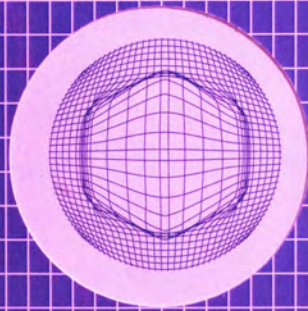


NEUROMANCER



WILLIAM GIBSON

8.

Archipelago.

The islands. Torus, spindle, cluster. Human DNA spreading out from gravity's deep well like an oil slick.

Call up a graphics display that grossly simplifies the exchange of data in the L-5 archipelago. One segment clicks in as red solid, a massive rectangle dominating your screen.

Freese. Freese is many things, not all of them evident to the tourists who shuttle up and down the well. Freese is brothel and banking nexus, pleasure dome and free port, border town, and spa. Freese is Las Vegas and the hanging gardens of Babylon, an orbital Geneva and home to a family inbred and most carefully refined, the industrial clan of Tessier and Ashpool.

On the *THY* liner to Paris, they sat together in First Class, Molly in the window seat, Case beside her, Riviera and Armitage on the aisle. Once, as the plane banked over water, Case saw the jewel-glow of a Greek island town. And once, reaching for his drink, he caught the flicker of a thing like a giant human sperm in the depths of his bourbon and water.

Molly leaned across him and slapped Riviera's face, once. "No, baby. No games. You play that subliminal shit around me, I'll hurt you real bad. I can do it without damaging you at all. I like that."

Case turned automatically to check Armitage's reaction. The smooth face was calm, the blue eyes alert, but there was no anger. "That's right, Peter. Don't."

Case turned back, in time to catch the briefest flash of a black rose, its petals shrouded like leather, the black stem thorned with bright chrome.

8.

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Part 3

THE RULES OF VERNE

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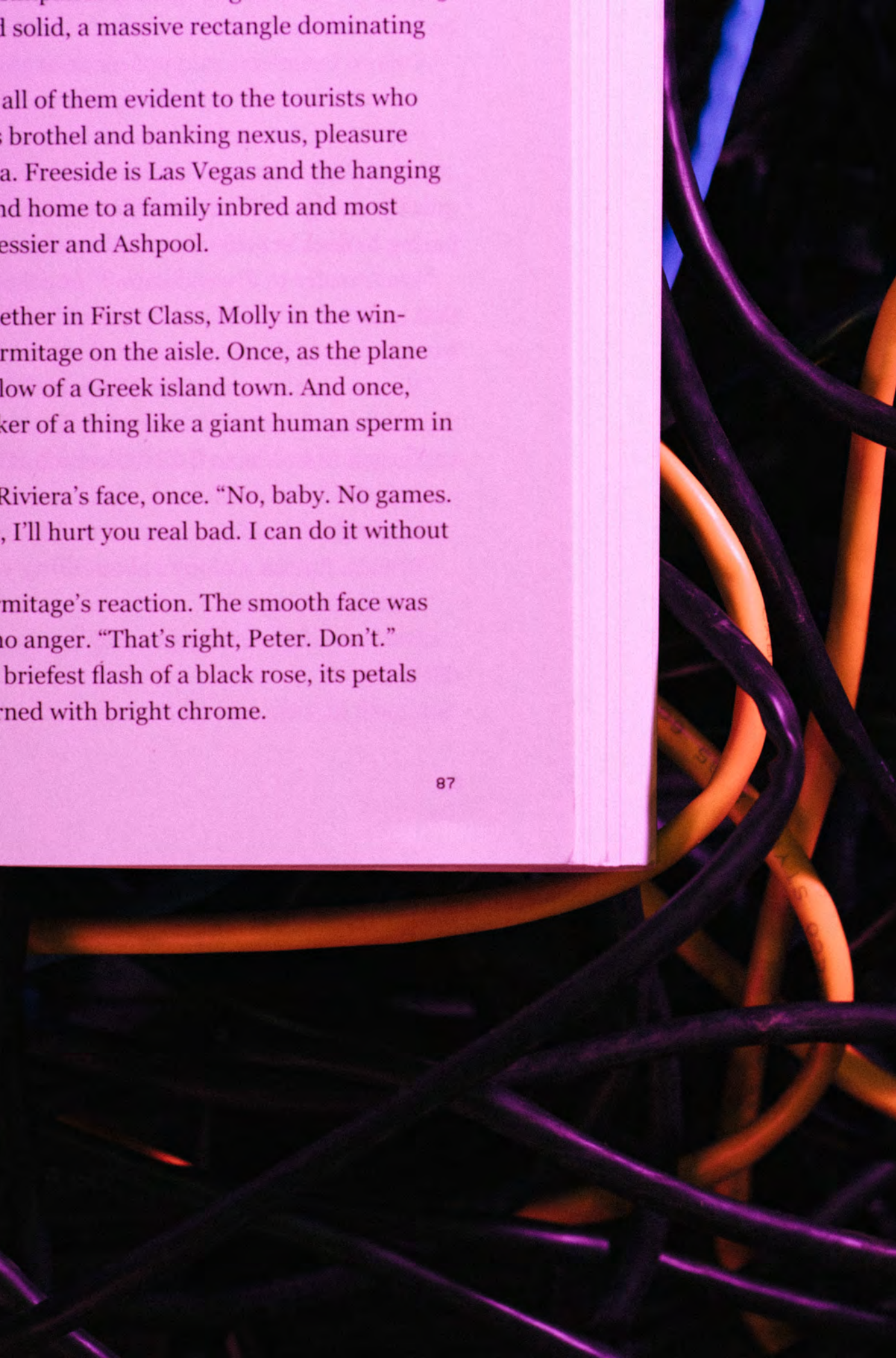
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MIDNIGHT IN THE RUE JULES VERNE

Part 3