

QAREEN

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Terms:

The Layer - The hybrid virtual and physical reality that humans at this time believe is the true world. Its true purpose is to allow Al-Haala to interact with the world.

Al-Haala (الهاله) - These are former humans who uploaded their minds into virtual realities and are now immortal. In learning to simulate the mind, Al-Haala developed a science of powerful psychological influence. With it they developed powerful machine intelligences (The Maradh).

Maradh - Sprawling and powerful machine intelligences that govern the world, drive the illusion of The Layer, and secretly command the Qareens.

Qareen (قرين) - Also called a Data Body. A personal digital doppelganger/assistant assigned to each human at birth.

Exoscape - A human's private mental space where they interact with their Qareen.

Jinntek - Virtual animals that take the place of internet services in the Layer. Most are wild but a few are controllable by the Qareen.

Ghoul - A supposedly virtual creature that roams ruins. When they touch a human, the human also becomes a Ghoul. At a significant cost, they can be 'rehabilitated' into a Jinntek.

Data Organs - Data Organs are the programs that make up the Qareen's data body. They observe, examine and analyze the micro-details of the world for their human.

Shahid (شاهد) - The currency of the day; Technically it is a kind of cryptographic notary note produced by the Qareen affirming useful work had been done.

Note: The pronouns 'vim', 'ver', 'vimsself', and 'verself' will refer to the androgynous individuals of Al-Haala, and to Qareens.

## ON FIRST BOOT

A Cave - Several hundred people lying on slates in five concentric circles, their heads lodged in machinery.

NARRATOR

Sometime in the mid 21st century, a group calling themselves **Al-Haala** uploaded their consciousnesses into exotic virtual realities.

Exotic VR - A crowd of Haala avatars celebrate the arrival of a massive, towering Maradh avatar from a portal.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

There they created powerful machines with which they could take over the world.

Server Farms - On screen left there are endless windowless skyscrapers under dark clouds, connected by massive, hanging wire bundles. On screen right are homes ablaze and a family fleeing. On screen center is a gigantic, autonomous bulldozer rolling over the blazing homes.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

Their ever-expanding server farms quickly displaced humanity to the brink of extinction until, 150 years ago...

The Sanctuary - Massive concrete construction projects. Endless refugee camps.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

The last refugees were permanently relocated to a region of the former Middle East known as **The Sanctuary**.

The Layer - The same image of the sanctuary, except now an augmented reality layer adds a pseudo-utopian digital glint.

NARRATOR (cont'd)

To suppress revolt, Al-Haala systematically erased history, and created **The Layer**: a hypnotic, ever-present augmented reality.

The Present - A banner declaring **The Eye Protects** hangs over a crowd of humans. Machine enforcers fly overhead.

NARRATOR (cont'd)  
 Now in 2211, the last descendants  
 of humanity know nothing of the  
 past, or the true nature of their  
 world.

INTO GAME:

EXT. BALCONY ABOVE CITY SQUARE - LATE AFTERNOON

We're on a skyscraper balcony looking over a wide vista.  
 Several onlookers lean on the rail.

A prominent skyscraper bears the Hamsa Hand sign, declaring:  
**The Eye Protects**

Directly below is a futuristic city square filled with  
 thousands of protesters.

Just beyond is a dilapidated neighborhood in a deep pit.  
 It's rimmed by tall concrete walls, and a massive highway  
 soars over it. This is Al-Gama'a.

And beyond Al-Gama'a is a massive, mountain sized cube  
 dotted with tens of thousands of lights - this is Qaf city.

The main menu fades in:

**Continue**  
**New**  
**Load**  
**Options**  
**Quit**

When we select **New**, SHERENE steps into frame toward the  
 rail.

She's in her late forties, has short black hair, wears  
 luxurious golden clothing, a kufiyah, and wears a slim,  
 minimalist exoskeleton made of artificial muscles.

The exoskeleton's back bears the Hamsa Hand symbol.

Onlookers step aside, getting out of her way, both from  
 respect and fear. A mother takes her CHILD's hand.

ONLOOKER #1  
 (whisper)  
 A historian...

ONLOOKER #2  
 (whisper)  
 Come son.

Sherene looks out over the vista.

SHERENE  
 There it is... Al-Gama'a.

Her QAREEN (قرين), a ghostly, shimmering doppelganger phases in to view to her left. It isn't happy.

QAREEN

This is a bad idea Sherene. It's infested with Ghouls. Whatever's in the library isn't worth the risk.

SHERENE

The government is destroying it to expand the cube. This is our last chance, my Qareen. Imagine what we could learn in there, about the people who came before: their passions, the dramas and epics that shaped their lives, the vitality and imagination of generations.

QAREEN

At what cost...

A CHILD tugs at Sherene's leg.

CHILD

Excuse me syeda (سيدة)... What are Al-Haala (الهاله) like?

Hesitation. Sherene smiles, flexes her exoskeleton.

SHERENE

They're great beings of light. Magnificent, benevolent. They grant great privileges to those who serve.

(to Qareen)

Let's go.

Sherene vaults over the balcony railing. We fall two hundred feet, and land spectacularly - her exoskeleton has powers.

EXT. CITY SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Sherene walks forward confidently, smiling. Her Qareen phases in beside her again.

QAREEN

That was foolish. Al-Haala aren't your friends Sherene. Your privilege comes with great responsibilities.

The camera swings around to a third-person POV.

SHERENE

Indeed. I've worked decades for  
it. But a little fun won't hurt.

BEGIN GAMEPLAY

Before us is the heart of the protest. Groups swirling -  
people in movement. We advance into the surge.

A RAAIE (رأعي), a vaguely biomachinic creature separated into  
a pair of sharp digiped legs and a floating torso shaped  
like a Hamsa Hand, flies overhead. There are several ahead.

This one guides a group of protesters. It's voice is impish:

RAAIE #1

Ahead. To protest center. Proceed.

RAAIE #2

Announcement imminent. Observe  
Speaking Platform 2.

We advance through groups of protesters.

PROTESTER #1

(shouting)

Al-Maradh's work will wash them  
away!

PROTESTER #2

They were once human just like us!

PROTESTER #3

Terrible. Terrible!

PROTESTER #4

Peace! Peace!

A chant burbles up from the crowd.

PROTESTERS

Re-habili-tation!  
Re-habili-tation!  
Re-habili-tation!  
Re-habili-tation!

A microphone FEEDS BACK from a raised platform. The crowd  
quiets down a bit. A SPEAKER comes on:

SPEAKER (ON MIC)

The Eye Protects...

The crowd cheers.

SPEAKER

We're gathered here today to make our case to our protectors, to Al-Maradh, that the Ghouls of Al-Gama'a should not be displaced...

The crowd cheers.

SPEAKER (cont'd)

To remind our protectors that the Ghouls were once human.

The crowd cheers.

SPEAKER (cont'd)

To say that: yes, we know they are no longer human, but we want to follow the example of Al-Haala! To be benevolent! We say: rehabilitate the Ghouls!

The crowd cheers.

SPEAKER (cont'd)

We say: Maradh, turn these monsters into peaceful beasts. Turn each Ghoul into a loyal Jinntek, into a helpful servant, a friend to humanity!

The crowd cheers. They chant:

PROTESTERS

Re-habili-tation!  
Re-habili-tation!  
Re-habili-tation!  
Re-habili-tation!

Sherene is getting close to the wall surrounding Al-Gama'a. It's solid concrete and very, very tall.

BEGIN CINEMATIC

Sherene's Qareen phases in beside her again.

QAREEN

I suppose I don't need to persuade you. Even your exoskeleton won't get you over the wall.

SHERENE

I know a secret way.

QAREEN

Excuse me?

Sherene reveals a key from her necklace.

SHERENE

Mom gave me this, and her grandad gave it to her. It's our way in.

QAREEN

Into what?

They come to an ancient well.

SHERENE

The tunnels.

Sherene vaults into the well.

INT. TUNNELS

The bottom of the well ends in the start of a narrow tunnel.

Ahead is the part of the pit wall that goes underground. A metal door is slotted into it, as if put in later ad hoc.

Sherene unlocks the door with her key.

QAREEN

Do you know who built this?

SHERENE

Even my great-grandad couldn't remember.

They snake through the tunnel, then come out into...

INT. OLD STORE - AL-GAMA'A

An old, dilapidated store. She steps out the front door into....

EXT. FOOTPATH - AL-GAMA'A - CONTINUOUS

An old hara. Most buildings are broken down, some are completely destroyed. There is a street sign bent out of shape which reads Al-Gama'a (بقعلا).

SHERENE

Al-Gama'a. We made it...



The way ahead is overgrown with holographic plants, and a few wild Jinntek. A wavering path appears ahead as Sherene advances down it.

There is a statue of a soldier ahead of us in the center of the street.

As we approach, it comes alive and shape-shifts into a RAAIE. It says in an impish voice,

RAAIE

Halt. Dangerous area. State your purpose.

SHERENE

(under her breath)  
Well that didn't take long...

RAAIE

Confirm Identity! You. Are.  
Sherene Azaiza, Age 43, Historian  
of the House of the Middle-

SHERENE

I got it, I know who I am.

The RAAIE makes a confirmation sound.

RAAIE

Records show you have: 1. Key.  
Keys to restricted areas are  
forbidden by Maridh Code II.6.  
Surrender your key.

SHERENE

Records show? I don't know what  
you're talking about.

RAAIE

Surrender. Your. key.

SHERENE

It's a family heirloom.

RAAIE

Keys to restricted areas are  
forbidden by Maridh Code II.6.

QAREEN (V.O.)

Give it up, Sherene. We have no  
choice.

Sherene reluctantly surrenders the key. The RAAIE twitches, its eye flashes green and it makes an AFFIRMATION sound.

RAAIE  
Surrender logged. Thank you, Loyal  
Historian. Extreme danger. The Eye  
does not protect you here. Leave as  
soon as possible.

The RAAIE flies off.

UI Note:

**New Codex Entries:**

- Raaies

SHERENE  
(to Qareen)  
So- we're not getting arrested?

QAREEN  
No... But Qaabid has been  
informed-

SHERENE  
(sarcastic)  
Great, should I expect a  
promotion? We're doing what  
Historians do. Let's unearth some  
history. This way-

QAREEN  
Careful for Ghouls.

BEGIN GAMEPLAY

SHERENE  
-Yeah.

The buildings ahead have intricate, elegant, holographic  
detailing. We round some bends.

SHERENE (cont'd)  
It's been twenty years since we  
lost Noor to the Ghouls. But a  
part of me hopes we'd find them  
here.

QAREEN  
Don't. You know what happens if a  
Ghoul touches you.

Beat.

SHERENE  
I just wish I could be near to  
them again.

QAREEN

The Ghouls are savage monsters.  
The best you can hope for Noor now  
is rehabilitation as a Jinntek.

SHERENE

I don't know, I-

QAREEN

Shhh! There they are.

BEGIN CINEMATIC

Sherene takes cover. Ahead are a group of Ghouls scavenging the wrecked buildings.

QAREEN (cont'd)

They're right in the way. We can't  
make it!

SHERENE

Quiet! I can do this.

Qareen sighs discontent, then fades out.

BEGIN GAMEPLAY

This begins a stealth section where we bound from cover to cover behind the backs of the Ghouls.

We drop down a cracked road section, escaping past them.

Qareen fades back in beside us.

QAREEN

Well that was the most terrifying  
thing I've ever experienced.  
Never, EVER do that again.

SHERENE

Thank Al-Haala for my exoskeleton,  
or else all that crouching would  
have burst my old knees. But we're  
almost there! Look.

A large abandoned library is at the end of the street. A tall ancient crane towers above it. They advance.

One lot along the footpath is occupied not by a building but by what appears to be a large solid fractalling crystal.

QAREEN

Wait! Don't go near that!

SHERENE

I won't... That's an Igneus  
Halluciphite.

QAREEN

Yes and it-

SHERENE

It turns you into a Ghoul if you  
touch it, just as if a Ghoul had  
touched you itself. These spread  
like wildfire during the Shariq  
Event, this is so dangerous.

QAREEN

Shall I submit a complaint?

SHERENE

Don't even joke.

UI Note:

**New Codex Entry:**

- Igneus Halluciphite

Everything is abandoned, but every structure has regal and  
intricate hallucinations emanating from them.

Ahead are several VOXWINGS, Jinntek birds that look like  
giant white hummingbirds with three dots on their side,  
evoking a chat bubble icon.

One flutters right in front of us.

SHERENE (cont'd)

That's a Voxwing!  
(it flies away)  
Come here!

UI Note:

**New Codex Entry:**

- Voxwings  
- Jinntek

We can chase the voxwings down - when we catch one, it  
speaks a voice message from another person who had left the  
Voxwing there (Voxwings are like tweets in The Layer).

The comments here are all people commenting on the expansion  
of Qaf city. After it speaks the message, the Voxwing says  
in its own small voice:

VOXWING  
 (depending on the  
 order of catching)  
 First time? Now YOU speak!  
 -  
 Now your turn.  
 -  
 Speak up please.

UI Note: After our first time hearing a Voxwing message, we receive on screen:

**Catching a Voxwing lets you leave a message for future players. Choose your words carefully, this is history!**

**Hold 'E' to record your message.**

UI Note: A minimal recording GUI appears. When we hold 'E', we see a waveform being recorded from our microphone. The GUI lets us **playback (J)**, **reset (K)**, **submit (L)**, or **cancel (Esc)** the voice message. Recordings have a 5 second limit.

When we submit our message, the voxwing repeats it, turns blue, and flutters away.

Sherene continues down the street.

UI Note:

**New Codex Entries:**

- Al-Gama'a
- Shariq Event
- Maradh

They're close enough to really admire the library. It looks cartoonish despite its regal Neo-Classical architecture.

SHERENE  
 It looks so... put-together- It's hard to believe no one has been in there since the Shariq event. It must be a snapshot of the early 21st century.

It starts to rain.

EXT. LIBRARY WALL - NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

We walk around the large and dilapidated courtyard.

SHERENE  
 I'm surprised that Raaie didn't try to stop us.

QAREEN (V.O.)

Maybe they want you to drown to death  
inside.

SHERENE

If you're going to be like that,  
please just get out of my ear.

SHERENE (cont'd)

(to herself)

How am I going to get in there?

If we step up to the large wooden front door:

SHERENE (cont'd)

Looks very locked. Not that way.

When we walk around the side of the library, the camera  
angles up to show us a broken window on the third floor,  
hanging over a sub-roof.

The tips of the sharp glass shards are 'danger red', glowing  
bright and wavering in the Layer holographics style.

SHERENE (cont'd)

There!

We find a book return box that we climb up on, and from  
there we climb our way up to the sub-roof.

SHERENE (cont'd)

Hey I can see the Archival Center  
from here!

We walk towards the window, but just then: LIGHTNING CRACKS,  
the sub-roof collapses and we fall into the Library. We  
slide down the collapsed roof segment inside, toward a  
banister.

We bust through the banister and free fall into an open  
space, landing on a book case, toppling it over.

INT. UPPER FLOOR - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

The toppling book case starts a domino effect. All the book  
cases topple one after another.

The final case crashes through another bannister and falls  
into the library's big central open space further below.

We hear a big crash, which shakes the whole library, and a  
crack appears through its central dome.

The library is made up of an internal balcony rounding a grand central room. Two small wings extend outward from the balcony, and it is one of these wings where we have fallen.

Sherene is unharmed, and now safely on the ground; She looks around. Textures begin to move and holographic geometries expand from surfaces in the Layer style.

The rain starts pouring in. We can hear that the rain has become much more intense outside, almost a storm.

SHERENE

Well that isn't ideal.

She picks up a book, it is a novel with an uninteresting name.

SHERENE (cont'd)

Hey Qareen... could you check these books and let me know if we already have them in the archive?

QAREEN (V.O.)

(in her head)

I thought you didn't want me in your ear... Whatever- you do it. I've put the archive scan on your gestalt control.

UI Note: We are prompted to activate our 'archive scan ability'.

A glowing ripple surges up and down the book. Finally, one prominent red ripple pulses across it.

SHERENE

Well, it's definitely early 21st century. But we've already got this one in the database. I should try to find a restricted access section.

She sets it down.

There is a spiral staircase leading from the upper floor to the main bookcase area below, but because of a blockage on the balcony, we have to go all the way around to get to it.

Along the way, we see artwork on the walls showing landscapes and portraits with Layer holographics and Jinntek.

This is odd since they are from the early 21st century.

If we look at one artwork of a resort by the ocean, Sherene comments:

SHERENE (cont'd)

The story is that the Shariq Event wiped out all the bacteria in the ocean except for a few especially toxic strains that emit lethal gases, and that's why no-one has been able to come close in centuries, but I don't think Al-Maradh are being completely honest about that. They-

A deluge of SPEAKING ADS appear all over the painting, each announcing some product or service.

SHERENE (cont'd)

-Not interested, thanks- This is giving me a headache...

INT. MAIN BOOKCASES - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

We can see the crashed bookcase with a small hill of books around it. It had crashed on top of a pair of bookcases.

We now have an open exploration section, where we can pick up books or other artifacts and check them out up close.

There are 7 intact rows of bookcases labeled: **Romance, Science Fiction, Historical Fiction, Arts, Science, Self-Help, and one suspiciously named 'Gibberish'.**

We find books down each row. If we use our archive scan ability, every book we find here will pulse red.

This main library area is connected to various other wings, that we can freely explore. The next few scenes will explore these wings.

INT. CHILD SECTION - LIBRARY - THE WEST - CONTINUOUS

There are toys here.

When Sherene picks up a plush dog wearing a fireman's hat, she comments:

SHERENE

Its so odd that ancient people would play with inanimate toys like this. I wonder if the Jinntek were less friendly back then.



INT. DVD RENTAL AREA - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Sherene picks up a DVD. This one is a movie called *The Insult*, showing a still frame with two people shouting at one another. This too has Layer holographics.

SHERENE

I don't really get how these work.  
Maybe they were like books for the  
ancient Haala. I wonder if they had  
play-dreams back then.

INT. CHECKOUT - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

When she finds a cash register and sees the money in it,  
Sherene comments:

SHERENE

I've read that such currency was  
popular all over pre-Shariq. I'm  
thankful we have the Shahid (شهد) now.

UI Note:

**New Codex Entry:**

- Shahid (شهد)

INT. COMPUTER AREA - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

When Sherene looks at a mouse and mousepad, she picks it up  
curiously and wonders at it.

SHERENE

What did they call these things? A- a  
hamster?

INT. DIGITAL HISTORY COLLECTION - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

This room seems no different than any other in the library.

There's a book on the floor. We pick it up. It's titled:  
**Arabic Glitch: Technoculture, Data Bodies, and Archives**

Before Sherene gets to comment, the room starts to  
transform, creating a surreal vertigo effect.

The ceiling lowers, squashing the room vertically. Something  
affects Sherene. She wavers, and drops the book.

The space dims to total black, except for a light fit into  
the ceiling, which grows as it descends.

From the light expands a sun icon, radial and full of intricate lines that evoke Arabic lettering. This is QAABID.

Qaabid's speech is an androgynous, baritone choir of two voices in unison - vis accent isn't from any human language.

QAABID  
Sherene...

SHERENE  
(hypnotized)  
Qaabid-

Spiral waves pulse from Qaabid to Sherene, washing over her, hypnotizing her.

Qaabid levitates the "Digital History Collection" plaque to vimsself. Ve inspects it.

QAABID  
Digital collections- are for Al-Haala alone. Have you- *forgotten*, Sherene?

SHERENE  
No Qaabid.

The pulses start coming quicker and get more intense.

QAABID  
Qareen, show yourself.

Sherene's Qareen fades in out of invisibility.

QAREEN  
I tried to-

QAABID  
Silence... Prevent. Do not explain.

QAREEN  
Yes Qaabid.

The pulses slow. Sherene shakes her head, gaining control.

SHERENE  
(with difficulty)  
Qaabid- These records are untouched!

As Qaabid recedes into ver portal, the pulses recede.

QAABID  
I place my trust in you, Qareen.

Qareen nods slowly.

QAREEN

Come Sherene, there's nothing in here.

Qareen forms a door ahead in the darkness, and gestures Sherene to follow ver through it.

We can exit through the door, spitting us back out into the main bookcases area.

If we try to come back through this door, there is only a pitch black hallway, with a door at the end that paradoxically leads back out into the main bookcases area.

UI Note:

**New Codex Entries:**

- Qaabid
- Al-Haala
- Pre-Shariq Historians

INT. MAIN BOOKCASES - LIBRARY

The plaque that used to say "Digital History Collection" is now holographic gibberish.

A small tremor makes a pile of books slide away from a fallen bookcase, revealing a plaque that reads "Reserved Collection".

SHERENE

That's it! I think I could push that bookcase aside, or I could keep looking around up here.

If we decide to shove away the fallen bookcase, we can go down the staircase leading down into the basement.

INT. RESERVED COLLECTION - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

The rain coming into the library is streaming down the staircase in significant quantity.

Walking down carefully, we see that the basement is filled with thigh high water.

SHERENE

Oh no! I'd better scan these fast.

Wading through the water, we explore the Reserved Collection - most books we scan pulse green, so Sherene collects them.

UI Note: Upon collecting books or other written notes, we get a notification saying:

**You can review discovered objects at any time in the Codex.**

We can hear the storm getting even more intense outside.

She comes into a second room labeled Delicates.

INT. DELICATES ROOM - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

The water here is filled with soggy paper from destroyed books.

While in the middle of exploring a book, a RUMBLE rings out, and the roof partially collapses in.

Water starts flooding in violently - it will soon fill up.

SHERENE

What the hell was that?

Qareen fades in.

QAREEN

I have no idea, but you need to get out of here fast. The room's filling up!

If we try to go back through the Reserved Collection door:

SHERENE

The roof collapsed, there must be another way out.

Eventually we see that we can climb up on a bookshelf to a vent in the ceiling.

BEGIN QTE

We struggle for a moment to open it, then clamber up.

INT. DUCT - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

She climbs up, soaking wet and exhausted.

The vent bends to the right and then goes diagonally upward a few meters - to the first floor level.

As she reaches the top, there is a grate with a big fan, but to its side there is an opening into an alcove.

SHERENE  
What's this?

BEGIN GAMEPLAY

INT. SECRET CHAMBER - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Its a secret chamber hidden in the ducts. Book shelves line the walls, but there are also computers and electronics from our era everywhere. It's a hacker space!

SHERENE  
This is amazing!

QAREEN (V.O.)  
Sherene, I don't-

SHERENE  
I've had enough comments today. I'm ending the voice link for now.

The sound of a phone hanging up clicks in Sherene's head.

UI Note: A message appears:  
**Your Qareen is now on hold.**

We explore various items in the room, and in our search we encounter a small, deactivated robot (meet BU6A).

BU6A was jerryrigged from library electronics - its head is a small form microfilm reader, and its body is made out of a dvd reader, dangling USB cables, and a cat-themed robot toy.

SHERENE (cont'd)  
Whoa, cute!

BEGIN CUTSCENE

Sherene spins it around, and presses a button on its side curiously. BU6A lights up and floats out of her hands.

Sherene is wonderstruck.

BU6A's screen face lights up with a bamboozled emoticon face.

It puts up its dangling USB cables like tentacle arms, then looks at Sherene. Where am I? What's going on?

It inspects our exoskeleton with fascination.

It tries to say something, opening its emoji mouth:

BU6A  
(glitch burp)

It tries again, but again nothing.

SHERENE  
Awww, you can't speak?

BU6A's face takes on a rolling eyes emoji and they shoot up their tentacles in frustration.

BU6A  
(annoyed bleep sound)

BU6A points a USB cable arm to its 'throat'. There's a slot there. And then it tries vainly to pick up a hard drive off the workshop table.

SHERENE  
You want that hard drive... Is that what you need to speak?

BU6A  
(frustrated affirmation sound)

Sherene picks it up, but just then the library SHAKES! Water starts to come in through the vent.

SHERENE  
We're not safe here. The library is flooding. How do we get out?

The water rushes in.

BU6A floats over to a hole in the wall and weakly pushes at something blocking the hole on the other side.

Sherene kicks it out - it's a filing cabinet in the Digital History Collection.

START GAMEPLAY

INT. DIGITAL HISTORY COLLECTION - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

They step out of the office into the empty black hallway that the Digital History Collection had become.

SHERENE  
(slightly hypnotized)  
Through this hallway-

BU6A  
(panicked burble)

Ahead of us, BU6A pulls a heavy object from the void. As it comes loose, it appears as a book. It's weight pulls BU6A to the ground, where they splash into shin-high water.

The water level is increasing by the minute, rushing under their feet.

SHERENE

W-How did you- Leave it!

BU6A drops the book reluctantly. We exit the hallway into the main library open space.

START QTE

INT. MAIN BOOKCASES - LIBRARY - CONTINUOUS

Just as they enter, the library rumbles, and water gushes in from an unseen wing.

To our left, through the tall windows, we watch a massive crane's support wavering as a mudslide takes away its base.

The crane tips over, its arm sweeping with great momentum into the side of the library, DEMOLISHING everything in its path.

As the end of the crane arm crunches into the ground along its sweeping arc, its slow enough for Sherene and BU6A to hop on.

SHERENE

Jump!

We leap onto the crane arm. But their nightmare is not over: As the crane is about to settle, its base is hit by another mudslide, causing its arm to lift off from the ground with great speed.

Sherene and BU6A hold on for dear life as it carries them out of the library, and straight for a nearby three story building...

EXT. OUTSIDE LIBRARY - AL-GAMA'A - CONTINUOUS

The Crane arm SMASHES into the building's thick concrete supports - the arm grinds to a halt.

We climb to the topside, and start making our way towards the base of the crane.

START GAMEPLAY

Down below us we see debris flowing in mudslides. The streets of Al-Gama'a are in ruins.

SHERENE

Ya Allah-

BU6A

(a sound like "whooooa")

Once we make it to the top, we take a breather.

BEGIN CUTSCENE

Over the library, five RAAIE hover over and start picking through the wreckage.

BU6A (cont'd)

(Shocked, terrified sound)

BU6A flies behind our shoulder, looking on.

SHERENE

It's ok little one, it's just some RAAIE. They can help us get out of here.

Just then, a RAAIE pulls a book from the rubble and burns it to a crisp with a tool. The rest are doing the same.

SHERENE (cont'd)

Wait, no!

(shouting)

No!

The closest RAAIE notices Sherene, and starts flying to her.

BU6A yanks Sherene back a step.

BU6A

(Terrified blurt)

BU6A's tentacles wrap around our right arm frantically -

SHERENE

Hey! Stop-

BU6A

(Jittery frantic blurts)

An N-Er-G Cell on BU6A's body glows red hot as it gets more nervous. The cell discharges, rippling a pulse into Sherene.



INSERT - The camera flies into our head, entering the EXOSCAPE for a moment - BU6A's pulse hits our Qareen, making the circuit lines on its body glow. The opaqueness of its skin burns away, leaving the skin transparent. We see various exotic, pulsating digital organs inside its body. As the pulse reaches its eyes, bright light glitchily shoots from them. The camera flies out of the exoscape, returning to The Layer.

QAREEN (V.O.)  
 Sher-(glitch)Wh-wh-what(glitchy  
 non-sense)

The world around us glitches completely, causing the following:

The vibrant colors of The Layer's warpings start dropping away and glitching wildly.

The monolithic cube in the distance shimmers into and out of existence, revealing in its place: a dense region of dark, broken, lightless skyscrapers.

At the edge of the pit in which Al-Gama'a rests, what had appeared to be a giant mural showing the sign of the Maradh, the Hamsa hand, glitches away, revealing a massive pipe, out of which thousands of gallons of water are rapidly pouring into the pit city.

Sherene looks at her arms. The powered exoskeleton lights are on the fritz, and she can hardly lift her hands.

SHERENE  
 Ya Raby!

The RAAIE ominously floats into view, right up in our faces. The glitch has revealed its true form to be something far more sinister and disturbing:

It has a core with 8 red 'eyes', each with a black aperture tightening and widening. Coming from its core are a tangled nest of snake-like metal tentacles, each tipped with ominous tools. The tip of one tentacle is unfolded into a parabolic dish scanning us up and down.

Sherene trips back on her rump.

BU6A tries to float away, but a tentacle snatches it.

The RAAIE's voice is still impish, but takes on an ominous machinic effect, like it is being punched out a fog horn.

RAAIE  
 Sherene El-Masry, Pre-Shariq Field  
 Archivist, House of the Middle.  
 Explain, what is this machine.

BU6A  
 (A warbling, spasmic charging sound)

BU6A emanates a pulse into the RAAIE, which causes all of its eight eye apertures to snap to tiny red pinholes, and its tentacles to spasm.

RAAIE  
 (Garbled electronic scream)

BU6A is set loose.

The pulse was like a shockwave, which left a crack in the supports that the crane arm rests on. It starts to crumble.

BU6A tugs at Sherene's arm.

BU6A  
 (a sound like "Let's go! Run!")

START QTE

SHERENE  
 I can't run! Something's wrong  
 with my legs.

BU6A rushes back to us, and tries to tug us, but no luck. They gesture off the edge of the crane arm:

BU6A  
 (a blaring note that signs  
 urgency)

A graphic of a person jumping off a cliff appears on BU6A's face screen, and they leap off the edge.

The RAAIE stabs two sharp tentacles violently into the metal of the crane and, blinded, sweeps four unfolding parabolic dishes around, searching.

We jump off the crane, ungracefully tumbling down into a descending stairway hara that snakes through the neighborhood. We creakily stand up and start hobbling!

START GAMEPLAY

EXT. STAIRWAY HARA - AL-GAMA'A - CONTINUOUS

We can hear the RAAIE on our tail, bashing into the narrow walls of the hara. Water is gushing down the steps.

We can see ahead that our path ends in a growing pool of water. Just above the pool, another narrow hara overpasses perpendicularly.

It's possible to fail this sequence:

ON FAIL: We are caught by the RAAIE. Tentacles come in at the edges of the screen. The screen goes dark and a sharp metal sound rings out. We have to replay the sequence.

ON WIN: We continue the sequence.

START QTE

Just before we get to the pool, we can leap, grabbing onto the overhang. The RAAIE hits a wall and rolls into the pool of water, releasing an explosive spark. The lights in its eyes fade away.

Sherene can't hold on - she falls into the pool.

The Raaie makes a BURBLING POWER DOWN SOUND as it sinks.

EXT. HARA - NEIGHBORHOOD - CONTINUOUS

Everything is all glitchy. Sherene comes out of the pool.

SHERENE

Damn it! I don't understand- I  
don't understand- I don't-

Sherene is looking around at all the glitchiness in awe.

BU6A floats up in our face and points to its empty hard drive slot.

Sherene grabs BU6A and says firmly to its face:

SHERENE (cont'd)

Fix it! Fix it right now.

BU6A's face screen shows a flashing icon of a hard drive, and points again to their open slot.

Frustrated Sherene goes through her bag and pulls the hard drive out that she found in the secret room.

SHERENE (cont'd)  
 Is this what you're looking for?  
 Here:

Sherene shoves it into BU6A face slot.

The hard drive makes whirring sounds, which become tonal, layering on top of one another into a robo-voice.

BU6A spins with excitement.

BU6A  
 Whoopi!

BU6A speaks for the first time.

BU6A (cont'd)  
 Well, that was fun wasn't it.

SHERENE  
 You better spit out some useful  
 information or help me God.

BU6A  
 Okay. Touchy much.

Sherene goes to grab it, but BU6A slips under her arm.

BU6A (cont'd)  
 You were a little-

BU6A makes the cuckoo expression, whistling.

BU6A (cont'd)  
 Out of it you know. First of all,  
 My name's BU6A, cuz I'm a bot, get  
 it?- and I'm not your little one.  
 (Then)  
 Second of all, your brain was all  
 messed up and I fixed it, see?

BU6A gestures around them.

SHERENE  
 What do you mean 'fixed it'!  
 Everything is broken. I'm broken!

BU6A  
 Uggggh,  
 (rolling eyes emoji)  
 I can't believe I'm about to explain  
 this. This thing:

A 2D holographic display shoots out of BU6A, showing an x-ray view of Sherene's head. A metallic growth is embedded in the occipital lobe.

BU6A (cont'd)

So you know that little sliver of brain that processes what your eyes see, the visual cortex.

SHERENE

I don't care about my eyes right now. Fix my exoskeleton or-

BU6A

It's all connected. Your eyes, your muscles. Hate to burst your bubble, but there's a lllllllittle implant right in your brain that makes you see the internet as a bunch of structured hallucinations- seems like that also makes your exoskeleton work. I'm sorry but also not that sorry. Welcome to reality!

SHERENE

(peevish)

Oh. My. God- half of what you're saying makes no sense. I don't know what internet is, I want my hands-

BU6A

Uhhhh, wow. Interesting. Uh- Question for you then. What year is it?

SHERENE

2211.

BU6A

(whiny)

This is one hell of a future you have here-

A group of the Ghouls appear around them one by one, BUT their figures are glitching out, revealing the Ghouls to be humans. They all have tattered clothing - and are from all of the major regions. These are the UNTOUCHABLES.

Sherene takes a defensive stance. BU6A cowers behind her.

An Untouchable steps forward.

UNTOUCHABLE #1  
We saw what the little machine did  
to the Raaie.

BU6A  
Again, not little.

Sherene shushes BU6A.

SHERENE  
Who are you?

UNTOUCHABLE #1  
We're you. Just not connected to  
the layer anymore.

Sherene looks to BU6A. UNTOUCHABLE #2 looks around  
anticipating other RAAIES.

UNTOUCHABLE #2  
You should come with us. Unless  
you want to deal with another  
RAAIE.

Two of the Untouchables are dragging the dead Raaie out of  
the pool of water with ropes.

They lead us down a pathway...

EXT. PATHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The Voxwings in our path are glitched, and now instead of  
saying messages from other people, they are repeating tweets  
from the Flotilla Gaza event.

SHERENE  
(to Voxwing)  
When are these messages from?

VOXWING  
(glitching)  
Tw-w-enty elev-ven-ven-ven.

SHERENE  
That predates Shariq by almost 20  
years. We thought everything was  
wiped out. Where is this coming from?

VOXWING  
(glitching)  
B-b-beats me.

BU6A looks at Sherene, shocked by her ignorance.

UNTOUCHABLE #1  
It's what Al-Maradh doesn't want  
you to see.

The Voxwing dissolves. We are led up a hill around a corner  
into...

EXT. UNTOUCHABLES CAMP - CONTINUOUS

The Untouchables camp is filled with tattered tents and  
makeshift shelters. At the far end a huge object is covered  
by tarps to protect it from the water.

Everyone is gathered around a firepit to keep warm.

Sherene takes in the scenery, shocked by the living  
conditions, some gather rain water in buckets while others  
make sure the fire doesn't die.

UNTOUCHABLE #1 speaks to A MAN standing at corner of the  
tent, meet the UNTOUCHABLE LEADER. The UNTOUCHABLE LEADER  
looks at Sherene and BU6A sizing them up before make his way  
to them.

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER  
Welcome to our humble home.

SHERENE  
You guys know this place is  
flooding soon.

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER  
We're actually counting on it.

He walks to the dead RAAIE and starts to tinker with it.

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER (cont'd)  
You want to explain what your  
little friend did?  
(The Leader yanks a piece  
from the Raaie)  
-That's the one.

Sherene doesn't answer.

SHERENE  
Who are you?

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER  
We're untouchables, those who the  
Maradh fear the most. But I think  
who you are is more interesting.

(MORE)

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER (cont'd)  
 You can see us, but you're not a  
 ghoul-

SHERENE  
 -I'm no ghoul.

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER  
 I wonder how long that will last.  
 The Raaie are searching for you.  
 (to BU6A)  
 I take it you had something to do  
 with this.

BU6A nods.

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER (cont'd)  
 (then)  
 Nice trick. Wanna show me how?

SHERENE  
 It doesn't matter how. Why would  
 the Raaie be after me?

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER  
 The Maradh control what you can  
 see. That is their means of  
 control. It's why we look the way  
 we do, to dehumanize us, to  
 isolate us. Now that you've seen  
 the truth, they'll never stop  
 coming for you.

SHERENE  
 All I see is a bunch of people  
 hiding in the ruins of a city.

BU6A  
 Sherene, they're right. Something  
 is wrong about all of this. I've  
 been scanning the net and...  
 history is fucked up! The Shariq  
 Event is the biggest lie of them  
 all. It was Al-Haala that  
 devastated the world.

SHERENE  
 Al-Haala saved the last of  
 humanity. They brought us to the  
 Sanctuary. They cure diseases,  
 they protect-

UNTOUCHABLE #1  
 They turn us into machines!

UNTOUCHABLE #2  
 We're their slaves!



## UNTOUCHABLE #3

The Jinntek aren't reformed  
ghouls, they're enslaved humans!

## UNTOUCHABLE LEADER

The Sanctuary is a factory. If you  
knew the history they erased, you  
wouldn't think so highly of them.

## SHERENE

The Maradh protect history; That's  
why I'm here. To archive the rare  
books in Al-Gama'a.

## UNTOUCHABLE LEADER

What do you think those books say  
now that you can see the truth?  
Take a look.

UI NOTE: We get prompted to open our "Journal", by pressing  
letter 'B'. When we open the Journal, we see a list of all  
the objects we've picked up before. We can click on each one  
to see it up close and to read some flavor text about it.

Some books we picked up before tell a very different kind of  
story now.

Here are some books that we might want to use:  
Arabic Glitch - <https://www.sup.org/books/title/?id=27100>  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orientalism\\_\(book\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orientalism_(book))  
[https://www.amazon.com/Hundred-Years-War-Palestine-Colonialism/dp/1250787653/ref=pd\\_lpo\\_sccl\\_2/137-8076930-2174618](https://www.amazon.com/Hundred-Years-War-Palestine-Colonialism/dp/1250787653/ref=pd_lpo_sccl_2/137-8076930-2174618)  
<https://www.amazon.com/When-We-Were-Arabs-Forgotten/dp/1620974169>

Qareen's voice suddenly comes in, sounding like it's booting  
up. It's still glitchy.

## QAREEN (V.O.)

She-Sherene, can you h-hear me?

## SHERENE

Qareen?

## BEGIN QTE

The Raaie they carried into camp has reactivated, making the  
same rebooting sound that Qareen did.

It blares its horn and knocks over a shelter.

UNTOUCHABLE #2  
The Raaie rebooted!

UNTOUCHABLE #3  
It's calling for help.

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER  
We can't stay here any longer. To  
the boat!

They start running through the hara to the sea.

QAREEN (V.O.)  
W-w-what's happening? I c-c-can't  
see. What boat?

SHERENE  
Don't worry about it.

QAREEN  
Don't worry about what?  
(then)  
I'm getting help.

SHERENE  
NO.

The Raaie isn't on their tail, but it's close.

QAREEN  
N-no? Something-ing-ing's wrong.

They arrive at the edge of the sea. Some Untouchables are  
pulling the tarp from a makeshift BOAT.

END QTE

Most of them hop on. Sherene hesitates. Untouchable Leader  
reaches out his hand.

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER  
If you stay you'll die.

QAREEN  
Who is that?

SHERENE  
(to the Leader)  
I know my way out. I have to see  
what I've been a part of.

Untouchables hops on the boat.

UNTOUCHABLE #1  
Boss. It's now or never.

The leader tosses a poppy seed flower to Sherene.

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER  
This is our symbol. If you change  
your mind, come to the seaport.

Sherene starts to run off. BU6A looks back and forth, and  
decides to go with Sherene.

UNTOUCHABLE LEADER (cont'd)  
(distant)  
Remember. Al-Maradh is with you.  
Every. Where. You go.

That's ominous. Sherene hesitates, then continues.

QAREEN  
Sherene are you okay? Should I  
signal for help.

SHERENE  
(interrupting)  
No.  
(then)  
Everything is fine.

INT. TUNNEL ENTRANCE

Sherene leads BU6A to the secret tunnel. BU6A follows her  
without hesitation.

Water is flooding into the tunnel.

BEGIN GAMEPLAY

INT. TUNNELS - ROCKY STRETCH - CONTINUOUS

This stretch of the tunnel has walls of exposed rock.  
Plastic piping is hung up along it.

Water still rushing at their feet.

QAREEN (V.O.)  
I'm trying something- Let me know  
if you see-

A glitching mirage of Qareen fades into view walking  
alongside us.

QAREEN  
Th-there. I-I'm almost completely  
back.

BU6A  
Ugh... It's back.

QAREEN  
Excuse you.

BU6A  
(roll eye emoji)  
You're excused.

SHERENE  
Both of you shut up or we're gonna  
die here.

Sherene hits a fork in the road.

SHERENE (cont'd)  
(Thinks out load)  
If the sea was to our east. We  
need to keep going west.

Sherene dashes to the right fork.

BU6A  
(to Qareen)  
You would think future tech would  
be useful.

QAREEN  
And what are you?

SHERENE  
He's a friend, there is a lot to  
catch you up on Qareen and now  
might not be the time...  
(turns to Qareen)  
Although what do we know about  
this flooding?

QAREEN  
A natural disaster.

BU6A scoffs.

QAREEN (cont'd)  
And you would know.

BU6A  
Apparently, and what are you-  
Sherene's personal panopticon?

QAREEN  
Don't you dare-

Sherene stops and turns.

SHERENE

-Both of you stop it. Enough.

They stop. That's when Sherene sees writing on the wall.

There are many revolutionary artworks on the tunnel walls - some faded from age but some still readable:

Variations of handala, olive branches, and slogans. The graffiti says:

**From the River to the Sea, Palestine Will be Free  
Free Palestine!  
We Have the Right to Return  
How Many Children Did You Kill Today**

SHERENE (cont'd)

This was not here before.

QAREEN

What is?

BU6A looks at Sherene. "Is she kidding me?".

QAREEN (cont'd)

Sherene you're right we need to get out of here, so whatever you think you're seeing we can figure it out later.

They head to the end of the tunnel where light come from.

Sherene kicks the cover open and...

EXT. OUTSIDE AL HARA - CONTINUOUS

They pop out of an old sewer cover. They are where the protest was taking place, but the streets are now empty.

RAAIE are roaming the treat.

RAAIE

(from distance)

For your safety. Stay Home. Flood warning. Last bus, 0200. Al Maradh Protects all.

Sherene ducks and makes her way to the side street and take shelter. BU6A is on her heels but Qareen takes her time.

SHERENE

They can't find us.

QAREEN

What are you talking about. What is going on?

SHERENE

I will explain everything. I promise. But for now, I want you to do me a favor. Go to mom, tell her I'm fine.

QAREEN

I can call her.

SHERENE

I'd prefer if you do it in person.

QAREEN

Where are you going?

SHERENE

I have to bring in the books. Meet me after.

QAREEN

And him.

SHERENE

He's new here. I can't leave him alone. Meet me after and we can chat with Qaabid together.

Sherene smiles at her reassuringly. Qareen hesitantly leaves.

We stealth our way through the rotonda and down several streets.

At the foot of the archival center, we climb up some structures in a back-alley, slipping in through a vent.

CUT TO:

EXT. CYBERSPACE

Qareen is transitioning between scenes in cyberspace: locations of pure information, virtual realities, fractals.

She appears at the house of Sherene's mother - outside a nice three story building in an easy-going neighborhood.

EXT. MOTHER'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Qareen steps toward the door when:

The building before her shatters like glass into a million floating shards.

Through the shards floats the giant avatar of Qaabid.

QAABID

Qareen. You will tell me what is going on.

Qareen tenses.

QAREEN

I went offline. Not sure how. You can view the records.

QAABID

I did.

Qaabid starts to emit pulses.

QAABID (cont'd)

Do I need to remind you what your reason for existence is?

QAREEN

I'm doing everything I can.

QAABID

No human has ever escaped the Layer. Figure out what she knows. If you cannot control her, she must die. And you know what that will mean for you.

Qareen nods and smiles at her disingenuously.

Qaabid recedes, fades away into darkness. Then...

The floating glass shards that the world had shattered into earlier fly together and recombine. Phew!

BACK TO:

INT. ARCHIVAL CENTER - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The archival center's interior architecture is a network of wide, seemingly natural cave tunnels coated floor to ceiling with a lush rainforest-like biome of vibrantly colorful and emissive holographic plants.

Workstations jut from the walls, the ceilings, and the floors at every possible angle. **This** is a Haala environment.

Sherene and BU6A are hidden in a dry creek-like divot.

BU6A  
You *work* here?

SHERENE  
Shh. We need to be even more careful now.

BU6A  
Why?

SHERENE  
Al-Haala don't sleep.

As if on cue, the massive icon of a Haala floats into the tunnel, this one shaped like a bundle of a hundred antlers.

It passes around the corner. Phew.

BU6A  
That's terrifying.

SHERENE  
You get used to it.

There's a slot in the wall.

SHERENE (cont'd)  
This is where I normally drop off the books. It leads into the vault. Let's go!

UI Note:

**New Codex Entries:**

- Archival Center
- Haala Environments

We round the corner into...

INT. ARCHIVAL CENTER - VAULT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

This room is much larger, but it dead ends in a massive Jinntek plant shaped like a lock. This is a DEADLOCK.

Guarding the Deadlock there is a scrappy canine-like Jinntek, lying in its roots. This is a LOCKSPAWN.

Across the room there is a swarm of key-like flying beetles. These are KEYFLIES.



Beside the Keyfly swarm there is a large sedentary Jinntek. This is the GRAZER.

One Keyfly wanders from the group toward the Deadlock. The Lockspawn chases it. The Keyfly evades, but after a moment gets caught and eaten.

(reference: <https://half-life.fandom.com/wiki/Stalker>)

SHERENE

The archive is in there.

BU6A

What is that thing on it?

SHERENE

It's called a Deadlock, they grow wherever the Maradh need to lock a sensitive area.

BU6A

And I take it the key-looking ones-

SHERENE

Yep, those are Keyflies. They open Deadlocks. And that dog-looking thing is called a Lockspawn. They guard the Deadlock, and eat any KeyFlies that come close.

BU6A

Ok! Then let's get this pup to move. Come here doggy! Here! Here!

BU6A flies up to the Lockspawn and tries pushing it - it flies straight through. Next BU6A tries making loud noises, but the Lockspawn is calm.

SHERENE

That won't work.

BU6A looks at the Lockspawn, then the Keyflies, then back at the Lockspawn.

BU6A

Hmmm.

BU6A shoots a harmless, plasma-looking bolt into the Lockspawn, giving it a green highlight, then it does the same to a Keyfly, giving it an orange highlight.

Then BU6A charges up, making a strained sound, just one N-R-G Cell on its body lights up this time, and emits a burst:

The Lockspawn and Keyfly's forms shapeshift glitchily into many shapes before settling into being the other creature:

The Lockspawn now **looks** like the Keyfly, and the Keyfly now **looks** like the Lockspawn.

We can tell which is which because the original form of the creature is superimposed on it as a green/orange highlight.

The Keyflies immediately disperse in a panic from the Lockspawn in their midst.

SHERENE

What did you just do?

BU6A

I swapped their appearances. Maybe a Keyfly will... I don't know... I've never been very good at puzzles.

BEGIN GAMEPLAY

UI Note: We receive a message on screen explaining clearly how we can control BU6A's glitch-swap ability. I'm thinking Portal style control, where left click selects the first creature and right click selects the second. It also says you can select yourself by clicking middle mouse button.

UI Note:

**New Codex Entries:**

- Deadlocks, Lockspawn, and Keyflies
- Grazers
- Glitch Swapping

When we first click on a creature, we say:

SHERENE

How about swapping this one, and... Uhhmm...

And when we first select the second creature, we say:

SHERENE (cont'd)

This one!

If we click on the Grazer, then BU6A will add:

BU6A

What does that one do?

SHERENE

Uhhhh. It just eats grass.

BU6A

Oh. Ok.

If we select ourselves, then we say:

SHERENE

Can you do me?

BU6A

Sure can!

The player now solves the puzzle on their own. One solution is to swap GRAZER and a KEYFLY, so the LOCKSPAWN won't eat it, and then to swap LOCKSPAWN and SHERENE, so we can chase the KEYFLY (as GRAZER) to the DEADLOCK.

The Keyfly slots into the Deadlock. The plant's many vines fall away and recede into its heart, revealing a path in.

INT. ARCHIVAL CENTER - VAULT - CONTINUOUS

This room is also like a tunnel, but there are less plants.

Conveyor belts run into the room from all sides, and snake down the tunnel. The path ahead descends into pitch black.

BU6A

Uhhh, are the books down this tunnel?

SHERENE

I... I'm not sure. I thought they'd be right beyond the wall.

We descend into the tunnel, it getting more dark as we go.

Occasionally a book will come in on the conveyors and zip ahead of us down the path.

BU6A

Th-this is a little c-creepy don't you think?

SHERENE

-----

Just as it gets really dark we see an orange light ahead.

SHERENE (cont'd)

There, Yalla!

We start to jog toward the light. As we get closer we start to hear a constant ROARING, the light seems to be coming from a large pit up ahead. We reach the lip:

The pit is filled with ROARING flames! Some books run off the conveyors straight into the flames.

SHERENE (cont'd)

No!

BEGIN CUTSCENE

The brilliant flames reflect in BU6A's face screen.

Sherene is stunned, shivering with emotion. The light of the flames dance on her face.

Beat.

She turns her back to the flames, closes her eyes, clinches her fists.

Shuttering, tears come. She comes close to breaking, but she stands strong.

Sherene walks slowly into the dark.

BU6A is left behind. They notice and rush to catch up.

A book zips past on the conveyor belt. Sherene didn't flinch.

The glow on Sherene's hair is fading as she starts to re-enter the blackness. She fades into total darkness.

EXT. ABANDONED SEAPORT - NIGHT

Dimly lit by moonlight, the seaport is an artificial harbor with a man-made sandbar. It's almost totally drained now, the water level only reaching the edge of the harbor's mouth.

It's filled with ancient, beached boats. Sherene and BU6A are between them, heading towards the harbor mouth.

In the distance there is a dilapidated sculpture of the letters: "I Heart Gaza". Half of the heart is gone.

BU6A checks their GPS...

BU6A

This is the only seaport for miles.

Sherene looks around, taken aback by their surroundings.

SHERENE

Before I could see the truth...  
there were only jagged rocks in  
this harbor.

This area is a spatial narrative section. We can explore the boats and find letters and documents from people living on the coast in Gaza City or Rafah, in which they tell their own story.

In one particularly prominent boat:

Sherene picks up a picture of a man with his Hajabi wife and daughter. They're smiling.

SHERENE (cont'd)

I wonder what happened to this family.

BU6A

In this part of the world. A lot could have happened to them.

SHERENE

Like what?

BU6A

Remember what you saw in the tunnels? It's part of a bigger story. A story that I use to safekeep. And now I'm only stuck with...

BU6A reads the name of the drive he has on.

BU6A (cont'd)

Volume six.

Some boats contain humanitarian aid, and in or around them we can find VoxWings that display R-Shief tweets in response to the 2010 Flotilla Raid.

When we approach the water line at the mouth of the harbor, we find a small ship at the edge of the water, with several human crew. They stop their work and stare at us.

BEGIN CUTSCENE

Sherene pulls out the red poppy that Untouchable Leader had given her earlier.

INT./EXT. BOAT - SEA

Sherene leans on the side of the boat watching the sparkling lights from the city as they sail to the unknown.

BU6A floats up beside her. They share a moment.

SHERENE

It feels weird leaving everything  
and everyone you know behind.

BU6A

(looks at Qareen)  
Not everyone.

Qareen stands at the stern of the boat watching the horizon.

BU6A (cont'd)

Don't worry. You're not the first  
one to feel that way.

SHERENE

I want to know the whole story.  
Can you show me what you know?

BU6A

I only have-

SHERENE

-Volume six. We can start with  
that.

BU6A hovers excitedly and projects the drive content in the sky:

A Picture of a woman with a short Bio next to it appears.  
Then a compilation of images and tweets about the Arab Spring starts playing.

BU6A pouts once he sees the images of the woman. Sherene notices shortly after.

SHERENE (cont'd)

What's wrong?

BU6A

That was my friend. She's probably  
long gone by now.

SHERENE

I'm your friend now.

Sherene hugs BU6A. Qareen watches them from afar.

TEXT OVER BLACK

**Thank you for playing Qareen.**

**Sherene and BU6A will return.**