

DRUID

PILOT - "I Am City"

Written by

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ACT ONEEXT. HEAVENLY LIGHT - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Two clasped hands, those of a woman and child. Light flares through their fingers and blinds us...

FLASH TO:

EXT. STREET CORNER - NIGHT

We see another hand held up in front of a different light. The fingernails are filthy, the light electric. Feeble tendrils of mysterious energy spiral off the trembling digits. This faint helical force is called PNEUMA.

The hand belongs to DRUID (27), a euphoric woman in sci-fi rags, like a disheveled Rosario Dawson. She stares dumbstruck at the Pneuma, like she just discovered that magic is real.

Druid stands on a debris-choked lane, bathed in light from the only functional street lamp. All around her, dark shapes huddle in the shadows of a fallen mega-metropolis that seems like it was welded back together and is now clinging to life.

She wanders out of the pool of light and continues down the squalid street. The next lamp flickers on as she approaches. Druid looks up at it - she beams and giggles agog.

DRUID

Thank you.

ALONG THE STREET

She dances to the next light, which flares to life as the one behind her extinguishes. Child-like wonder fills her eyes. Druid breaks into a run as the lamps illuminate her passing like a haunted runway.

DRUID

Thank you! THANK YOU!

The lights expose STRANGERS. They gather in dubious clusters. Some pass around smoking, makeshift pipes. Others stare with bloodshot eyes and scuttle away like roaches.

Druid trips on rubble, spills to the ground in hysterics. But she stops. Feels the cracked asphalt. Her eyes go wide. Druid puts her ear to the filthy sidewalk. THUM-THUM, THUM-THUM. Hears a faint pulse, like the heartbeat of God.

She leaps to her feet, grabs the arm of a PASSER-BY.

DRUID (CONT'D)
Do you hear it? You feel it too,
don't you?

They yank away from her crazed grasp. Elated, Druid hurries to the next group, a pair of DRUG ADDICTS. One of them jabs a candy-colored button tipped with a hypodermic needle in their neck and presses it to dose up with a narcotic called TAPS.

DRUG ADDICT
Wanna Tap?

DRUID
(still enthused)
It's in me, it's everywhere. It's
all around us! And, and --

DRUG ADDICT
Who are you?

Druid's jubilant smile fades. She considers this. Tries to summon up an answer but can't. Druid wanders away from the Drug Addicts, and lamps flicker on to illuminate her path.

Three teen THUGS emerge from the shadows and watch her go...

EXT. ALLEY - MOMENTS LATER

In a confused daze, Druid leaves the shelter of the street lights and drifts down a dark, cluttered passage.

Behind her, we see the juvenile Thugs skulk unnoticed.

A cracked neon sign flickers red, and its glow lights her face. She admires the color. Realizes that it's a warning.

The sound of hurried FOOTSTEPS. She whips around. Sees the angry kids race toward her. Druid instinctually runs!

ALLEY DEAD END

She staggers down the lane, crashes through refuse. A BANDAGED BUM in the corner squints up blearily. Druid glances around - trapped. The Thugs rush in. Shove her to the ground.

The young brutes have decorative flame tattoos on their fresh faces. One of them draws a scrap metal trench knife.

DRUID
D-D-Don't.

THUG #1
 (mocking)
 Duh-duh-duh-duh --

THUG #2
 Fukscum Tappers.

KNIFE THUG
 Grab her.

Druid looks to the wide-eyed Bandaged Bum in the corner.

DRUID
 Help me.

The bum moves to assist, but the Knife Thug freezes him with a glare. Thug #1 handles Druid roughly. She pushes weakly on his face to get him off of her. Her efforts make him happy.

Druid's pupils glint like orange street reflectors.

Thug #1's face splits in a leering grin.

Then SHHKLUSH! His head splits in a tangle of bloody rebar!

KNIFE THUG
 DA FUK!?

Thug #1 convulses in a final bloody spasm, impaled on Druid's hands that were pushing at his face. Crooked lengths of rebar have extended from her fingers like rusty metal claws. His body slumps lifelessly to the ground and drags her with it.

Stunned, the other two Thugs watch a grotesque, nearly comical display as she awkwardly tries to extract her fingers from his head. Her face is wrought with horror and confusion.

DRUID
 (distorted FX)
Help me.

The two kids exchange a look - then rush at her. Druid tears a claw free. Whips at the Knife Thug. Rebar talons CLANG the blade out of his grip. He recoils, clutches his wounded hand.

The other Thug wraps her in a bear hug from behind. Druid's jaw cracks open. Unhinges. A cluster of broken glass grows from her mouth like translucent fangs. She chomps down.

THUG #2
 GAAH!

Thug #2 retracts his shredded arms, peppered with shards. Druid's broken glass maw crunches down over his face.

She spins around, eyes raging orange. Thug# 2's head is clutched in her craggy mouth. She crushes it like a grape.

The Knife Thug flees down the alley.

The mashed head falls from her jaws with a splat. Along with a mouth full of bloody glass teeth. Druid is aghast at the nightmarish mess she created. Vomits on top of it.

She reverts, falls down. Her body quakes. Pneuma crackles off of her in subatomic spirals, stronger than before.

The Bandaged Bum begins a guttural CHANT...

Druid watches him as blood streams from her mouth. He stares back, unfazed. A metallic SQUEAL can be heard as a grate in the ground is pulled open and another CHANTER emerges.

A panel slides aside in a door to reveal more chanting mouths. Druid backs up, terrified. A procession of chanting homeless people assemble. These are THE HARVESTERS.

A tall, non-binary figure emerges from their midst. Their gaunt body is draped in tarpaulin robes with a bent wheel spoke circlet atop their head. This is YOLA (44.)

The Harvesters cease their hymn. Druid heaves with dread. Yola's lip trembles as they are overcome with joy.

YOLA

At last.

TITLE SCREEN.

EXT. SHRINE DISTRICT - STREET - DAY

Ramshackle market stalls made from corrugated metal lean-tos and plastic sheeting are packed with excited PATRONS. They flock and gossip, while clusters of them break off and run down the street. Something has them worked up.

We RISE OVER the crowd to:

THE SHRINE DISTRICT SKYLINE

The wreckage of broken buildings and dormant construction equipment strangles the horizon. Beyond that is a series of pristine (and very out-of-place) titanium towers that reflect the muffled sun in a dingy orange sky. This is PAX NOVUS.

We DRIFT BACK through an open window to:

INT. HANDS OF HEAVEN HEADQUARTERS - TEZI'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is a hovel shrouded by draperies that depict hands wreathed in decorative flames. TRAP BEATS blare from a busted speaker. TEZI (19), a thickly-built young woman dressed in makeshift tactical gear, smirks at the chaos below.

TEZI

Word is the towers finally opened.
Now all of Pangaea is going fukkin'
gyral, yah?

JAX (O.C.)

Give me the point-eight.

Behind her is JAX (12), a neurodivergent boy who tinkers at a workstation of obsessively organized tools, gun parts, and junk-tech. His missing front teeth make him talk with a lisp.

Jax wears a banged-up military helmet emblazoned with a stylized wave and covered in an array of knobs and wires. On the desk is WHISKEY, Jax's pet cyborg rat - rodent body with robotic head and legs. It scrambles to fetch him a tool.

JAX (CONT'D)

No, Whiskey. POINT-eight.

Jax fiddles with some of the controls on his helmet, and a light on Whiskey's head flickers. The rat processes, retrieves the correct tool, and the boy finishes his work.

JAX (CONT'D)

Try it now.

Tezi saunters up to Jax, who hands her a bulky JUNK-TECH PISTOL that appears cobbled together from spare parts. She grabs the firearm, scans it, expertly aims the contraption.

She racks the slide, which causes the weapon to shift and extend, but it gets stuck with a WHINE. Tezi whacks the pistol, which then completes its transformation into a submachine gun. Scrawled on the side is the name "Peeper."

TEZI

Wazza. Good as new.

She winks at him and gives his helmet an affectionate knock. He flinches at her contact a little but cracks a smile.

TEZI (CONT'D)

Whatchu think's in there anyway?

JAX

The towers? I bet it's a scam.
Myndworm, maybe K10-7, or one of
the other gangs is behind it.

TEZI

You tellin' me bangers rummaged
THAT together?

She points out the window at the errantly perfect towers. Jax considers it, shrugs a bit. There's a knock at the door.

THUG'S VOICE (O.C.)

Rithi wants you.

The knock startles Jax. A sense of dread overcomes him. He goes pale, eyes wide. The boy rises robotically, he grabs Whiskey like a stuffed animal, and hurries to the corner.

JAX

Four.

TEZI

Hey, hey!

Tezi goes to comfort Jax, careful to not touch him.

TEZI (CONT'D)

It's nix, bruv. I got it. Stay
here, yah? I'll see what he wants.

Jax takes deep breaths. Pets Whiskey with quick strokes.

TEZI (CONT'D)

Three... Two...

JAX

One and done.

TEZI (CONT'D)

One and done.

The boy relaxes. Whiskey twitches its whiskers.

JAX (CONT'D)

Do you have to go?

TEZI

He's da boss.

JAX

He... doesn't have to be.

TEZI

Not this botch again. He puts a
roof over our heads, chow in our
gullets.

JAX
I hate him.

Tezi glances at the door with a fleeting nervous look.

TEZI
Shouldn't say that shite, Jax.
Where'd we be otherwise?

JAX
Out there, looking for *him*.

TEZI
Bruv. You don't even know if your
Da's still --

JAX
He is.

Jax stares hard at Whiskey. Tezi drops it. Smiles.

TEZI
I'll be a zip, yah? Breezy.

She knocks affectionately on his helmet again and departs.

INT. HANDS OF HEAVEN HEADQUARTERS - RITHIPOL'S LAIR - LATER

This spacious loft has an air of sanctity, its facade meticulously polished and painted with a curling flame motif. A massive, cracked statue of Buddha dominates the room.

A figure wearing an extravagant saffron robe stands before the effigy with his back to us. This is RITHIPOL (49). He is flanked by four ATTENDANT boys clad in loincloths.

A few young GUARDS stand watch beside an ornate, golden entrance. There's a knock, and the doors swing open. Tezi marches in, eyes downcast. Rithipol remains fixed.

RITHIPOL
Where's the boy?

TEZI
Home. You know how he gets.

Rithipol turns around and approaches with his Attendants. He looks like an evil Buddha: jolly smile surgically fixed on his face, long ears and dangling earlobes, savage piercings and Sanskrit-like tattoos. His black eyes never smile.

RITHIPOL

You been skipping meets, ditching your rounds. Like you're hiding.

TEZI

En't like that. Jax just gets raw out in the grind sometimes and --

RITHIPOL

All the time. That's a problem. Has been ever since you took him in.

TEZI

But he's the best junker we've ever had, yah? He's a right genie!

RITHIPOL

The Hands of Heaven is a family. I raise my children to be strong, to fight. I did that for you. And I let you do that for him.

Tezi nods. Rithipol pats the shoulder of a boy Attendant.

RITHIPOL (CONT'D)

But a family is like a machine. Every part needs to work or it breaks down. Parts that don't work have to get scrapped. That hurts my children. And hurting my children is unacceptable.

He lets that sink in. Motions briskly with a hand. A figure that had been lurking in shadows approaches them.

RITHIPOL (CONT'D)

(rising anger)

There's someone out there right now, Tezi. Hurting my children. Hurting them. Right. NOW.

The Knife Thug that escaped Druid comes up beside Rithipol.

RITHIPOL (CONT'D)

Stop her. You AND Jax. Or you're scrapped.

EXT. PAX NOVUS - DAY

A crazed horde of CITIZENS stampedes up wide, palatial steps that lead to the gleaming, titanium towers we saw before.

A scrawny girl, MAIVA (10) stumbles amongst the throng. She manages to keep up, barely able to make out her surroundings as she goes. Maiva passes through open metal doors a few feet thick and under a magnificent archway to enter:

THE PLAZA

A vast court glows with heavenly light. The impressive towers form a ring around the plaza and stretch into a sky that's suddenly no longer dingy orange, but miraculously clear blue.

THE HORDE

Bewildered eyes stare up in wonder. Filthy hands clutch at unfamiliar statues and smear polished walls. Tensions flare within the desperate, unruly mob. A fight breaks out.

MAIVA

She is knocked down in the struggle. Panicked feet trample. A boot crushes her hand. Maiva closes her eyes in terror.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.)

Welcome.

Everything stops. Maiva's eyes flash open. Citizens around her halt their stampede. Light grows bright overhead.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

You are confused. You are scared.
And for good reason. You live in a
dangerous world. Violence, disease,
starvation - these are the only
neighbors you can trust.

Above the crowd, an elevator platform silently descends.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Death is the only escape from the
suffering you are doomed to endure.
But no more.

The closer the elevator gets, the brighter the light becomes. The elevator touches down. An angelic female figure emerges.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.C.) (CONT'D)

You can have a better life, free
from hardship. You can be reborn.

The light fades, and the woman can be seen. She is tall and slender, strikingly beautiful with flowing black hair beneath a silken veil. She wears an elegant, futuristic toga that seems to undulate as if it were underwater. This is NERO.

Ner0 extends her hand to a tearful Maiva, who takes it.

NERO

I am Ner0, and I bring you
ascension. I bring you the Program.

We see two clasped hands, those of a woman and a child.

END OF ACT ONE