Raphael drag the young Stronglandian soldier and let him go at a safe distance from the explosion.

RAPHAEL
This is completely outside protocol.
Helping the enemy!

GEMMA
He's just a kid.

BANG, BANG, Gemma snaps around and sees Raphael go down with two bullet wounds to his chest. She instantaneously marks the shooter, another wounded Stronglandian Soldier. She shoots him dead. She rushes to Raphael, who's barely alive

GEMMA (cont'd)
Oh God. Oh God. You're gonna be
alright. Hold on.

RAPHAEL
The helicopter. Get to safety.

GEMMA
Not without you.

Raphael takes out the ring and gives it to her.

RAPHAEL
Please. Go.

Raphael dies. Gemma screams in agony. Then points her rifle at the Stronglandian kid and fires multiple shots at him.

The kid raises his arm in protection. But none of the shots hit him. He looks at himself then at Gemma in disbelief. They lock stares for a moment.

GEMMA
(to the
Stronglandian)
Remember this moment.

Gemma grabs a hold of Raphael and drags him away.

EXT. DESERT ROAD

Gemma drags the dead Raphael to the helicopter. Two other soldiers help her with Raphael's body.

INT. HELICOPTER

Gemma holds a dead Raphael in her arms, as the helicopter lifts off.

EXT. ANCIENT CITY, ROOF TOP - NIGHT

Gemma looks distant.

RAPHAEL
I'm so sorry. I know what it's like
to lose someone you love.

GEMMA
If I would've just listened to
Raphael and left, he would be alive
right now.

RAPHAEL
Gemma, it's not your fault.

Raphael lifts her chin up. They look at each other for a moment and slowly lean closer for a kiss, but Gemma backs away.

GEMMA
No this isn't right. You're not him.

Gemma gets up.

GEMMA (cont'd)

I have to go.

RAPHAEL

I didn't mean to upset you. When
will I see you again?

GEMMA

I don't know.

Gemma reaches for her head and grabs a hold of an invisible helmet. She pulls it off.

Her image disintegrates.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE

Gemma takes off a VIRTUAL REALITY GOGGLE. Strings of light disconnect from her temple interconnect and retract back into the goggles. She puts it on a table beside the seat she occupies. A screen on the table has the words: EITORIAN NET: EITROIAN TECHNOLOGY FOR THE EITORIAN PEOPLE.

She's in a darkened office. A man, THE PSYCHIATRIST, sits at his desk.

PSYCHIATRIST
Is everything okay? You left the EN
early.

GEMMA
I can't keep doing this.

PSYCHIATRIST
What did Raphael talk to you about
this time?

GEMMA
Nothing important.

PSYCHIATRIST
Did he want to take you somewhere?

GEMMA
No.

PSYCHIATRIST
Did he want to show you something
he's working on?

GEMMA
Why does it matter? You told me this
Raphael is just a figment of my
imagination. Why is what he says so
important?

PSYCHIATRIST
Gemma, we talked about this before.
The EN created this Raphael
character ...

GEMMA
Yes. Yes. Based on my subconscious
mind or some crap like that.

PSYCHIATRIST
Yes. He is a door into your
subconscious mind. Understanding
your interactions with him can help
us deal with your PTSD.

GEMMA
That's bull.

PSYCHIATRIST
Is it really that far fetched?
Gemma, you practically escaped
reality and retreated into the EN's
virtual world. And because of your
advanced military issued
interconnect
(points to his
temple)
the EN's AI algorithms somehow
picked up on your PTSD and created
Raphael to help you.

GEMMA
Help me?! This Raphael is a fake.
The feelings I have for him are
fake. Raphael is dead because of me.
And nothing can bring him back.

PSYCHIATRIST
Gemma, you've been suffering on your
own for six years.
(beat)
Now we can use the EN's technology
to help you get your life back. Get
your career back. Isn't that what
you want?

Gemma grabs her jacket.

GEMMA
Fine. One more time. But that's it.

Gemma walks out.

EXT. LIBERATION SQUARE

Gemma stands by the river in Liberation Square. Behind her is a contrast of history. The south watchtower she saw in the Eitorian Net is in the middle of the Square, but it's ancient, down to the bricks. Making up the back drop is a futuristic cityscape.

Gemma taps her interconnect and we can see her dancing with the real Raphael.

Gemma closes her eyes and goes into a flashback.

EXT. DESERT ROAD - FLASHBACK

Gemma sees Raphael getting shot.

EXT. LIBERATION SQUARE

A tear rolls down her eyes. She taps her interconnect to stop the feed.

Gemma's phone vibrates. She picks it up and looks at it. A message reads: "I AM REAL. MEET ME IN THE EITORIAN NET IN ONE HOUR."

Gemma stares at the message in disbelief.

INT. GEMMA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gemma hesitantly puts the VR goggle on. As she does strings of light extend from the googles and insert themselves into her temple interconnect.

EXT. ANCIENT CITY, ROOF TOP - CONTINUOUS

Gemma appears on the roof top in the ancient city. She looks around at her empty surroundings.

GEMMA
I'm here. Where are you?

No answer.

GEMMA (cont'd)
Is this a joke?

Suddenly the entire world is drowned in red. The sky flashes different shades of red and an alarm sounds.

COMPUTER
Warning this EN Realm is being
deleted. Exit now. Warning this EN
Realm is being deleted. Exit now.

The ground shakes under her feet.

GEMMA
You gotta be kidding me?

She reaches for her head and tries to take off the invisible helmet, but she can't. She panics and tries again with desperation. The disintegration of the EN Realm approaches.

The buildings on the horizon start to decay; past them only static.

GEMMA (cont'd)
What is going on?

The chaos approaches her quickly. After a brief moment's hesitation, Gemma heads towards a scaffold erected by the face of the building and climbs down.

Her weight dislodges a few old wood planks and they go tumbling down. Gemma loses her balance but halts her descent by grabbing onto a pole. As she does she cuts her hand on a sharp edge.

GEMMA (cont'd)
Aah

INT. GEMMA'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Gemma lying on a recliner with her VR goggle on, reacts in pain.

EXT. ANCIENT CITY, ROOF TOP - CONTINUOUS

There is a strange looking cut in her hand; part organic, part digital.

GEMMA
This can't be possible.

CLANG. Gemma snaps towards the noise and sees the building next to hers break apart. She climbs down in a hurry.

EXT. ANCIENT CITY, STREET - CONTINUOUS

Gemma tries to out run the disintegration process taking place all around her.

That's when she notices a blue lit sign which reads: THROUGH HERE GEMMA, hung on a nearby building. The window on the second floor is pulsating blue.

Gemma changes directions and heads there.

INT. ANCIENT CITY, BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Gemma enters the building and climbs up to the second floor. The stairs are almost disappearing under her feet. The blue light seeps from under a closed door. She rams through the door.

EXT. WHITE SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Gemma is propelled through what looks like a digital sink hole which spits her out on the other side. She lands roughly in white space. She scrambles up on her feet, looking around, left and right. Everything is disorientingly white. Then her sight lands on a revolving logo, a lion's head with two swords crisscrossed behind it. Underneath it are the words: "EITORIAN DEFENSE NET (EDN)".

GEMMA
Holy crap. How did I get here?

The whiteness rolls back like a fog. It looks like she's in...

INT. ADVANCED LAB - CONTINUOUS

Gemma hears growling noises behind her. She snaps around and finds herself face to face with a mythical beast.

GEMMA
Oh, this day is getting better and better

Gemma backs up.

The beast charges her. She dives to the side, but not fast enough. The beast head butts her. She's launched backwards and *CRASHES* into the machinery of the lab. Sparks fly.

Gemma collapses to the ground.

The beast lunges at her. But before it makes contact it explodes into a burst of digital light.

When the sparkles from the explosion disappear, she sees Raphael with a mobile device in his hand.

GEMMA (cont'd)
What the hell was that?

RAPHAEL
It's an anti-virus program, designed to protect the Eitorian Defense Net.

Raphael helps her up. Gemma holds her side in pain. He looks concerned for her.

RAPHAEL (cont'd)
I'm sorry I had to put you through this.

GEMMA
Who are you? Cause you're sure as hell not Raphael.

RAPHAEL
I know this must be confusing. But it was the only way I could get you here.

Raphael walks to a computer server. Gemma follows him.

GEMMA
What do you want from me?

Raphael checks on the progress of an ongoing download to a tiny STORAGE DEVICE. He turns back to Gemma.

RAPHAEL
First I want to thank you for sparing me.

GEMMA
Sparing you?

RAPHAEL
Ah, right! I don't look the same in here, do I? You might recognize him though.

Raphael presses a few keys on his mobile device. The scene where Gemma shoots at the Stronglandian soldiers but doesn't hit him intentionally.

GEMMA
(in the playback)
Remember this moment.

The holographic play back disappears.

RAPHAEL
I did remember that moment. Our
destiny was intertwined since that
day in the desert, Gemma.

Gemma backs up in shock.

GEMMA
You! You Stronglandian liar. You
used an avatar which looks like my
dead fiancé to deceive me. You're
despicable.

RAPHAEL
It was the fastest way to gain your
trust.

GEMMA
How did you break into the EN?

RAPHAEL
That's the wrong question, Gemma.
You should be asking why I broke
into the EN. And the answer is, so I
can meet you.

Gemma tries to take off the invisible helmet, but fails again.

RAPHAEL (cont'd)
It's no use trying. I hacked your
interconnect. My algorithm is
paralyzing you in the real world. I
need you here Gemma.

GEMMA
You bastard! What do you want from
me?

RAPHAEL
Eight years ago your battalion was
protecting a computer server storing
detailed scans which Eitroian
archaeologists took of ancient
cities. Cities discovered
underground on Stronglandian soil.
The damned Eitorian military then
blew it all up. Thousands of years
of history gone. Just like that.
Except for those scans. I want them
back.

Gemma backs away from Raphael.

GEMMA
I destroyed that whole server.

RAPHAEL
(chuckles)
You really think that was the only
copy?

GEMMA
Why do you care about some
archaeological scans?

RAPHAEL
My connection to the EN isn't
stable. I can't get the data out,
but you can.
(taps his forehead)
Your military interconnect is the
key.

GEMMA
I'll never help you.

RAPHAEL
I'm afraid, I'll have to insist.

The console beeps. They both look there and see "DOWNLOAD COMPLETE".

Suddenly Gemma kicks Raphael in the chest sending him hurtling back.

She rushes to the console. Raphael catches up with her. They struggle for control over the STORAGE DEVICE.

Raphael gets the upper hand and knocks Gemma down. He unhooks the Storage Device, which is no larger than a tiny thumb drive.

Gemma attacks him, but he easily immobilizes her and takes her in a stranglehold. He tightens his arm lock around her neck. Gemma gasps for air.

Raphael then takes the device and shoves it in her mouth. He uses his finger to force it down her throat. Then clamps his palm on her mouth to prevent her from spitting it. Gemma struggles.

RAPHAEL (cont'd)
Swallow it. Come on. Don't struggle.
That's it. Good.

Gemma swallows involuntarily. Raphael lets her go. She falls on her knees, holding her neck. A change comes over her. Digital markings travel over her skin, from her core up to her face and into her eyes. Her eyes darken.

INT. GEMMA'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Gemma is in her chair having what looks like a seizure. An array of LEDs in her VR goggle is flashing like crazy. Alarms sound from the VR google.

INT. PSYCHIATRIST OFFICE - NIGHT

The psychiatrist sits at his desk looking through some papers, when an alarm goes off on his computer screen. A message reads: DATA BREACH IN PROGRESS. The psychiatrist types on his computer and a video feed of a man in the shadows appear.

PSYCHIATRIST
It's starting sooner than we
expected. Bring her in.

INT. ADVANCED LAB

Gemma holds her head.

GEMMA
What did you do to me?

Raphael kneels beside Gemma.

RAPHAEL
I used your military interconnect to
download all the scans to your
brain. I know you hate me, but the
future of both our nations depends
on this data.

The digital stream running up Gemma's skin subsides. Raphael takes a step back.

Suddenly, two beasts materialize in the middle of the lab. Gemma and Raphael snap towards them. Raphael types a few commands on his device

RAPHAEL (cont'd)
My times in the EN is up.

Raphael steps back.

RAPHAEL (cont'd)
I hope next time we meet, it'll be
face to face.

Gemma's anger bubbles up and she lunges at him with a battle cry. But Raphael hits a final key on his device and it explodes. Everything goes white.

INT. GEMMA'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Gemma exits the EN. She snatches the VR goggle off her head and throws them on the desk in disgust. She holds her head as a wave of pain flow over her.

Her mobile phone rings. She looks at it suspiciously.

GEMMA
(carefully)
Hello.

RAPHAEL
Gemma, they're coming for you.

GEMMA
Who is?

RAPHAEL
Your military. Go to your apartment
door.

Gemma takes a few steps to the apartment door. She hears clicking and the door knob moves slightly. Someone is trying to work the lock.

RAPHAEL (cont'd)
I really recommend you leave now.

Gemma backs up and looks around.

GEMMA
Are you watching me? Doesn't matter.
I'll report everything that happened
to my superiors.

Gemma backs up towards her window.

RAPHAEL
(laughs)
Gemma, they're trying to break into
your place as we speak. What do you
think their intentions are now that
you have top secret data locked up
in your brain?

The door starts opening

RAPHAEL (cont'd)
Don't say I didn't warn you.

The phone line goes dead. Gemma heads to her apartment window.

At the window, she looks down at a ledge which runs across the tenth floor of her apartment building. She takes a deep breath and steps out.

the AGENT walks into the apartment, gun ready, moving carefully. He goes to the computer and examines her VR goggle.

The agent takes out his phone and dials a number.

AGENT
We have a runner. Start containment
procedures.