An armored car stops among the glossy, gray and reflective skyscrapers of Kernel City. The buildings reflect the light off their randomly angled surfaces, dissipating the heat without incinerating any one point in the one-hundred and thirty degree heat. The car doesn’t reflect; its matte black exterior disturbs the passing light while hydrogen burns to steam cooling the faux leather interior.

The side door opens to a businessman in an all black suit. He is thin, but not cadaverous. Behind the side doors on either side, hanging onto the car, are lightly armored soldiers with submachine guns. They dislodge themselves and hop to escort the businessman. As they disembark, they reveal the simple sans serif logo of Tachiodyne. The guards wear opaque sun visors and black tactical gear; style over substance, in the desert heat. All three walk in a column to a shantytown built at the end of an alley between two highrises. Around ten people sit on the pavement leading to the informal dwellings, all in various stages of decay. Two smoke out of clear pipes, unfocused on the arriving men. The businessman wears leather gloves, but never actually uses them; his job never necessitates his involvement in the direct dealings of recruiting.

The car hums, steam billowing, freezing the inside of the car with no regard for efficiency. The businessman walks with his hands behind his back, guards ready at either side, smirking at the homeless around him.

“Hello, sir, would you mind if I made an offer to you?” he said, towering over the large homeless man. He wears tattered, brownish garb and a white baseball cap. His beard is scruffy but trimmed. He looks up at the limber presence and squints at the glare of a day’s end reflected sunlight.

“Huh?” the poor man said.

“This offer is for all of you, but I’ll make sure to discuss it with everyone individually.” He gestures to the rest of the shantytown behind the poor man. He grins more at him. “I’m sure you all need jobs, right?” He doesn’t wait for an answer and proceeds as if talking to a child. “Well, we’ve got an offer for you! Twelve weeks, standard pay, and more importantly, I bet, for you guys at least, free medical implants for anything you have that’s damaged—sorry if that’s rude.” His expression doesn’t waiver.

The homeless do drugs, often severely damaging their livers in the process. After no more than a year’s use, most die of liver failure, and they know it, most taking it as just a part of their life. Tachiodyne offers free liver implants, an enticing offer and one unexpected.

The poor man’s eyes light up. “Wow, so… uh… what’s the job?”

“You will be connecting to the Matrix to help defend our estated area. Over the last few months, Datist insurgents have done a number on them. It’s nothing much, but we just need more soldiers.”

The poor man doesn’t listen, and a guard offers a tablet with a non-optional interface port to the poor man. The tablet’s light is flat in the sunlight, matte and barely readable; but the poor man signs it without question nonetheless. The tablet’s interface port is used by everyone in the encampment. The businessman continues, getting signatures one at a time. After, the three leave the new employees.

A few days go by before an ancient bus arrives at pre-sun dawn—the coldest part of the day. There were around one hundred seats with six taken. The homeless clammer their way on the Tachiodyne marked bus and seat themselves. There’s no driver in the bus, but the passengers order themselves anyways at the direction of a synthetic voice blaring in the cramped quarters of the bus. It quickly drives away, leaving no one at all in the shantytown.

The bus arrives at a fifty-story minor Tachiodyne building on the outskirts of the city center. A two-lane tunnel curves into the base of the building from the side. A bus drives out one of the lanes as the other enters.