

# MINUS MEN

by  
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Even God cannot change the past.

-- Agathon 403 B.C.

minus men \`mi-nes ,men\n

1 :members of military service: esp :an enlisted man ,drawing duty in the past (histories) as either an Observer :SEE UMPIRE , or restorer 2 :non-conventional operatives, soldiering pre-present

-- The New Merriam-Webster  
Dictionary 2028 A.D.

FADE IN:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A quiet glade.

The distant sound of ARTILLERY SHELLS pock-marking defensive emplacements. SHOUTS... rising and fading...

A LINE OF CONFEDERATE HORSEMEN

They thunder past, digging in their heels. A tattered Confederate flag trails proudly from its standard. SUPER the title:

**Somewhere in Eastern Virginia... 1864...**

A line of UNION CAVALRY follow, firing their Spencer repeaters.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Its ceiling vibrates from the thundering hooves. A rock jars loose, tumbles down into partial darkness... the interior split from above by a filmy shaft of daylight.

NICHOLAS GABRIEL

glances up from where he rests, dark circle under his eyes. It's difficult to tell his age with his clothes caked in mud and all the cuts on his face and forearms.

GABRIEL  
They're passing.

A TALL, OBSCURED FIGURE

ignores him, listens to the sounds of death. The skirmish fades, leaving only the slight, rhythmic DRIPPING of water... and its ECHO.

FIGURE  
I think your real name is not Thomas Gabriel... is it?

GABRIEL  
It's Nicholas Gabriel. Last name's real... last I checked.

We hear the distinct sound of a rifle BOLT being drawn back. The tall figure points some kind of weapon at the ceiling, as if sighting it.

GABRIEL  
Mr. President, I don't want that thing going off in here, punching holes in both of us.

The figure steps forward, into the shaft of light, revealing:

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

Our sixteenth American President. He stands erect, a Colt Commando M4 Carbine assault rifle gripped in his grimy hands. It won't be invented for another one-hundred years.

LINCOLN  
A most amazing weapon.

He feels the stock, the grip surrounding the barrel.

LINCOLN  
And this material. What did you call it?

GABRIEL  
Plastic.

LINCOLN  
When I was a boy in Kentucky, I hunted squirrels with my father's four-foot smooth-bore. To think what I would have been capable of with this.

He holds it out, like a savage his first bronze sword. Like Gabriel, he is also covered head-to-foot in mud and dust and bramble cuts. The image is disconcerting. Gabriel leans forward, takes it from his grasp.

He inspects the chamber. Safeties the weapon, placing it on the rock next to him.

LINCOLN  
Yes, of course. I'm not fully studied in its mechanics. We wouldn't want any unnecessary accidents.

GABRIEL  
Why don't you sit down, sir. Get some rest.

The President does just that, and we notice the side of his jaw is swollen. He pats his vest pockets, sighs.

LINCOLN  
My kingdom for some tobacco.

Gabriel looks at him a beat. Sits up, groaning.

GABRIEL  
I know I'm gonna regret this.

He fishes inside his tunic. Produces a pack of modern cigarettes. Pumps two out of the cellophane. Uses a match to light them both in his mouth. Hands one to the President.

GABRIEL  
Suck on it like a cigar. Inhale the smoke.

The President does as he's told... hesitantly at first. After a short coughing spat, he gets the hang of it. Actually smiles. Reads the brand name on its side.

LINCOLN  
Lucky... Strike.

GABRIEL  
You can thank me when you die of cancer.

Gabriel realizes that will never get to happen. Decides to shut up. He's tired. Very tired. The President fingers his jaw.

Water drips.

LINCOLN  
Gabriel. Assuming I believe everything you've told me... that is, well... with regard to... might I ask you something?

GABRIEL  
Sure.

LINCOLN  
What is it like in your time? Does any of this --  
(indicates outside; the war)  
-- help matters?

GABRIEL  
You mean, the future? Regarding blacks?

LINCOLN  
Well. Yes. And the Union. Is it preserved?

Gabriel manages to chuckle, tosses a pebble into a small underground pond within the cave. The ripples look like liquid mercury...

CLOSE ON: THE RIPPLES

... spreading out... not unlike our concept of time...

GABRIEL (O.S.)  
I guess I wouldn't even be here if it wasn't...

INT. COMMUNITY COLLEGE - CLASSROOM - DAY (2028)

ON AN ABSURDLY LARGE, HIGH-DEF WALL-SCREEN:

Newly elected president BARACK OBAMA waving to the crowd in D.C. on that historic day back in 2008. Twenty years ago.

The image changes to more RECENT FOOTAGE -- that of a stoic, slightly older African-American man before a large, animated crowd of all colors.

Waving banners that say: "WE WANT MOORE IN '28."

A HAND shuts off the image.

JEFF FARMER, African-American, stands before a class of primarily black students.

FARMER  
Okay. What were we seeing?

MALE STUDENT  
Obama. Moore. Now those are my niggas.

FARMER  
In Moore's case alone, Mr. Duffy, you're looking at an ex-Marine Colonel who served his country proudly by defending it, not only as a Captain in Force Recon, but as an African-American in the American Military Industrial Complex. Hardly a "nigga", wouldn't you say?

DUFFY  
My bad-ass niggas?

The class laughs.

FARMER  
I concede. But, aside from the obvious, what makes this election so important? I mean, Obama served two terms. Does that have any bearing on voter's choices this time around? Especially considering the state of our economy pre- and post-Obama? Will Moore be our next president? Come on, people. Anyone? Ms. Johnson?

STUDENT JOHNSON  
Moore's platform includes not only the difficult burden of radical minority, majority relations reforms; but carries with it the unwanted focus of a series of death threats from all corners of the white supremacist world.

MALE STUDENT  
Yeah, I remember reading that in USA Today, too.

The class goads her.

ANOTHER STUDENT  
Yeah, Mr. Farmer. How you feel about it? I mean, your bein' in the Army -- you gonna go kick some ass on Herr Whitey or what?

FARMER  
What, the thought of me teaching your misguided yet salvageable minds only part-time isn't enough to give you nightmares?

Chuckles.

FARMER  
All right, all right.... million dollar  
question: Why is it so important our man  
Moore be elected President?

ANOTHER STUDENT  
So these radical scare tactics and hate  
propaganda could be revealed as a mask  
for what's really wrong.

FARMER  
Which is..?

WHOLE CLASS  
(in unison)  
White Men Still Can't Jump -- !

The class erupts. A series of DIGITIZED BEEPS --

OVERHEAD SPEAKER (V.O.)  
*Classes... are... dismissed...*

EXT. MINUS SYSTEMS - DAY

ESTABLISHING an immense network of black granite buildings.  
Over the portico states the anomaly: "US Army Minus Systems  
And Programs, Inc." SUPER:

Baltimore, Maryland  
2028 A.D.

A large marble stone under a constant flow of fountain water  
offers the promise: "ALL THINGS, IN TIME."

INT. MINUS SYSTEMS - UNRESTRICTED CONCOURSES - DAY

A female TOUR GUIDE leads a group of school children and  
their teacher down an echoing, sterile tunnel. Everyone is  
wearing identical jumpsuits with the silver Minus Systems  
logo.

TOUR GUIDE  
... Minus Systems houses over sixty-  
thousand technicians, military personnel,  
general staff, and maintenance crews.  
Seven-hundred and twelve cooks and  
commissary staff feed over eighty-two  
percent of those people three-point-two  
times a day...

TEACHER  
(reading brochure)  
That's incredible.

TOUR GUIDE  
All for the security of history.

Little SAMSON picks at a scab. Looks bored.

SAMSON  
So where's the guns?

## TOUR GUIDE

Firearms are prohibited in the Operations building. So are all commercial or non-military medical supplies, clothes, foods, and synthetics.

(laughs)

We wouldn't want a ninth-century Icelander to end up with even just one small piece of our technology.

## SAMSON

... sure, why avoid small pox and the plague...

## INT. MINUS SYSTEMS - COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - DAY

Advanced by about thirty years. Technology that is almost recognizable, but still the stuff of science fiction.

FOLLOW scores of rows of technicians seated at consoles, speaking into headsets...

... ending at COM TECH 681, placing a finger to his ear.

## COM TECH

... say again, one-eight-six-four-oh-six?  
Your signal is weak.

WE HEAR a garbled, human RESPONSE. He shakes his head.

## COM TECH

Come again, one-eight-six-four-oh-six..?

His supervisor, GORMAN, comes up behind him.

## GORMAN

What's the problem?

## COM TECH

Ah, satellite's acting up. Probably just solar flares bouncing the signal.

## GORMAN

Account for it.

The com tech starts tapping at his computer keypad.

## INT. GOLD'S GYM - CARDIO ROOMS - DAY

Farmer runs hard and fast along the edge of a sea cliff. The soft rays of a sunset bathing him in a warm orange glow. The view is breathtaking.

PULL BACK to reveal scores of individually chosen VIEWS. Men and women jogging or walking within their own personal cardio-pods.

## BOXING ROOM

Farmer spars with an AUTO-BAG. Half-punching bag, half-machine, he pummels it, circling as it advances, ignoring the glancing blows of its spring-loaded EXTENSION MITTS.



He almost takes its "head" off --

AUTOMATON (V.O.)  
*Lethal blow... lethal blow...*

INT. FARMER'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Farmer maneuvers his car through traffic, checking his watch.

FARMER  
 Damn. Damn. Damn.

EXT. GRADE SCHOOL - DAY

A lone, black sixth-grader, ASHLEY, sits on the steps with her bookbag. Morose, affected. Reading a book on TRAINS.

Farmer pulls up. Honks the horn, calls --

FARMER  
 Union-Pacific, all aboard.

She makes a point of checking her watch before standing.

INT. FARMER'S CAR - MOVING - DAY

Farmer watches Ashley be absorbed in her book.

FARMER  
 All right. I admit it. I'm a terrible father. Any more and it would be child abuse.

No reaction.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Farmer swipes his fingerprint over the outer lock of the car. The two walk past middle class brownstones.

FARMER  
 I gave it to her last week...

ASHLEY  
 She wants a money order or cash. She says your checks bounce like moonballs.

FARMER  
 Well maybe your momma should come down out of space once and a while, she knows so much about gravity.  
 (quietly, to himself)  
 Lunar bitch.

ASHLEY  
 Dad?

FARMER  
 Yeah, baby?

ASHLEY  
 Would you quit the Army if you marry  
 Bethany?

FARMER  
 Did she say that?

ASHLEY  
 I think you should marry her.  
 He stares off, affecting hurt feelings.

FARMER  
 Say it.  
 She shakes her head, grins.

FARMER  
 Go on, say it. I know you want to.

ASHLEY  
 The Army's...

FARMER  
 ... what's that? I can't hear you.

ASHLEY  
 The Army's...

BOTH  
 -- the bomb.

EXT. U.S. MINUS SATELLITE - SPACE

A sleek SATELLITE lacking any real corners orbits earth at over seven-thousand miles per hour. A DOT appears beneath it, becoming larger, breaking the stratosphere's fiery perimeter...

Until it reveals itself to be a MISSILE...

... as it HOMES IN on the satellite and OBLITERATES it.

Dices space with a million shards of light.

INT. MINUS SYSTEMS - CLASSROOM - DAY

An INSTRUCTOR holds up what looks like a BULLET-PROOF VEST, with two TOGGLE CORDS on either side, reminiscent of those used by parachutists.

In front of him are ten fledgling COMMANDOS.

INSTRUCTOR  
 This is your fight-or-flee outfitter,  
 ladies. The Minus Vest. Without it, you  
 cannot travel through time. With it, you  
 got just two jumps anywhere you want to  
 go.  
 (pulls first toggle; then  
 second)

One trip there... one back. After that,  
thing's as useless as my hippie son.

He tosses it to make his point. PULL BACK from the room's neo-  
plex partition into the...

COMMUNICATIONS ROOM

... as Com Tech 681 jerks his head. Puts a hand to his ear  
piece.

TECH COM  
Christ...

GORMAN  
What?

TECH COM  
I just lost him. One-eight-six-four-oh-  
six.

He indicates his monitor. There is a flickering STASIS LINE  
with a numerical designation and ID PICTURE of a MAN.

ACROSS THE ROOM

A SAT TECH suddenly takes a big step back:

SAT TECH  
Yo! We just lost our mid-nineteenth  
century E.Y.E.S.!

Gorman moves to him. Stares at his computer. Taps a few keys.

GORMAN  
You're sure it's not some kind of glitch?

SAT TECH  
It's gone.

GORMAN  
The satellite's gone?

SAT TECH  
I mean, like God reached down and plucked  
it from the sky.

EXT. VIRGINIA COAST - DAY (1864)

A 250-ft. converted CLIPPER SHIP plows through three-foot  
swells on a sunny, cloudless day. SUPER:

USS WARSHIP FAIRWEATHER  
OFF THE COAST OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA

EXT. FAIRWEATHER - DAY

The CAPTAIN reads Melville on the quarterdeck... soaking in  
the rays. A LOOKOUT cries --

LOOKOUT

Ho!

A COMET hurtles into the sea a few miles away -- lands with a spectacular EXPLOSION of water.

CAPTAIN

Leutenant, make course!

LEUITENANT

Aye, aye, sir.

EXT. FAIRWEATHER - DAY

The ship's crew hoists a bulky CONTRAPTION aboard using ropes. Sets it down on the deck.

CREW MEMBER

What in God's name is that?

FIRST MATE

Some kind of Reb ordinance?

CAPTAIN

Too far out.

(scans)

No other ships about.

Behind them, the second-lieutenant -- MR. SIMMONS -- has turned slightly pale.

ANGLE - THE OBJECT: A piece of the destroyed satellite.

INT. FAIRWEATHER - OFFICER'S QUARTERS - DUSK

Alone below deck, Simmons turns a piece of the shattered satellite over in his hands. On his head is a tiny HEADSET with a MIC.

SIMMONS

(into mic)

Branch code one-eight-six-four-oh-four.

Reporting. This is an OPSEC breach

transmission. Repeat...

He looks urgent... listens to STATIC.

From overhead, sudden YELLING.

EXT. SHIP'S WAIST - DUSK

Simmons emerges from below, pulling on his jacket. Joins a group of sailors standing at the ship's bulwark, watching the Virginia coast a few miles away.

SIMMONS

What is it?

FIRST MATE

(points)

That, sir.

The distant tree-line. SMOKE billows.

SAILOR  
More Rebs?

Without warning, a sleek, modern MISSILE breaks out of the foliage -- launched at a thirty-degree angle --

The confused crowd of sailors watches, mesmerized, as the exhaust trail levels out fifty feet over the sea... twisting around in a mile-long, horizontal arc...

SAILOR  
What in the heck is...

... until the MISSILE is heading straight for the Fairweather.

Simmons backs up slowly, his face scrunched in disbelief.

SIMMONS  
No...

ANGLE - A GRYPHON MARK-IV CRUISE MISSILE  
as it hones in on the compact Fairweather.

MISSILE POV

The crew up ahead races at us impossibly fast... men scrambling like ants on deck as the last half-mile is covered in a few seconds...

INT. MINUS COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - DAY (2028)

Com techs reporting in. Milking billion dollar hardware for everything it's worth. There's a slight panic.

COM TECHS  
I can't get my people on line!/  
I got faint, very faint signatures!/  
Mostly residual!/? What the hell is going  
on?

Gorman spins on a man, grabs him --

GORMAN  
Get me Kringle! Find him!

VOICE (O.S.)  
What's going on in my world, Gorman?

MAJOR-GENERAL KRINGLE steps into the theater of operations.

GORMAN  
Sir, we've lost satellite number one-  
eight-six-four.

KRINGLE  
How're our people holding up?

GORMAN  
 We're experiencing total black-out. No way to tell about our Three-P's, sir, except that --

He brings Kringle to a long computer bank with screens denoting scores of Pre-Present Personnel, their ID pictures, and stasis lines.

GORMAN  
 We assume they're still alive.

KRINGLE  
 I want an emergency uplink team prepped and off within fifteen. Meet me at the Platform.

He storms off. Gorman calls after him --

GORMAN  
 But without the satellite... they'll be jumping blind!

INT. MINUS SYSTEMS - PLATFORM ROOM - DAY

A large, vaulted room, with a raised stage. The Uplink Team consists of three men and one woman, each wearing a Minus Vest, and surrounded by equipment, a portable dish. Beneath them is a large trap door which opens onto a see-through WATER TANK directly below.

KRINGLE  
 Your landing area has been anticipated as part of a contingency plan for jumping back without Eyes. A field five klicks south of Richmond. Our people are working in the dark out there. Find out what happened to our bird. And get back safe.

They all salute crisply. A senior JUMP TECH keys a temporal sequence, gets the thumbs-up all around. He and hits the INITIATOR.

The trap door below the team releases. The team and their gear dunk into the water. An INTENSE LIGHT FLASHES from within the tank -- the entire room's TEMPERATURE RISING considerably -- as a vacuumed, molecular schism -- appearing as an electrified funnel -- ERUPTS from an empty hole.

A hole left by four humans that are no longer there.

INT. COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - DAY

Gorman stares at one of the digitized ID's on a screen. A PHOTO of a MAN.

GORMAN  
 Hold on, people. Cavalry's coming.

CUT TO:

INT. SECOND-STORY OFFICE - DAY (1864)

That same MAN, wearing a three-piece suit circa 1864, gathers papers off a desk... hastily placing them in a leather case.

He moves to a wall safe, dials the combination. Extracts a HEAD SET and MIC identical to Mr. Simmons' on the Fairweather before it was blown up.

EXT. WASHINGTON CITY - OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

The Man holds his case in a tiny archway... watching the mixed foot traffic of Union militia, horsemen, civilians, and carriages -- all on an as yet unpaved Pennsylvania Avenue. The mud is thick from late summer rains.

ACROSS THE STREET - ANOTHER MAN

carries a similar case, one that probably holds its own headset and mic. The two operatives make quick eye contact. Move out into the street.

They are twenty feet from one another when a STRANGER in a long, muddy overcoat and slouch hat calls out --

STRANGER

Douglas!

The first operative turns. The stranger tosses him something, then walks away. He catches it, looks --

A GRENADE

stares back up at him. There are no grenades in 1864.

The second man is blown off his feet as the first man simply EXPLODES. A woman SCREAMS in terror, her face and hands suddenly splattered with blood. A SHOE and its foot lands in the mud.

People start running, as someone cries --

PEDESTRIAN

Early's Rebs! They're shelling us!

The second man shakes his head, sits up in the mud. A HAND comes down to help him. He takes it. Nods an uneasy thanks. Looks up into the STRANGER'S face.

The last thing he sees is a FLASH of BLADE --

EXT. VIRGINIA WILDERNESS - CABIN - NIGHT

A WOMAN finishes saddling a horse, throwing her own leather case over its back. Hikes up her skirt, jumps on -- rides off in a spray of mud.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

She looks behind her occasionally. Spurs the mare on faster.

ANGLE - A SINGLE STRAND OF RAZOR WIRE

Strewn across the darkened path, barely glinting in the moonlight. Neck level.

She never sees it.

EXT. PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA - NIGHT

The Battle for Petersburg rages on. Union forces lob 10-inch mortars and artillery canisters onto the Confederate emplacements surrounding the city.

The Rebels return cannon fire with equal vigor.

EXT. A MILE FROM THE SIEGE - FOREST - NIGHT

A young man, dressed as a Union corporal, peers from behind a tree, listening. In the distance, the destruction can be heard.

He hears a low WHISTLING.

ANGLE - A CONFEDERATE SOLDIER

pokes his head from behind an oak thirty yards away.

OAK

The two men meet under an ancient tree. Whisper tersely, fear in their eyes --

UNION SOLDIER  
Any luck?

CONFEDERATE SOLDIER  
No one's responding. All I get is static... like we're all alone. Something's happening.

UNION SOLDIER  
I got a bad feeling about this.

ANGLE - A RIFLE SCOPE'S INFRA-RED POV

of the two men, standing close. The POV MOVES, until the two soldier's heat signatures overlap, appearing as one.

One SHOT takes them both out.

EXT. WASHINGTON CITY - WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

The North Portico. Dark. A peaceful breeze.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Senior Pinkerton Law Agent JACOB COLE walks the hallway, checking locked doors.



EXT. SOUTH PORTICO - NIGHT

A Union soldier relieves himself against some bushes, his musket slung over his shoulder. Stifles a yawn...

He hears something. Turns, sees --

A STRANGER RUNNING AWAY

SOLDIER

Halt!

He hastily unslings his musket, aims, gets off a shot.

INT. WHITE HOUSE - NIGHT

Cole spins at the SOUND.

EXT. SOUTH PORTICO - NIGHT

The INTRUDER disappears into the darkness. The soldier re-loads, when his backside is suddenly illuminated by an orange GLOW. He turns... eyes going wide...

INT. PRESIDENT'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

COLE throws open the door to the President's room, a pinfire revolver at his side.

President Lincoln is standing at the window, staring outside.

COLE

Mr. President..?

He approaches hastily. Sees what the president sees.

THEIR POV

of the White House lawn, on fire. Someone has spelled out the word "EMANCIPATION" in fiery block letters. Within a circle. With a line of flames through it.

COLE

God in Heaven...

EXT. BROWNSTONE - DAY (2028)

A pretty woman, BETHANY, opens the door. Farmer and Ashley stand there.

BETHANY

You're late.

ASHLEY

I feel your pain, sister.

The girl saunters inside. Farmer gives Bethany a peck.

INT. BETHANY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Farmer collapses on the couch.

FARMER  
You get a sitter?

BETHANY  
She'll be here any minute.

Ashley plays with the stereo. It suddenly BLASTS music.

FARMER  
Ashley -- turn that thing down. Damnit,  
girl!

Ashley turns it down. Bethany is at a mirror with lipstick.

BETHANY  
... reservations are for six. We can just  
make...

Farmer's BEEPER goes off.

BETHANY  
Oh no. Hell no.

Farmer checks it. Looks at her, miserable.

LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bethany and Ashley sit on the couch across from one another as Farmer moves out the door. He gestures feebly, getting no response from either.

The door closes.

ASHLEY  
Get used to it.

EXT. MINUS SYSTEMS - SECURITY GATE - NIGHT

Farmer's car pulls up to a Minus Systems gate. He places his palm on a scanner. A red light turns green. The guards salute, and his car wheels are automatically CLAMPED...

Farmer, his car, begin to descend into the earth.

INT. MINUS COMMUNICATIONS ROOM - NIGHT

Farmer finds the communications room in absolute PANDEMONIUM. Com techs are watch helplessly as their assigned Observers' stasis lines flat-line -- one after another --

FARMER  
'Scuse --

OFFICER  
(curtly)  
Not now.

The man disappears into the Platform Room. Farmer uses his foot to keep the door from closing.

INT. PLATFORM ROOM - NIGHT

Kringle and technicians watch as the air on the raised stage RIPPLES... a VORTEX forming...

JUMP TECH  
Uplink team inbound, sir. Three seconds...

A BLINDING LIGHT -- the WHUMP! of displaced air -- and they are back -- the team sent to assess the satellite's damage.

Only what we see is not four individual uplink commandos. It's a solid mass of flesh, equipment, vests, organs, hair and SCREAMING.

A technician turns away, stumbles... vomits...

KRINGLE  
Jesus...

JUMP TECH  
Their vests were sabotaged -- !

CLOSE ON: FARMER... shaken.

INT. KRINGLE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Farmer sits, straight-backed, across a desk from Kringle. He's reading Farmer's service records, a light sweat on his brow.

Kringle coughs, folds his hands.

KRINGLE  
Six months ago, when I re-assigned you after the Hertz-Gabriel affair, it was for purely political reasons. He was my best friend. Important to many people. I had Washington so far up my ass I was beginning to worry about stopping too suddenly. It was nothing personal.

FARMER  
Yes, sir.

KRINGLE  
(looks in file)  
Says a long time ago you used to be with our GLCMs Program, Maintenance and Regeneration. Degree from MIT. Worked on medium-range birds. Why the transfer?

FARMER  
Machine's were too predictable.

KRINGLE  
Fan of human nature, are you?

FARMER  
Intrigued, sir, would be more accurate.

Kringle takes a drink of water.

KRINGLE  
I'm re-assigning you to Minus Status.  
Effective immediately. A situation's come  
up.

FARMER  
I gathered. Where?

KRINGLE  
The last place on earth you'd want to go,  
Captain.

INT. MINUS SYSTEM - CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

About a dozen people are seated at a long table, arguing. Division heads, historian-techs, support staff, numbers-crunchers. Even Gorman is present. At the table's head sits the President's Secretary of Defense, LINUS O'CONNOR.

A HISTORIAN-TECH makes himself heard above the others --

MALE HISTORIAN-TECH  
... the bottom line is this: there's  
really only two possible threats to the  
year 1864 which could be of significant  
political value to any modern terrorist  
organization.  
(with his fingers)  
One is a premature assassination attempt  
on President Lincoln's life. Not too  
difficult to do if your people are  
motivated and from the future. The other  
threat would have to come in the form of  
interference in the events shaping the  
current fighting between the Union and  
Confederate Armies. That would require a  
bit more... finesse.

O'CONNOR  
I'm afraid I'm going to need a little  
more than that.

FEMALE HISTORIAN-TECH  
By late summer of 1864, the third year in  
what will be a four-year war, General  
Robert E. Lee of the Confederacy and  
General Ulysses S. Grant -- who's in  
charge of the Union Armies -- are  
pounding one another into a bloody pulp  
in and around Northern Virginia. It  
started with the Battle of the  
Wilderness... continuing for eight or so  
months... ending at the Siege of  
Petersburg -- which Lee and the  
Confederacy eventually lose. Arguably, it  
went on to mark the beginning of the end  
of the Civil War and the Southern  
Confederacy.

O'CONNOR  
Where do we fit in?

DIVISION HEAD  
All of our Pre-Present Personnel -- designated 3-P's, or "Watchers" -- that are MIA as of right now were assigned specifically to areas in and around Washington and Richmond. The North and South's respective capitals. This indicates to us that whoever it is that is doing this, they are concentrating their efforts on the Northern theatre of the war.

O'CONNOR  
And exactly who is doing this?

GORMAN  
We ran the last transmission received from a Three-P through our computers. Managed to filter out most of the garbage. Still...  
(shuffles someone's papers)  
We heard something. A word.

O'CONNOR  
One word?

GORMAN  
A name, actually.

O'CONNOR  
Tell me it means something.

GORMAN  
We think it does, sir.

KRINGLE (O.S.)  
Trafikan.

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - NIGHT

Kringle and Farmer stare through a one-way mirror down onto the conference room.

KRINGLE  
Lance Trafikan. Surprised?

FARMER  
No, sir. I'm not.

KRINGLE  
I want you to stop him, son. Go get this crazy bastard before he changes everything you and I have come to take for granted.

FARMER  
You and I, sir?

KRINGLE  
Freedom, damnit. You of all people should understand --

FARMER  
Because I'm black?

Kringle is silent. Farmer stares back down into the conference room.

FARMER  
With all due respect, sir... this conversation is redundant.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - NIGHT

Secretary O'Connor makes a show of remembering.

O'CONNOR  
Trafikan... Trafikan...

The Intelligence Division Head rolls his eyes.

FBI LIASON  
The VX-2 gassing of four years ago, sir. Nine-thousand people in downtown Watts, choking on their own lungs. Trafikan's American-born, but his mother's Afrikaner, with large ties to the present South African regime. A pure-bred white supremacist down the line.

CIA LIASON  
He runs a real tight ship. Deep pockets, thanks to the Saudis. And highly mobile.

O'CONNOR  
The President should know this.

A black female pencil-pusher coughs.

PENCIL-PUSHER  
What, uh, would this do to our history? If this Trafikan were to succeed?

FEMALE HISTORIAN-TECH  
Well, assuming he's attempting to change the outcome of the war --

MALE HISTORIAN-TECH  
The repercussions would be devastating and irreversible -- the worst of which -- and I think this is Trafikan's whole point -- being the annihilation of a modern United States of America. We'd be left with two separate, warring nations, each half the size and with half the resources. Who would go on to kick Hitler out of Western Europe? The Japanese from invading our western shores? Certainly not a group of rag-tag Southern Confederate States.

And the North couldn't do it, not without the capitol brought in from Southern cash crops.

BLACK PENCIL-PUSHER  
You're saying we wouldn't have our *nation* if this one man finishes what he's started?

HISTORIAN-TECH  
Theoretically.

FEMALE HISTORIAN-TECH  
The only thing that *would* survive the war would be the institution of slavery, at least in the South. Maybe even the North, considering Lincoln's already unpopular policies...

PENCIL PUSHER  
Come on. Slavery? To this day?

She shrugs, as if to say, Does it really seem impossible?

SOMEONE  
(murmurs)  
So much for rap music.

BLACK PENCIL-PUSHER  
Hey, screw you.

O'Connor raises his hand.

O'CONNOR  
People, people...

INT. OBSERVATION DECK - NIGHT

Kringle scowls.

KRINGLE  
Look at that. Bastard's already dividing us.

FARMER  
Down with Moore in '28.

KRINGLE  
How's that?

FARMER  
Isn't that what all this is really about? A reaction to the possibility of another African-American President of the United States of America Of All Things? First Obama. Now another one?  
(shakes head)  
To these people, to someone like Trafikan... that's unacceptable...

Kringle stares at Farmer, who watches the arguing below.

INT. MINUS SYSTEMS - TRAINING RANGE - NIGHT

Under stadium lights, MINUS COMMANDOS. Of every shape and size, dressed in black sweats with the silver Minus Systems logo. Drilling with a variety of ancient and not-so-ancient weapons. We see curved scimitars... katanas... rapiers... javelins... Tommyguns... broad swords... whips ... knives... staffs... lances.. etc.

Kringle and Farmer approach the RANGE MASTER.

INT. SECURED ROOM - NIGHT

Kringle, O'Connor, and Gorman are seated at a table, CONFERENCE CALLING on a secure line.

O'CONNOR  
... Mr. President, a Captain Farmer will be in charge of the Petersburg team.

THE PRESIDENT (V.O.)  
When do they leave?

KRINGLE  
In the morning, sir.

THE PRESIDENT (V.O.)  
Why this man, General Kringle?

KRINGLE  
He's one of only two of our operatives who's seen Trafikan's face and lived.

O'CONNOR  
Really?

KRINGLE  
That's confidential, Mr. Secretary.

THE PRESIDENT (V.O.)  
And the threat to Lincoln, gentlemen?

GORMAN  
Our only hope is to get someone on the inside, sir. Close to him. Say... on his security detail...

KRINGLE  
We're taking care of that as we speak.

INT. TRAINING RANGE - NIGHT

A Range Master blows a WHISTLE, and the commandos immediately line up in front of him, at attention.

Kringle and Farmer step up.

KRINGLE  
Every man here has no less than five jumps under his belt. Top of their classes. No ranks below sergeant.



Farmer walks in front of line-up, hands behind his back.

FARMER  
Can any man here tell me the name of the  
man who liberated the slaves in this  
country?

SMALL COMMANDO  
(stepping forward)  
That would be President Abraham Lincoln,  
sir!

Kringle looks at Farmer.

FARMER  
Go back to your training, soldier. Thank  
you.

Confused, the man walks off.

FARMER  
Any one else?

Another man, this one black and linebacker-large.

LARGE COMMANDO  
Sir! Frederick Douglass! Sir!

FARMER  
Strike two, sergeant. Excused.

The man lowers his head, shuffles off. Kringle suppresses a  
grin.

FARMER  
Now. Any one else wanna try?

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Kringle marches with Farmer past harried staff.

FARMER  
-- this man needs to know more than  
weaponry and textbook history. I need  
sharp instincts, hands-on experience...

KRINGLE  
There is someone.

EXT. EXPANSIVE DESERT PLATEAU - DAY

A massive field of heat-waved CARNAGE, as far as the eye can  
see. The aftermath of a devastating battle. SUPER:

**BATTLE OF GAUGAMELA  
MESOPOTAMIA (PRESENT-DAY IRAQ)  
CIRCA 331 B.C.**

Alexander the Great's army has just defeated the emperor  
Darius' 200,000 man force.

Elite Persian guards, mercenaries, Asian horsemen, Turks, Parthians, Medes -- their corpses are strewn across the desert plateau. Periodically among their carcasses lay the grey mountains that were once war elephants -- the ancient equivalent of the modern-day tank.

NICHOLAS GABRIEL

crests a hilltop. Dressed as a member of Alexander's Macedoneans. Grimy and bloody and tired as hell.

GABRIEL

Pussies.

He stumbles over to a small well-spring. Pulls a small cord of netting from the water. Inside is the last can of what was a six-pack of Budweiser, and a water-proof pouch. He cracks the beer and guzzles, letting it spill over his burnt face.

Then he opens the water-proof container and brings out a pack of Lucky Strike cigarettes. Lights one, takes a drag. Slumps back, eyes blank.

ANGLE - HIS LEFT THUMBNAIL

suddenly begins to vibrate, beeper-esque.

GABRIEL

You gotta be kidding me.

HILLSIDE - THREE FELLOW MACEDONEANS

trudge towards the rise. The AIR suddenly RIPPLES, their swords cackling with static electricity. When they reach the top --

Gabriel is gone.

INT. MINUS SYSTEMS - PROCESSING CENTER - NIGHT (2028)

A SERGEANT behind a tall processing desk holds Gabriel's bloody cigarette and can of beer at arm's length...

INT. KRINGLE'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Gabriel stands in the center of Kringle's office, still in filthy Macedonean garb, an unusual-looking Minus Vest hanging loosely on him, unstrapped.

Farmer is off to the side, casually covering his nose.

GABRIEL

You want me to guard a president that we know is going to die less than eight months later?

Kringle goes to a liquor cabinet.

GABRIEL

You yanked me from my vacation for this?

KRINGLE  
 Drink?

                  GABRIEL  
 Got any single malt?

                  KRINGLE  
 Remind me not to send you to twentieth-century Belfast again. Nicky, this is Captain Farmer.

Gabriel nods at him, goes to sit. Kringle motions:

                  KRINGLE  
 Uh-uh. Not on my furniture.

Despite the gap in age and rank, there is an obvious affection for one another, a mutual respect. Reminiscent of father and son.

                  FARMER  
 I see you're qualified to wear a vest, Mr. Gabriel.

Gabriel clears his sinuses in response.

                  FARMER  
 I have just one question for you. Then I suspect you can go home. Can you tell me who liberated the American slaves?

Gabriel receives his drink from Kringle, amused.

                  GABRIEL  
 Shucks, Tom. Am I being interviewed?

                  FARMER  
 Did you have a problem understanding the question?

                  GABRIEL  
 I understand you don't know your history too well, Captain. Nobody freed the slaves. Other than on paper. Yet, despite this -- you, a black man, are a Captain in the U.S. Army. Kinda doesn't make sense, does it?

Gabriel tosses back the Scotch. Kringle stifles a grin, re-fills Gabriel's glass.

                  KRINGLE  
 Nicky. It's Trafikan.

                  GABRIEL  
 Trafikan?

Farmer watches him closely. Gabriel peers down into his glass, eyes dark. Knocks it back, grimaces.

GABRIEL  
And here my birthday's not until... when  
is it, again?

EXT. BETHANY'S BROWNSTONE - NIGHT

Farmer turns off the ignition to his car. Sits there,  
exhausted.

INT. BETHANY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A sleepy Bethany lets Farmer in. Ashley is curled up on the  
couch. Farmer sits next to her.

ASHLEY  
(sleepily)  
Daddy..?

FARMER  
Yeah, baby.

He strokes her hair. She sits up. He takes her in his arms.  
Looks up at Bethany.

BETHANY  
Jeff..? Is everything all right?

He stands, Ashley wrapped around his neck. He takes Bethany  
in his other arm.

Holds them both very tight.

INT. MINUS SYSTEMS - PREP ROOM - MORNING

A PREP TECH wraps a thin layer of rubber around Farmer's  
upper torso.

PREP TECH  
This'll protect your heart from the  
static electricity...

FARMER  
I've done this before, Corporal. And a  
few shocks, I can handle.

PREP TECH  
This kind'll light a small town through a  
winter. Now. I gotta keep to Regs, so  
listen up. You'll be jumping into a tank  
of water -- you know it affectionately as  
the Fish Tank. This is designed  
specifically so that you have to hold  
your breath. Once outside the temporal  
stream, you can shout or puke or whatever  
you like... just don't try and intake  
air. What you'll end up with is not  
something you want in your lungs. Stay  
calm and it will be over in a few  
seconds. Any questions?

Farmer looks over at his team: Four other commandos suiting up -- TYLER (his second-in-command and their corpsman), DUANE (a wiry triathlete in charge of communications), MCCAWLEY (also black and a demolitions expert) and ROPER (weapons expert and the youngest, a Georgia boy with a flashy gold tooth).

FARMER  
Sergeant Tyler, you boys good?

TYLER  
Strapped and snapped, sir. Good to have you back in Minus Ops. Heard a lot about you.

FARMER  
We'll all do fine.

ROPER  
(slipping into his vest)  
I love the smell of vulcanized rubber in the morning..!

PREP TECH  
All right. I'm told you may run into some of our people out there without vests --

TYLER  
Yeah, yeah, yeah. Any skin contact will accommodate a successful transfer of said people, including any equipment they might have.

PREP TECH  
And try not to leave anything behind.

DUANE

looks through the neo-plex partition into the Platform Room -- more specifically the Fish Tank.

DUANE  
I hate that thing.

MCCAWLEY  
What's not to love about your body reaching twenty-five hundred miles an hour as it splits into trillions of atoms. This, on the off-chance they'll all come back together again.

TYLER  
Hopefully, in all the right places.

ROPER  
Yeah, weren't you missing some pieces last time, Duane?

DUANE  
There was enough to go around.

They all crack up, high-fiving, psyching up for being a part of the most dangerous act of physics since nuclear fusion.

Everyone dons clothing circa their destination. Only tiny, wire HEADSETS give them away.

Farmer indicates GABRIEL, away from the team, suiting up in his strange vest...

FARMER  
What's his story?

PREP TECH  
Gabriel? Some people take drugs, support a habit. Gabriel, he clocks through time. Gets off on it, crazy bastard.

FARMER  
Who is he?

PREP TECH  
Some kinda spook for Kringle. High-yield, low-profile stuff. Comes and goes at all hours. See that vest he's wearing?

FARMER  
Yeah.

PREP TECH  
That's a prototype. One of only two ever made. No jump limitations. They say he's the son of Dennis Hertz-Gabriel, inventor of time travel. There's a running pool.

FARMER  
Save your money. Hertz-Gabriel and his entire family were assassinated.

PREP TECH  
Well, like I said. Just talk.

ROPER

racks a round on his musket. McCawley inspects another.

MCCAWLEY  
What're we packin' today?

ROPER  
10mm laser-propelled explosive-tip caseless.

MCCAWLEY  
Yippie.

FARMER

is still staring at Gabriel.

PREP TECH  
You all right, Captain?

FARMER  
It's just... I knew Dennis Hertz-Gabriel.

PREP TECH  
Well, do yourself a favor and don't bring  
up the old man. Kind of a sore subject  
with him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VALLEY FOREST - DAY (1864)

The sound of AUTOMATIC GUNFIRE echoing throughout a valley.  
SUPER:

**Somewhere in Northern Virginia**

A pair of hurried, booted footsteps.

They belong to MAJOR RIDDOCK of the Southern Confederate States, swatting foliage out of his way as he cuts through underbrush.

CLEARING - A ROW OF FOUR RUNAWAY SLAVES

hold a Union flag over their heads. Terrified beyond words.

A fifth lays on the ground, missing half his skull. A sixth is on his knees, gripping a bloody hand, his face pale.

TRAFIKAN (O.S.)  
I seem to have missed.

ANGLE - LANCE TRAFIKAN

stands at a distance of fifty yards from the slaves, holding a smoking assault rifle. Of average height, graying around the temples -- it's his eyes that begin to scare you first. They tell you you're about as important to him as a flag.

Around him stand various Confederate officers and enlisted men.

RIDDOCK bursts into view, his face beet red.

RIDDOCK  
What in Hell's Name is this, Mr. Errols?

His second in command, CAPTAIN ERROLS, grins expansively.

ERROLS  
Major Riddock, sir. This here gentleman's name is Lance Trafikan. Got the most amazing of repeaters. Never seen anything like it.

RIDDOCK  
I gave specific orders for no unnecessary discharging of weapons this close to Sheridan's pickets.

Trafikan steps up, offers his hand.

TRAFIKAN  
Major, my apologies. I was just showing your men the unmatched merits of the Valmet M90 Assault Rifle. Compliments of the Peoples Republic of Finland. May I present it to you, sir, with my compliments.

He hands over the weapon. Riddock accepts it. Notices the strange clothing Trafikan is wearing.

ERROLS  
Mr. Trafikan's one of those French-Dutch we been reading about. Southern-loyal, sir. Says he wants to help us.

RIDDOCK  
(feeling rifle's lightness)  
In what capacity, Mr... uh... Trafikan?

TRAFIKAN  
First, let me introduce a counterpart. Ayn?

Trafikan's personal viper, AYN, steps up, dressed in all-black military BDU's -- his own Valmet slung over his shoulder. Tall and sinewy, made from spring-steel and hate, he's a thoroughly fearsome man.

AYN  
To your cause, Major.

ERROLS  
Major, sir. Perhaps these boys'll be kind enough to give you a demonstration.

Trafikan looks to Ayn, who steps up in front of the group.

AYN  
So far you gentlemen have seen this weapon's capabilities on single and three-round burst. This is your third option.

Ayn swings his Valmet from behind him in one fluid motion, raising it and emptying the entire thirty round clip in under four seconds. The group covers their ears.

When he's done, the M90's barrel is smoking. The flag fifty yards away has all but disappeared.

Including a second black hand... the previous owner writhing in pain on the ground. The soldiers all chuckle nervously. Ayn grins, safeties the weapon.

RIDDOCK  
Amazing. Absolutely amazing. Errols, see to those two men.

Errols moves to the wounded blacks.



TRAFIKAN  
I don't have to tell you what just twenty  
of these weapons in your ranks could do  
to a Union advance.

RIDDOCK  
Yes. Surely...

Trafikan puts his arm over Riddock's shoulder, leads him away  
from the group.

TRAFIKAN  
What would you say if I told you I have  
an almost unlimited number of them? Just  
what would you be willing to do, Major  
Riddock?

EXT. ANOTHER VALLEY - DAY

A cavalry skirmish between Union and Confederate troops. The  
air thick with gun smoke.

A UNION SOLDIER

lands hard in the dirt with a mortal wound.

HIS DYING POV

is of the smoke and air literally parting, as FIVE STRANGERS  
appear out of nowhere.

FARMER

crouches low, gun smoke in his eyes. Tries not to vomit.

FARMER  
... Rally..!

His disoriented team moves towards him.

FARMER  
Where's Gabriel?

A YELL comes to them, above the din of fighting.

ANGLE - GABRIEL

comes flying out of the trees -- snapping all manner of  
branches along the way --

He hits the ground hard.

FARMER  
Grab him!

Gabriel is smacking his smoking vest, coughing.

GABRIEL  
-- piece of crap useless frigging son of  
a -- !

A WILD SHOT takes out a chunk of wood near their heads.

FARMER  
Keep moving!

EXT. FOREST - DAY

They stop when the fighting sounds distant. Catch their breath.

DUANE  
To hell with this.

ROPER  
(spits)  
Dorothy was a lightweight.

WOODS - LATER

The team walks in file through the brush, individually spaced by about five meters. The forest around them is quiet.

Tyler lets his eyes dart to the side. Catches up to Farmer, who is checking his compass.

TYLER  
We're being followed.

FARMER  
I know.

In Farmer's ear piece --

MCCAWLEY (V.O.)  
Captain?

FARMER  
(into mic)  
McCawley. What is it?

FARTHER BACK - MCCAWLEY

checks behind him.

MCCAWLEY  
That dude, Gabriel, he up there with you?

FARMER  
No. Why?

They all stop, look around. Gabriel's gone.

FARMER  
Damn.

A twig SNAPS somewhere. They all fall to the forest floor... weapons ready...

DUANE  
Over there.