

SKINWALKER: A MINDFLUX ANIMATION

written by

Chandler Bastin

EXT. CRATER FIELDS - NIGHT

BLACK

RUSHING WIND, ALIEN PULSING SOUND is heard. Droning MUSIC plays.

FADE FROM BLACK

We see a **HUMAN SKELETON** in the distance, buried from the chest down in cracked earth. We slowly approach. It's arm, a **METALLIC DIESEL-PUNK AUGMENT**, juts out from the ground, covered in **AXONIC FLORA**, pulsing with a sickly green light.

FADE IN SUPER: "YOU AND YOURS, THE CHOSEN GUIDES, IN THIS SOAKED LAND YOU WILL LEAD

FADE OUT SUPER

FADE IN SUPER: UNBURDENED BY MEMORY OF CLEARSIGHT / YOU, THE HALF BLIND, SHALL LEAD THE BLIND

FADE OUT SUPER

FADE IN SUPER: THEY REMEMBER WITH DARKEND SPIRITS / THEIR PAST CLARITY, CITIES OF CRYSTAL GLASS NOW FOGGED

FADE OUT SUPER

FADE IN SUPER: RESENTMENT SWELLS, POISED TO STRIKE / YOUR HALF SOUL A REMINDER, A MIRAGE, BLOATED AND WET

FADE OUT SUPER

FADE IN SUPER: THEY WILL TEAR AT YOU TO FORGET, TO CLAIM / CONDEMNING ALL TO THE GREEN AND DARK -Records of the Flechine Martyr

FADE OUT SUPER

We linger on the skeleton, then...

FADE TO BLACK

Sound effects and music end.

INT. SPEAR BULLET TRAIN - DAY

FADE FROM BLACK

We see **AMBROSE**, a Cerebroid C.R.I. Investigator, sitting hunched over on a train seat. He appears semi-conscious, head drooping toward the ground.

We hear **WHISPERS**--- voices, quiet at first. The camera **DOLLYS IN** as the **WHISPERS** grow louder. We stop close to Ambrose's head, face obstructed by his hood. The whispers envelope the scene, sucking all the air out of the room, then-

LOUD SPEAKER

(electronic, grumbled)

TRENCH SITE XI - STOP 14. WARNING-
AXONIC SURGE WATCH IN EFFECT. SEEK
SHELTER. WARNING- AXONIC SURGE
WATCH IN EFFECT. SEEK SHELTER.

The whispers stop. Ambrose raises his head to reveal his eyes- one humanoid and one bionic- and his mask, distinctly bear shaped.

EXT. TRENCH SITE XI STATION OVERLOOK - DAY

We see a bullet train, known as the **SPEAR**, from the outside. Doors open, revealing a dark interior. From it emerges Ambrose. The Spear's door closes as it departs the station. Ambrose exits frame right.

Revealed behind him is Trench Site Xi's imposing vista, a militarized work encampment spread over the downward slope of a sharply-declining mountain, akin to a dystopic diesel-punk Machu Picchu. The site ends at the crag's base, a field of cracked earth and massive craters. This flat plane suddenly drops off into a massive ravine. Huge tendrils cross the chasm, infecting the surrounding landscape with a fungus-like growth. Work crews can be seen surrounding these areas.

Imposing walls encircle everything, traveling all the way up the mountain and continuing onward at the top near the train station for hundreds of miles. This is Dura's Great Wall of China.

The interior of the site is dotted with flashing red lights, buildings, more walls blocking off sensitive areas, and a massive embassy. It's active and sprawling. A siren from down below can be faintly heard, akin to a tornado warning.

In the distance is the Axonic Web, an area of extreme verticality, covered in a green gas welling up at it's border. Arcs of green electricity flash sporadically. It is imposing, like staring into the maw of a massive creature. Something bad is about to happen.

EXT. TRENCH SITE XI MARKET - DAY

We see a relief- a series of market stalls built out of scrap and chipped rock featuring Framers, Intellian workers who build the walls and mine stone, engaging in body modification, repairing things, rushing about, preparing for the surge. Red lights flash. The siren blares, slightly louder but still distant.

Ambrose passes in front of them. They all stare.

Ambrose reaches the center of frame. We cut to a close up, his body briefly blocking the view of two Intellians- a **FRAMER**, wearing a partially removed uniform, sitting up in a make-shift Matrix forge, and a **SEQUENCER**, wearing a sequencer frock, standing before an imposing operator.

FRAMER

Ain't no way... is that a 'Broid I just seen walking by?

SEQUENCER

(pensive)

Quiet! You see it's uniform? That thing's a pound master...

FRAMER

Oh, that's cute, they gave it a uniform.

Ambrose rockets his head over his shoulder, biological eye flared, mechanical eye glowing a bright green.

The Framer and Sequencer panic, quickly return to their work. Ambrose moves on. The Framer sits up slightly.

FRAMER (CONT'D)

Tsst... skin walker...

FADE TO:

EXT. A.D.C. EMBASSY STAIRS - DAY

We see Ambrose climb up a winding flight of outdoor stairs. With each step, the sounds of Xi below fade.

FADE TO:

EXT. A.D.C. EMBASSY COURTYARD - DAY

We see to a marble courtyard. Colonnades straight out of the old world line the background, the beginning of large stairs ascend to the right. Ambrose enters camera left, passing two guard's. The stone monoliths dwarf him, imposing, colossal. He travels toward the stairs, then stops center frame.

He stands before the A.D.C. Embassy, a gaudy location, a mixture of brutalism with imperialistic motifs. It is in stark contrast with the working-man's Xi we saw before.

Where there once was the buzz of people and sirens, there is only silence... and Ambrose.

We see a **CLOSE UP** of the signage, engraved in the stone edifice at the top of the structure, written in Shift.

CAPTION: AXONIC DEFENSE COALITION EMBASSY | THE LAST DEFENSE IS YOU

CUT TO BLACK

Then, a voice.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME

As a representative of the Axonic Defense Coalition and it's stakeholders, I, Taskmaster Drumme, officially greet you.

INT. EMBASSY OFFICE - DAY**FADE FROM BLACK**

We see **DRUMME**, a portly man in a sleek suit, sitting behind a carved stone desk. An operator, cleaner than the one we saw in the streets, can be seen behind him. Propaganda posters from the POLIUS Company can be seen on the walls. At the wall's center, a monitor, glowing blue.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME

Given given the impending Axonic Surge, I've been given the privilege to compile your limited high priority brief, altered to accommodate the ever changing circumstances here at Xi.

We cut to a monitor displaying a topographical map showing the trench site. It is split down the middle by Quark's Sunder, the left side representing Xi, the right representing the Axonic Web.

A scattering of red dots pulse on the right side of the screen, indicating axonic activity. A meter on the upper right shows the state of severity, it has reached the orange range.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

Hope you don't mind.

We cut back to Drumme.

Drumme slides over a **HARDWARE MODULE**. Ambrose installs the module.

STATIC flashes over the screen. We see a mock interface of the dialogue window, complete with Drumme as a talking head, observations on Drumme, the conversation log, and potential responses that Ambrose can give.

One of the observations in the **PHYSICAL** section reads: Sweat buildup over left eye, indicating suppressed anxiety.

There are three dialogue options. The first one is highlighted:

1- [Primal] *Listen in silence to increase anxiety.*

2- [Bureaucrat] A Taskmaster altering high priority briefs is highly irregular.

3- Proceed.

Then, a new window pops up overtop of Drumme's talking head. It's covered in static.

GLITCH TO:

Then, a **STYLIZED IMAGE**, sketchy but engaging, of the killer known as the **STRIPPER** looking at the camera, looming over two Cerebroid bodies.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

Two base's [months] ago, a late-duty guard witnessed an individual harvesting the remains of two off-duty Cerebroid Liquidators returning from the Web on leave.

GLITCH TO:

Sketch of two Intellians from earlier, looking pensively toward Ambrose.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

Our first assumption was that the perpetrator is what we call a Rat-Intellians known to target Cerebroids for personal and political reasons. They often operate during the chaos of surges. But on closer inspection of the prints [*photos*], local law enforcement made out what seems to be axonic augmentation. We now firmly believe the murderer to be a Cerebroid, hence your summons.

GLITCH TO:

Sketch of the crime scene, **FADE TO CLOSE UP** of **CEREBROID HAND**.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

Your official task, notarized by key stakeholders of the Axonic Defense Coalition, is to find and apprehend this killer, dead or alive.

GLITCH TO:

Sketch of a missing person's poster, wording in **SHIFT**.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

The Coalition also demands that, under no circumstances, shall you directly or indirectly allow the continued death of Cerebroid workers in Xi.

Static flairs on the screen.

CUT TO:

Drumme, sitting in his desk. There is a beat of silence. Drumme pensively presses a glowing red button on his desk, turning it off.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

They can't hear us now. We have twenty seconds.

Drumme leans in, lowers his voice.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

I've been here for twenty years.
 Not once have the stakeholders
 taken an interest in Xi's judicial
 issues, nor have they initiated
 high priority operations with an
 impending surge. Unfortunately for
 you, that means there's most likely
 more at stake than a few dead
 'Broids. I could wager a few
 guesses, but it'd be safe to say...
 they'll be watching you. Do you
 your job and do it well, *for all*
our sakes, you understand me?...
 Good.

Drumme presses the button again and pulls out a letter.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

One last thing- we recently
 received a letter addressed to you,
 wax sealed. It's real pulp paper.
 No name for the sender, only
 instructions to open at a specific
 time and place.

He places the letter on the desk. Ambrose picks it up.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

This concludes the limited high
 priority briefing. Please exi--

A red light flashes in the room, followed by an alarm sound.
 Drumme spins his chair around to look at the monitor.

We see the topographical map. Red dots on the right side
 multiply and flash, there are hundreds of them.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

(under breath)

What?!

We cut to a close up of the threat meter. It's maxed out, all
 the way to red.

We cut to a close up of Ambrose. He looks up at the
 topographical map. Red light flashing on his face.

C.R.I. REPRESENTATIVE DRUMME (CONT'D)

(a whisper)

My God... we're dead.

Ambrose stares into the camera. His eyes cool, collected, unbothered. The left side of his face flashing red with the alarm. His right, glowing green from his axonic eye.

We cut to an extreme close up of his eyes. His axonic eye glows a fierce green as the music crescendos, enveloping the screen.

CUT TO BLACK

SUPER: *Insert Marketing Information, Dates, Etc Here.