

THE GLADIATOR'S HEADQUARTERS

"VIVID IS EUPHORIA, SIR. THEY KEEP UPGRADING THE DRUGS AND TURNED IT INTO SOMETHING MUCH DARKER."

"IT DOESN'T TAKE SCIENCE MUCH TIME TO EMBRACE CRIMINALITY. THEY CALL IT 'VD,' AND IT'S DANGEROUS."

"HOW DANGEROUS?"

WHEN I FOUND HER SHE WASN'T AS BAD AS MOST OF THEM, BUT THEY ALWAYS GET THERE.

THIS DRUG IS LIKE GRAVITY. IT ALWAYS DOES THE SAME THING.

TAKE ME TO HER.

THERE'S NOT MUCH TO SEE, SIR. SHE'S SEMI LUCID. BARELY KNOWS ANYONE IS IN THE ROOM WITH HER. WE BROUGHT HER IN SO MEDICAL COULD ANALYZE HER AND UNDERSTAND WHAT VD DOES.

WHAT SOME PEOPLE HAVE DONE WITH OUR TECHNOLOGY.

AND?

AND THEY TOLD US IT CONVINCES THE BRAIN THERE'S ANOTHER REALITY THAN THIS ONE. AND IT NEVER LETS YOU OUT OF IT.

OKAY, OKAY, I GOT IT. JUST TAKE ME TO HER.

"TOSHIRO NOBATA"
CHIEF GLADIATOR 13

A person with long hair and a head-mounted device is seated in a medical chair within a blue-lit room. The person is wearing a white lab coat with orange accents. The room has a futuristic, industrial feel with various panels and equipment. The scene is framed by the dark silhouettes of two other people's heads in the foreground, looking towards the person in the chair.

"IT'S GETTING WORSE, SIR. WE'RE FINDING PEOPLE LIKE HER ALL OVER THE COBWEBS."

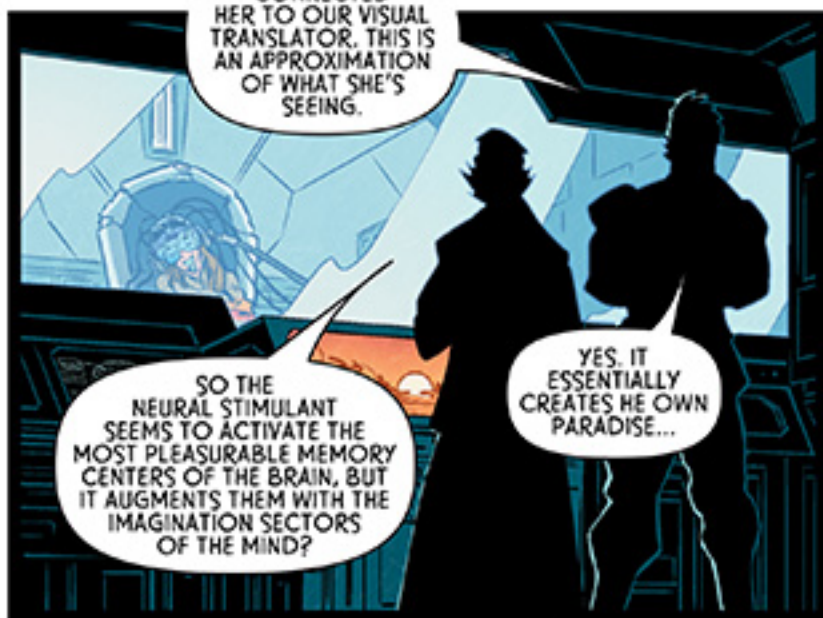
"JUST THE PARTS OF THE COBWEBS NO ONE CARES ABOUT. AND THE PEOPLE EVERYONE IN THIS CITY WANTS TO FORGET."

"WE NEED TO GET THIS DRUG OFF THE STREETS."

"BECAUSE IF NO ONE DOES, WE'RE GOING TO SEE A LOT MORE OF THESE."



WE CONNECTED HER TO OUR VISUAL TRANSLATOR. THIS IS AN APPROXIMATION OF WHAT SHE'S SEEING.



SO THE NEURAL STIMULANT SEEMS TO ACTIVATE THE MOST PLEASURABLE MEMORY CENTERS OF THE BRAIN, BUT IT AUGMENTS THEM WITH THE IMAGINATION SECTORS OF THE MIND?

YES. IT ESSENTIALLY CREATES HE OWN PARADISE...



...BUT IT WON'T LET YOU LEAVE IT.

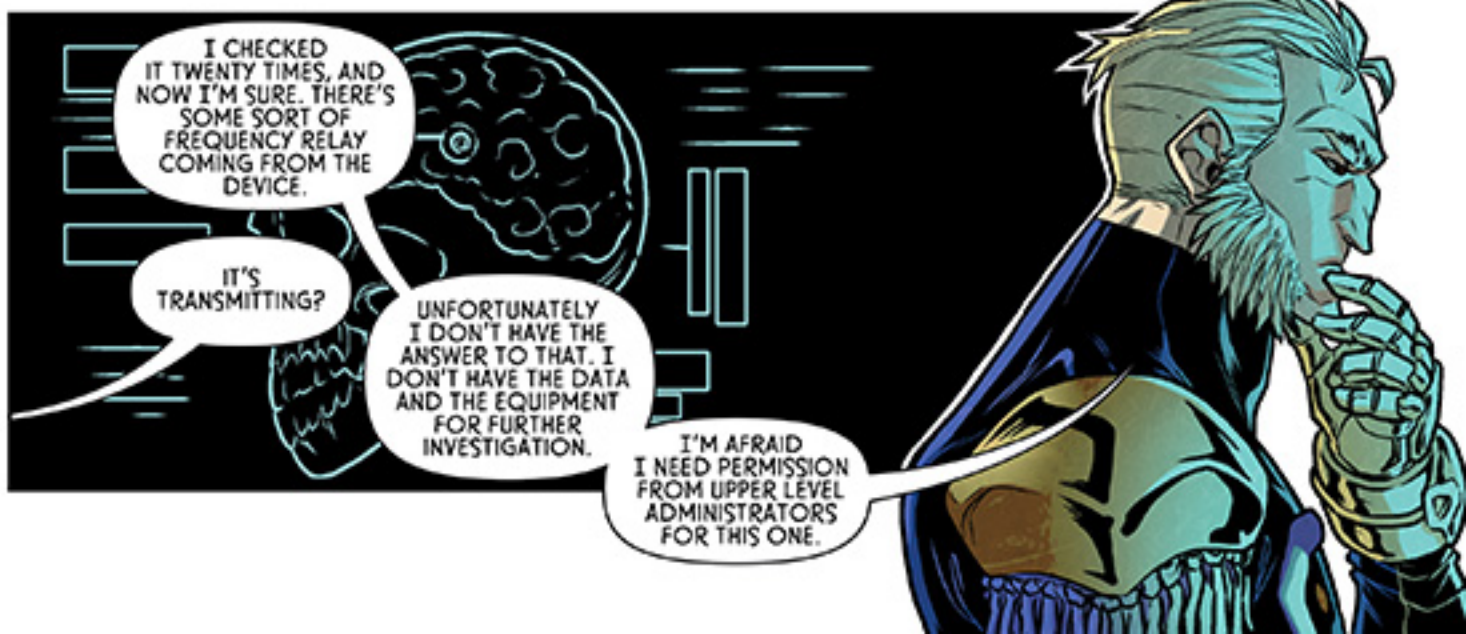
WARM...

SUMMER...

DAY...



NO WONDER PEOPLE CALL THEM "THE MINDLESS." AFTER PROLONGED EXPOSURE, YOU TAKE ON A VEGETATIVE STATE. LIKE HER.



I CHECKED IT TWENTY TIMES, AND NOW I'M SURE. THERE'S SOME SORT OF FREQUENCY RELAY COMING FROM THE DEVICE.

IT'S TRANSMITTING?

UNFORTUNATELY I DON'T HAVE THE ANSWER TO THAT. I DON'T HAVE THE DATA AND THE EQUIPMENT FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

I'M AFRAID I NEED PERMISSION FROM UPPER LEVEL ADMINISTRATORS FOR THIS ONE.