

THE FUTURE IS MORE THAN JUST A GAME.

# SODA POP SOLDIER

A NOVEL



**NICK COLE**

AUTHOR OF THE WASTELAND SAGA

---

# SODA POP SOLDIER

**Nick Cole**



**HARPER Voyager**

*An Imprint of HarperCollinsPublishers*

# CONTENTS

---

Chapter 1
Chapter 2
Chapter 3
Chapter 4
Chapter 5
Chapter 6
Chapter 7
Chapter 8
Chapter 9
Chapter 10
Chapter 11
Chapter 12
Chapter 13
Chapter 14
Chapter 15
Chapter 16
Chapter 17
Chapter 18
Chapter 19
Chapter 20
Chapter 21
Chapter 22
Chapter 23
Chapter 24
Chapter 25
Chapter 26
Chapter 27
Chapter 28
Chapter 29
Chapter 30
Chapter 31
The Last Chapter
About the Author
Also by Nick Cole
Credits



# Chapter 1

---

The war starts at 6 A.M., in-game time. By 6:45 we're losing Hamburger Hamlet as our entire line begins to disintegrate.

It isn't a total collapse. Pockets of resistance hold out in key positions, buying ColaCorp time, expensive time, to fall back and reorganize. On my right flank, Kiwi holds a high hill overlooking the Song Hua river basin. We call that hill WonderSoft Garage because of the small power station and vehicle spawn depot located there. WonderSoft had made the capture of that hill and power station a primary objective in the last three battles we'd fought at this end of the basin.

And it looked like they were gonna try for it again today.

Over BattleChat, Kiwi swears as he burns through the ammo that an air resupply Albatross barely managed to get through. In my mind, I can see empty lager cans parading around the workspace that Kiwi's keyboard and monitor, as ambient in-game sound resounds in a metallic symphony of ammo and brass expended in adult-sized doses. If the sound of auto rifles and explosions is a kind of music, and to some of us it is, then Kiwi is Beethoven.

Through graphically rendered feathery willow trees and the game-supposed heat waves of the day, we can barely make out what's going on up at the top of the hill in brief glimpses. Three fast-attack WonderSoft Goats, their version of a jeep, and a Thrasher light mech are burning. Thick oily smoke belches from the mech, and a moment later it explodes in a shower of sparks. More WonderSoft Goats and Thrashers climb the road to the bridge that leads to our side of the river.

WonderSoft infantry scramble from cover, racing to other cover, as Kiwi fights hard to keep them from crossing the choke point at the bridge and capturing WonderSoft Garage. It's about to get real intimate, real quick.

"Command, we're gettin' killed up here," shouts Kiwi over BattleChat. His transmission is broken and distorted by automatic weapons fire in the background. "I'm down to three grunts," he continues. "Request reinforcements or evac, A-S-A-P! If you've got fire support, I'll take it now, but you'd better drop it right on top of my position, your choice, Command."

Minutes earlier I'd requested Command point two transports of grunts our way as reinforcements. One of our dropships got jumped by a flight of WonderSoft Vampires as they'd approached the LZ. The other, piloted by RiotGuurl, had gotten away.

I hope.

RiotGuurl is as good a pilot as I've ever worked with. Losing the first transport hadn't been an easy choice for her, but when a WonderSoft Vampire caught your electronic scent, there weren't many options left for a transport squadron other than to split up and run like hell to get away from the wicked ground attack jet.

Since then RiotGuurl was maintaining radio silence. I know she's chasing every nook and cranny .

the jungle-clad hills that surround the basin on all sides, flying her gunship way too close to the computer's representation of the ground, looking for a route back into Hamburger Hamlet so we can resupply and reinforce the river crossing. Maybe even help Kiwi.

"Be advised, Command, it's just me now. All my grunts are KIA." Kiwi again. "Two ammo packs left and multiple Softs inside the wire." Kiwi never gives up. Even when he's being overrun. Maybe it's an Australian thing. Once this war is over, I plan on taking some of my winnings and heading down under to spend some time in Gigaboo Flats at the Wonky Boomerang, Kiwi's favorite postbattle watering hole. But hopefully the Cola Wars will never end, or else how will I get paid?

"Kiwi, evac not possible at this time. Sorry about that, son." It's RangerSix, ColaCorp's tactical commander. The fact that he's overseeing our little firefight reinforces how crucial this battle really is for ColaCorp.

Using my targeting monocular, I scan the sloping hills and tall grass behind and above Hamburger Hamlet for our commander's avatar. RangerSix is the kind of guy who can change a battle with a basic rifle kit and some explosives. As usual I can't find his hiding place.

Across the river, WonderSoft artillery begins throwing everything they've got at us. Head down inside my command post, I crank my speakers to full ambient in-game sound, cutting off Catherine Wheel's seminal late-twentieth-century album *Ferment*. I'm waiting to hear RiotGuurl's turbine. She's Kiwi's only hope now.

"Sixty rounds left. How about fire support, RangerSix?" It's Kiwi.

"Negative at this time." I hear the quiet frustration in RangerSix's smoke-stained voice.

"Die in place again, huh?" grunts Kiwi.

Behind me, in the detailed squat bamboo and stone village that is the game designer's representation of a fictional Southeast Asian river basin village, a place we call Hamburger Hamlet. As a nod to the often bloody struggles for online supremacy that take place there, our armor rolls through retreating farther to the east. We've been holding this side of the river, waiting for our massive Charger IV battle tanks to cross the muddy brown shallows under heavy mortar fire. Now, it's time to bug out.

WonderSoft Garage has always been the key to control of the river crossing at Hamburger Hamlet. There's no bridge, but the river's shallow enough to get most vehicles across. Now that the overwatering Kiwi was providing at the garage is on the verge of being taken, the battle, at least here alongside the river, is lost for ColaCorp. Any of our units on the far side of the river aren't getting back to our lines without an airlift. The game day still promises more fighting. It's Saturday, and the network goes back on coverage for the weekend. But to lose good armor this early would spell disaster for whatever Command has in mind for us to do next. We've gotten the Chargers back to this side of the river. That's enough for now. We'll have to fight another battle somewhere else.

"Afraid so, son," says RangerSix to Kiwi over BattleChat regarding any kind of assistance. Or to be more specific, the complete lack thereof. "Sorry."

Kiwi doesn't reply.

The turbines of RiotGuurl's Albatross scream loudly as she coaxes the VTOL transport slas her gunship into a tight bend south of my position. The fat hover jets that hang beneath the stubby wings of the wide-bodied OD green Albatross kick up a spray of water as she bleeds altitude and speed.

getting close to the surface of the river.

For a brief second there's hope.

---

But, as I swing my avatar's view around, locking her craft into my HUD, I don't need imagination or predictive software to tell me her ship's already down to 48 percent integrity. The Albatross is vomiting black oily smoke while blue flames climb from the turbines across the fuselage, licking at the pilot's canopy. Seconds later a dart-winged fast mover, camouflage shifting from sky gray to river brown and its onboard computer tracks position relative to target and adjusts the color scheme, comes into view. It's a WonderSoft Vampire and it vaults the bend farther down the river, rattling out short bursts from its forward-mounted 30 mm chain gun directly into the Albatross's burning fuselage.

The pilot's an amateur.

RiotGuurl's finished.

Any good pilot would just let her crash into the ground, but this jerk wants a special gun camouflage "kill" to put up on his webwall. A professional player kill worth bragging about. Or at least he's hoping to brag about it.

"Not today," I mutter and order my air defense grunt to take out the Vampire, an easy kill at this range and altitude with a preoccupied pilot. The grunt, skinned in jungle camo and battered light body armor, leaps out from behind the barn at the far end of Hamburger Hamlet and scrambles to shoulder the ground-to-air HammerClaw missile.

With in-game ambient sound cranked up to full, I hear an unseen WonderSoft sniper's Barret300 go off like the sudden snap of a dead branch. A moment later my grunt is flung backward from the impact of the supersonic round.

That means WonderSoft has snipers in the hills on our side of the river. Things are actually worse than they seem.

"C'mon you lazy . . .," growls RiotGuurl over BattleChat as her Albatross loses an engine and begins to list badly to starboard. I know she's scrambling to maintain some kind of altitude in order to get the replacement platoon she's carrying out the door and somewhat near our position alongside the river. Parachutes puff to life just beyond the flaming fuselage, but the falling stick of badly needed grunts and players will be scattered all along the river at best. With our line currently collapsing they'll be less than combat effective. They probably won't even be able to link up with any friendlies.

I hit E on my keyboard and then Spacebar, making my avatar jump up from behind the sandbag command post I'm using as the command post I'd set up back when I thought there might be some kind of contest for Hamburger Hamlet. But that's not happening today.

I race for the air defense grunt's gear, knowing the sniper sees me. A good sniper will wait for me to reach the dead grunt. It'll take two point five seconds to exchange my rifle kit for the shoulder-fired HammerClaw Air Defense System the downed grunt carried. That'll be all the time the sniper needs to blow my avatar's head off. My hope is that a good sniper, and I hope this sniper is good, is waiting for another grunt to appear and pick up the valuable Air Defense gear. My other hope is that he's not expecting a real live player. Or at least that's what I tell myself as I reach the grunt's prone body.

ColaCorp SOP insists live-player avatars look just like the AI-controlled grunts. Hypermuscular digital depictions of frontline real-world combat troops. Dirty green jungle-stripe fatigues, dull green and grease black tiger-striped face and arm camo. Even the same gear with the rare exception of

shotgun or a favorite sidearm. It's good policy. The enemy expects an AI grunt's reaction to any given circumstance. So we all look like grunts; that way the expectations are lower. Except a live player can do the unexpected.

RangerSix is probably behind that smart idea.

I pause at the kit and roll left a heartbeat later. A spray of dirt blossoms on-screen as the Barret round explodes in the mud just beyond the dead grunt's body.

Where my avatar's head should have been.

Now the WonderSoft sniper will need to pull the slide back and chamber another massive round, a serious drawback to using the Barret3000.

I exchange kits with a tap on the keyboard, raise the shoulder-fired missile, and select *Shotgun Mode*, firing on the fly, not even waiting for the high-pitched tone indicating lock. The micro missiles that scatter away from the launcher don't have far to go as the Albatross and Vampire streak straight over the top of Hamburger Hamlet. They sidewinder skyward and punch right into the bottom of the frost-gray SkyCamo of the WonderSoft Vampire.

*Kaboom.* No Vampire. Musta hit an armed weapon or maybe even the fuel tank.

Meanwhile, RiotGuurl's finished.

"Lateral's gone . . . I'm going in," she says just before the Albatross smashes itself into the cliff wall below WonderSoft Garage above the river.

I know RangerSix sees it happen. Seconds later he's broadcasting an areawide alert. "Albatross Two-Six is down. Repeat, Albatross Two-Six is out of action. All units, we are leaving this AO! Be advised we are evacuating the river. Fall back to rally points appearing on your HUDs now."

A moment later, a yellow triangle indicating a rally point has been established a kilometer to our rear appears on my avatar's CommandPad. The tanks rumble away dustily into the foothills behind Hamburger Hamlet, unbothered by the snipers. Across the river I can see WonderSoft grunts swarming into their slate-gray troop carriers. A missile streaks away from one of them, crosses the river, and smashes into a nearby barn, turning everything into sudden flying, flaming matchsticks. Casualty reports flood in from my platoon. I order my two heavy-machine-gun units to open fire on the WonderSoft transports as they approach the river crossing. Smoking tails of depleted uranium rounds streak low over the river at hypersonic speeds as plumes of water blossom in the shallows and on the far bank. My gunners are just finding their range as the first WonderSoft transports wallow in the muddy brown water.

On the hill above my position, WonderSoft Garage, the rattle of gunfire and brass has stopped. Kiwi's out of assault rifle ammo. The fight up there is over.

"Kiwi, what's your status?" I say over BattleChat as I retrieve my rifle kit.

"Not good, mate. Not good at all. It's a real knife and gun show up here."

"I can hold the Hamlet for a few more minutes if you can get out," I tell him.

"Negative. Perfect, not happening. It's too hot, hot, hot to leave." I hear the *pop pop pop* of his sidearm as he spits out the repeated word.

"Be advised." It's RangerSix again. I can tell he's pointing this message at me and me alone. "We are leaving this AO now, PerfectQuestion! Get your platoon moving and cover those tanks. Watch for antiarmor mixed in with snipers above your position."



“What about Kiwi?”

RangerSix says nothing.

---

“No worries here, mate,” Kiwi breaks in. “I’m havin’ a barbecue and I’ve invited all the WonderSerfs. Main course is a whole lotta thermite.” Seconds later, “See ya, Perfect.”

The entire jungle hilltop around WonderSoft Garage blossoms in rosy red, flaming destruction. The explosions billow and rise above the soft feathery jungle haze and the sleepy yellow-brown river. Several smaller, secondary explosions accompany the blast, indicating WonderSoft’s APCs, probably just arrived to establish control of the captured objective, have also been invited to Kiwi’s barbecue.

Kiwi loves his explosives.

“G’day, mate,” I whisper, watching the apocalyptic ending of ColaCorp’s hold on WonderSoft Garage. Then my squad is up and moving into the hills, low and slow, watching for snipers.

# Chapter 2

---

My grunts were getting chewed up the whole way back to the evac point. I lost twelve.” I’m telling Sancerré about my bad day.

“Oh, where did you lose them? Go to the last place you’d look. Whatever it is, it’s usually there, the last place you’d look.”

My girlfriend does not understand my job.

“You’re not listening,” I say.

“Yes, I am. You said you lost your little grunts.”

“Yes, I did say that, but you don’t know what I mean by grunts. If you did, you would know I cannot go back and ‘find them’ in the last place I would look for them. They’re dead. KIA.”

She pauses from packing her camera bag. I notice there’s a little black dress and heels inside.

“I understand. You don’t need to get testy with me; it’s not like I’m two years old,” she says as she snaps up some memory sticks from the floor. “They’re something to do with your game. Just go find them, or better yet, get some new ones.”

“First off, Sancerré, grunts are computer-controlled AI bots assigned to each player. They look like basic versions of our avatars. Like real modern combat troops. Once they get ‘killed’ they’re dead. They don’t respawn. Second off, it’s not a game. It was, when I was paying to play like all the other subscribers, but now I’m a professional and if you’d get your head out of your viewfinder, you would realize the ‘game’ I’m playing is paying the rent right now.”

“We don’t use viewfinders anymore; SoftEyes shows exactly how the shot might be composed.”

She’s a photographer.

“I understand that because what’s important to you is important to me,” I say. “But that doesn’t always seem to be the case in reverse.”

“Okay, okay, enough. Tell me about your bad day playing war. What happened to all your grunts?”

“They got killed. Happy?”

“People got killed?”

“No, my grunts got killed, and every grunt under my command is my responsibility and gets deducted from my total score, which gets deducted from the ColaCorp victory point total, which gets deducted from my weekly bonus.”

“You shouldn’t let that happen.” Her tone indicates she understands the seriousness of the loss. Or at least that we won’t be getting as much money as we need in next week’s paycheck. “Who killed all your grunts?”

“Listen, there are real players fighting me online . . . fighting my team, ColaCorp. Got that?” I feel a rant coming on. I feel an argument in the air. Like an afternoon storm coming straight at you.

“Yeah, duh! I wasn’t born yesterday,” she snaps.

And . . . I love her.

“Goon.”

“You’re a goon.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too.” She sighs and sits down next to me. “I’m sorry I haven’t been listening. It’s just that this is a really big spread for *Vanity*. And being an assistant for fashion’s greatest eye, in his very own opinion, is . . . very . . . let’s just say it has its problems.” She sighs again, and there is enough of it that I know the world is bigger than me and my problems. I know I’m not here just for me. That . . . I want to rescue her.

“I’m sorry,” I say. “I feel bad for just coming in here to vent. It was a bad day all across the board. We were fighting for advertising space at Madison Square Garden and Channel Two. It was kind of a big day.”

“Is that why they pay you? Because if you and your friends win your little games, then they get to own those places?”

“Well, they don’t get to own them, but they get the right to pay to advertise in them. Plus LiveNBA broadcasts the best parts of the action with lots of product placement.” It’s surprising to me that Sancerré, a trained commercial photographer, doesn’t understand advertising-gaming rights. But fashion seems to be its own little world. Hence the photo shoot last year in which she’d had to hide under a model dressed as an undead Marie Antoinette carrying a light saber as the dust children of Mogadishu ate red apples on a dirty street full of cheap PrismBoard advertising. I think it was an advertisement for jeans.

“I guess today was pretty important then,” she offers.

“Yeah, it was. But forget about it. How long do I get you for?”

“I’m afraid that’s it, soldier boy. I’ve got to be there early. Miss Thing threatened not to show up over shoes and they want me in just in case she actually makes good and doesn’t show.” She shouldered her bag and checks her makeup in the mirror one last time.

“Is she really that bad?”

“Worse. She actually will show. She will get what she wants and then she’ll play the martyr and everyone grovels for her forgiveness. It’s disgusting.”

“I guess I might just chill tonight,” I say with a stretch and a yawn. “I’m pretty wiped. If you’re back by midnight we can go watch the big PrismBoard at Madison Square Garden change over to WonderSoft.”

“I wouldn’t count on it. Mario made us clear our schedules. He wants to buy us all drinks at Burnished.”

“Do I need to worry? I mean, I know you love those things. I’m sorry I don’t have enough. I wish I had more. I’d spend it all on you . . . honest.” I would.

“I know you would. You don’t have to worry about those things. Everything will be okay. It won’t always be like this.”

But somehow I do worry, and I imagine it being much worse.

Later after she’s gone, I bring up my compilations. I’m feeling very ’Nam. I mix a scotch and

SevenPlus, ColaCorp's new not-cola and light a smoke just as this great remix from the 2030s "White Rabbit" by the band that first did it comes on. Outside, the late winter sun drops below the horizon. New York locked in winter is even more depressing than getting pwned by WonderSoft. I want jungles and golden sunsets. I want a hot yellow sky and murky haze and gurgling brown rivers. I light some incense, crank up the humidity control, put on an army surplus T-shirt and 'Nam out.

I settle into the warm glow of the scotch, dragging absently at my smoke. I think about WonderSoft, Garage and Kiwi. He's near the end of a bad streak of getting killed. ColaCorp doesn't like that kind of thing, and it's only a matter of time until he gets reduced from professional status back to overqualified amateur. He needs a win. In truth, the whole team needs a win. We all do.

WonderSoft had come into its own in the past six months of online warfare, dominating most of the battlefields for advertising supremacy. Eastern Highlands was my first campaign as a pro player, an officer and already we'd lost some major advertising venues in and around New York. Losing everything to WonderSoft is probably going to get me booted back to freelance, which will cut down on any future campaign actions. Worrying about Kiwi only reminds me that his situation is only slightly worse than mine, and everybody else's at ColaCorp for that matter.

My 'Nam set gets psychedelic, cascading over remixed hits almost a century old. I mix another drink and log in to the bunker, the gathering place for ColaCorp professionals after battles. Senior commanders generally don't drop by after a loss, but after a win they come in and hand out bonuses and slap our backs over the feeds. Today's beating at Eastern Highlands and the loss of Madison Square Garden and Channel Two ensured we wouldn't be seeing them tonight.

It sucks to lose.

Kiwi's avatar, large and hulking, shirt off and showing curling tribal tats, leans against the bar talking to JollyBoy, an intel specialist, and Fever, a great medic who's managed to revive me on the battlefield more than a few times, including one time I swore I was really down for the count. I double-click them and bring up all three of their feeds. Kiwi looks even more frightening in real life than his avatar. Huge, hulking, tattoo overdose, a leering lecherous grin, almost drooling into the monitor. His eyes are the only feature that tell you he's a friend and not foe. His eyes say, *I'm kidding, you can trust me, mate.*

"Perfect, Perfect, PerfectQuestion. Did ya make it back to the rally, mate?" he asks me.

"Cheers, Kiwi. It was touch and go, lost a lot of grunts. But, yeah, we got picked up at the right paddies just as WonderSoft started dropping their artillery all over us."

"We lost three slicks at the LZ," JollyBoy announces happily. The joker he is never fades, even when he's delivering the worst of news. Losing three Albatrosses made me glad I was on one of the slicks that got out of there. What a cheap way to get it. It's one thing to be out there fighting, making a bad choice, getting caught in the cross fire, whatever, and losing your day's winnings and bonuses. But catching a slick and feeling safe as you hear the turbines spool up and thinking you've just escaped one bad day of gaming and that you're gonna get paid and make it to the next fight only to have it explode a moment later—well, that's another thing. A bad thing.

"Any players?" asks Fever. Fever cares little about the fighting. I don't think I've ever even seen him running around with his weapon out. He only carries his med packs, boosts, and revival pads. He cares more about us than the battles.

“Yeah,” JollyBoy says with a smirk. “ShogunSmile and WarChild . . .”

“These laughin’ newboys with their haiku tags. Serves ’em . . .” Kiwi’s drunk, but just drunk enough to catch himself at the beginning of a lecture on tag choice. His discipline isn’t long for the world.

“What’re you listening to, PerfectQuestion?” asks Fever, catching the music in my background.

“Lemme see . . . ‘Vietnam’ by this reggae guy, Jimmy Cliff.”

“Sounds good. . . . feed me.”

“Me too,” says Kiwi. I patch them into my music, inviting JollyBoy also.

“No thanks, PerfectQuestioney. The Harlequin likes his industrial trance calliope mixes.”

JollyBoy is weird.

We play music for a while and watch funny clips from the day’s battle, usually something we or our grunts did that was dumb. We talk about what went wrong and what we should have done, all the while each choosing a song, not realizing we’re saying something about ourselves, the day, and maybe life. Finally Kiwi plays “Waltzing Matilda,” mumbles something about the long ride to the Wonk Boomerang and logs off without further good-byes. JollyBoy has long since faded into other conversations. Fever smiles and says, “Keep your head down, Perfect,” and is gone. I scan the cantina for RiotGuurl.

Why?

Because it was her first battle as a professional. That entitles her entrance into the bunker. I tell me empty apartment it wasn’t her fault that we lost and put on “Black Metallic” by Catherine Wheel. Another drink and I force myself to think about Sancerré and a relationship that’s coming apart at the seams. But my guitar-driven thoughts keep returning to RiotGuurl.

Who is she?

Where is she?

And why do I care?

# Chapter 3

---

At twenty to midnight I wake, still sitting, still holding the remnants of a watery glass of amber scotch on my stomach.

This is my life. Digital death, destruction, and some computerized mayhem by day, long lonely nights with too much scotch and too little of the woman I loved.

Love? Loved?

Love.

Too much of some, and too little of something else.

“Do I love what I do?” I ask myself as I throw on my trench, a vintage leather piece purchased as a reward after promotion to professional, and hit the streets for the short walk to Madison Square Garden. I guess I do, otherwise why else be out on a dark winter night, dirty green glowing from clinging to the sidewalks, just to see the fruits of my defeat?

Just before midnight, across the street from where I stand in the shadows, the giant PrismBoard goes dark. It had been showing a blond construction worker slaving away in a hot suit setting up a thousand reflector assemblies. Slowly, dawn’s first rays hit the fragile plantlike assemblies, which then burst into life like so many exploding crystals. Around the construction worker, Mars begins to turn green as plants grow, cities rise, and the construction worker begins to age into a handsome silver fox. His hot suit is suddenly gone and now his tanned skin shows through a brilliant white cotton shirt and khaki trousers as an equally beautiful little girl, presumably his granddaughter, grasps his hand and holds up a cola. He smiles and drinks. Then the ColaCorp logo emerges.

The ColaCorp ad runs two or three more times while I wait and then, at just the moment the Martian colonist begins to age for the fourth time, the PrismBoard goes dark. Now, only the blue lights of the tall towers that disappear into the cloud cover below Upper New York remain. Upper New York blocks out the night sky. Strange, eerie lights move back and forth up there, above the cloud bottoms. The dark feels more sinister as those faraway lights provide the only illumination down here in the dark remains of a mostly forgotten old New York.

I feel that preconcert moment before the main act comes on. When it’s dark and you feel like something important is about to happen. Or at least you did, when you were young and a band seemed like it might be something more than it was.

The WonderSoft logo appears on the PrismBoard as French horns, mournful, tiresome, noble nonetheless, begin to serenade the nearby streets with the coming of WonderSoft’s endless barrage of SoftLife products. In front of me, in the middle of the street, a bum in silhouette passes by while techno-Gregorian chants promise both of us hope in a bubble.

What does that bum want from life? Glory days remembered, youth retained, a friend long gone never returning, suddenly appearing. WonderSoft wants him to have the latest SoftEye. He passes on.

oblivious to the expensive marketing of WonderSoft's next gen product, my defeat, their victory.

"Two sides of the same coin," says a voice from the shadows behind me. I turn and see a tall and very thin man. Shadows abound all around us as the light from the PrismBoard shifts, and for a moment all I can see is a long coat, a wide flat hat, and a SoftEye gently pulsing purple in the left eye of the stranger. Then I can see all the images of WonderSoft's ad playing out across him and the light turned-bone-white alley he stands in.

"I say, two sides of the same coin, isn't it?" he repeats. His voice reminds me of some English actor from one of the period piece dramas Sancerré watches only for the outfits, or so I suspect. Like a violin playing Mozart. With malice.

"I don't follow . . .," I mumble.

"One's defeat, another's victory. Your loss, someone's gain." Now WonderSoft's Voice of the Ages begins to sell product above and behind me on the giant shining PrismBoard.

"SOFTLIFE, IT'S NOT JUST A DREAM ANYMORE . . ."

"Who cares, though? We were tired of the old, give us the new," continues the thin man from the shifting shadows. "A new liberator has come to save us from the shackles of ColaCorp, or U-Home, or UberVodka, or TarMart, or, yes, even someday, WonderSoft." Golden light erupts across the street as the PrismBoard gyrates wildly to the exciting new life WonderSoft promises. From the shadows the thin man steps forward and I can see him clearly now as the light display floods his face with a thousand sudden images.

"DREAMS, LIFE, LOVE, SEX, FRIENDS, FAMILY, POWER, SOFTLIFE OFFERS ALL THIS AND . . .," intones WonderSoft's Voice of the Ages.

"Death to the tyrant, hail the new Caesar!" shouts the thin man above it all and throws his long arms sickeningly wide. In the golden light of the PrismBoard I see that he is not so much a thin man but more a bony man. A man whose skin is so tightly stretched, it shows all the bones in his face.

A man made of bones.

"Faustus Mercator, commenter on things past, things to come, and . . ." He laughs. "All things in general, really. Butcher, baker, and of late, kingmaker. At your service." He removes his hat—doffing it, I think they used to say in old bound books—and makes a slight bow, never once taking his SoftEye off me. The skin of his skull is dry and tight and, as I said, bony. Every ridge, protrusion, and scar is seen beneath the shaved, dark stubble of his bulbous head.

A character. Out here on a night like this. I wonder if he's just a fan, or even a reporter blogging on the changing of the marquee. I've started getting a lot of e-mail for PerfectQuestion, and not all of it can be classified as fan mail. Many times there's an undercurrent of disgust, rage, or sometimes something worse. For a moment I stare at him contemplating what he's capable of. Hoping for the best, I shudder and wrap the trench tighter around my body. I don't have much body fat or warmth to spare. Borderline poverty does that to you. I smile, nicelike, testing him. His response will let me know if I should fight . . . or flee. His agile build and height, three inches above my six feet makes a good argument for flight. He smiles back, immediately, beamingly.

"Picking up your check tomorrow, I s'pose?" he asks, drawing out the last word.

He knows I'm a professional. Maybe the only people down here at this time of night are the winners and the losers. Since I know who the losers are when I look in the mirror, that must make him

one of the winners.

WonderSoft. But which one? BangDead, Unhappy Camper, OneShot, CaptainCarnage, maybe even Enigmatrix. WonderSoft had been recruiting the best for much of the past year. Their national battlefield advertising wins reflected as much.

“SOFTLIFE, A NEW WAY, A NEW HOPE, A NEW TOMORROW . . .”

“No bonuses I’m afraid, though.” He continues on, his smile a sudden row of large white headstones erupting between thin lips. “At least not with . . . your present company.”

“Do I know you?” I ask.

I’m not a fighter. I don’t mistake my online capacity for rapacious violence with my real-life code of nonviolence, which isn’t so much a code but more of an excuse for not being the toughest guy in the world and all the problems that comes with. I don’t make that mistake.

“I know a lot of things, PerfectQuestion. A lot of things.” He also knows my online tag. Great, what else does he know?

“Monday morning, after tonight’s match, you’ll show up at Forty-Seventh and Broadway, ColaCorp’s once proud headquarters,” Bony Man continues. “And you’ll be shown to the seventh-floor, fourth-floor meeting room. Checks will be handed out, and poor old RangerSix will discuss what we’re wrong and how things might get better. In the end you’ll leave and prepare for Tuesday night’s big match in the Eastern Highlands. Forget Sunday night, later today, tonight in fact now that yesterday is dead and buried. Sunday night’s just small change, just a bunch of brushfire skirmishes to be stamped out. Tuesday’s the real big game. We all know that, PerfectQuestion. Big things are afoot, heavy lifters moving in, all kinds of nasty tanks and antipersonnel platforms. Should be a real—what do your pal Kiwi call it?—a real ‘knife and gun show,’ I believe. But while you’re sitting there, PerfectQuestion, listening to all those really nifty big plans of RangerSix’s, and when you leave this ever so small, I mean tall, building, ask yourself . . .”

Big pause. He beams, holding his breath. Like the suspense is supposed to kill me.

“Are you happy, PerfectQuestion?”

“What?”

“Are . . . you . . . happy, PerfectQuestion? You know, a feeling of joy, optimism, ecstatic belief. Are you happy?”

“All right, I’ll ask myself if I’m happy, OneShot, or Unhappy Camper, or Enigmatrix, or whatever your name is. And if I’m not, what’s it to you?”

“Tsk tsk and pshaw,” says Bony Man.

Someone read a little too much Dickens.

“I’m no such animal, PerfectQuestion. You’re the killer, online. You would know those worthies if you met them in real life. They’re killers, like you, online of course. Not me. I haven’t the skills for such pursuits. I have only the highest respect for people like yourself who can keep track of so much all the while pointing and shooting, managing the little lifelike dolls you call grunts, dodging the bullets of the enemy, once again, online of course. No, my fingers get all crossed up and, to be honest, they’ve got minds of their own. You wouldn’t believe the things they’ve done, the trouble they’ve gotten me into.” He held up one long spiderlike hand in front of his face. Images from the PrismBoard slither across its length.



“My brain gets so discombobulated with all that hectic killing, online. No, no, I’m made for other pursuits. I have talents better used in the real world. But as for you, young PerfectQuestion, you young golden boy, you young Pericles, this is your day, your battle, and you would easily defeat an amateur like me, online of course. I even wonder how much of a challenge Enigmatrix herself would actually be for you. You’re quite a killer, online of course.” Again he smiles, leaning in at me. I clutch the sawed-off broomstick I always carry in the deep right pocket of my trench. It isn’t much, but it just might have to do.

“Which brings me to my original command, or request, if you prefer. Ask yourself, tomorrow on the seventy-fourth floor: Am I, PerfectQuestion, happy?” His polished patent leather shoes grind roughly on the pavement as he spins away from me, turning to leave. It makes me think of storerooms being opened. He’s leaving now, still talking talk and leaving.

“Ask yourself, PerfectQuestion,” he throws over his shoulder, “are there meeting rooms higher than the seventy-fourth? Who’s getting the bonuses? Where is Sancerré? Where will she be tonight? And don’t forget to ask yourself the most important question”—he turns at the edge of the shadows deep in the alley, almost enveloped, almost swallowed whole by the darkness that brought him—“Am I happy?” Then he’s gone.

“SOFTLIFE STARTS TODAY, INSIDE YOU.”

# Chapter 4

---

The Sunday Night Game starts and I'm tasked with clearing out a small village of WonderSoft insurgents as the battle lines attempt to coalesce. The insurgents are players who've volunteered, but paying their monthly WarWorld Live subscription, to fight for WonderSoft. The insurgents crossed the Song Hua River downstream and have been ambushing ColaCorp units using a small village up in the jungle highlands as a base.

I haven't lost any troops because I like to play it safe, and all my grunts are fairly leveled up. They don't make many of the mistakes the basic AI-controlled grunts often do. So we take the village and neutralize five insurgents. I check my bonus pay on all five as soon as WhippySFX, the last WonderSoft insurgent, goes down in a hail of gunfire near the village's central raised hut. At twenty per, I make a cool hundred. Not everything I need, but every bit helps.

"PerfectQuestion, this is Six; what's your status?" I switch from my CommandPad to BattleChat and reply.

"We're finished here, whaddya got for us next?"

There's a pause. I wonder if the connection's dropped, or if we're even being jammed by WonderSoft's electronic warfare units. Then, "PerfectQuestion," says RangerSix in his signature matter-of-fact drawl, "I need you to order your unit to link up with ShogunSmile four clicks west of your position. Give him command authority . . ."

I've been fired.

Then, "I need you to log in to OpsDeck for a briefing, Question. We've had a superlab opportunity open up for us, and I need you to take command of the operation. I'm countin' on you, son. Get this done quick and clean."

Not fired.

I order my unit to pack up and move out to ShogunSmile's AO. Three minutes later I'm in the OpsDeck screen and going through the briefing on the superlab.

"Scouts have discovered a hidden complex up-country in the mountains near the city of Song Hua," begins the briefing program avatar, a military admin type. The high-res photos show a small complex nestled beneath a mountain that's more a giant oblong piece of rock erupting from the jungle than anything else. Stunted trees cling to one of its misty sides. The other side is a sheer rock face above the complex.

"Satellite imagery," continues the briefing, "indicates the complex is a laboratory-class facility where dangerous and illegal superscience research has recently been conducted."

WonderSoft will want this, but ColaCorp needs this. Whatever it is. These labs can provide bona-fide game-changing tech. No doubt WonderSoft will go for it, even if it's just to deny us the asset.

The briefing camera, mounted on a recon drone, overflies the facility revealing a night-vision look

at what we're going into. It's an open perimeter and a jumble of squat buildings in two adjacent locations. One location has the distinct look of a dropship landing pad, but slightly different from anything I've seen before. The other looks too industrial to be anything but a lab. There's a construction crane on the far side of the lab complex. The complex is mostly composed of octagonal interconnected modules that lead to a main multistoried building. The briefing asks me to choose which type of unit I'll request to take into the superlab.

I tell it to give me the light infantry template.

The briefing hesitates, then takes me to the unit loadout screen. I try to activate my personal unit from Delta Company, but it won't let me. "All main force ColaCorp units engaged at this time," it tells me in its calm, computer voice. The only option available is to pull unknown players from the ColaCorp Special Forces reserve unit.

Great. I have to use amateurs. I stare at the facility map again. There'll be three maps. There's always three maps. I'm probably looking at the first one. So what's the game?

Death match? Domination? Infection?

I check the ColaCorp Special Forces reserve roster. Currently there are over a hundred thousand plus ColaCorp fan-players waiting, worldwide, to join the network televised fight.

"Isolate veteran-status players and above."

"Done," replies the briefing avatar.

"Isolate light infantry skill sets."

"Done."

I want to tell the avatar to remove the ones with poor social skills and negative sportsmanship reviews, but sometimes those ratings are just the results of complaints filed by sore losers. Sometimes being good at online combat doesn't necessarily make you great at being human.

"Isolate kill counts ten thousand and above." Sure it's WarWorld Live kills, the home game played on console with other amateurs, but ten thousand kills means they're serious about the game and they've got some skills. That's when I started getting noticed by professional teams.

"What's my pool?" I ask.

"47,754 players meet your requirements," replies the avatar.

"Isolate on-target percentage. Above 50 percent."

I don't even ask how many that leaves. I just want shooters now. "All right, fill all five squads from those requirements."

A moment later the avatar sends invites to all players fitting my requirements. The first fifty to respond and log in to the OpsDeck are going in-game during prime time with me to take the superlab.

Within seconds the rosters are full.

"Please choose tactical insertion method," the avatar tells me.

I check the map again.

I check my options. I've only got one. Dropship. In the map, I set the spinning holograph of the L marker down on the landing pad. There are three back-blast fences that surround the site. We can use those for cover before going into the main complex.

WonderSoft, on the other hand, can go in any number of ways. They've always got options because they've always got money.

Next I choose my weapons. I select my standard loadout for close-quarter matches like this. I take a gray and graphite black-striped Colt M4X assault rifle with extended banana clips and holographic tactical sights. Three dots, predator style. For my sidearm I take a nickel-plated long-barrel .45 loaded with hollow points. I also take five grenades: three flash-bangs, two smoke. I take my personal avatar skin, which is okayed by ColaCorp for tactical instance maps like this. ColaCorp jungle-pattern camo cargo pants and green tank top T-shirt. Jungle boots. Shaved head and a camo pattern I call SnakeFace. My guy even has stubble. Like me. Except the avatar skin is based on some action hero from the last century. Guy named Schwarzenegger. I'm big on last-century stuff. Things were better then.

"Going live in fifteen seconds . . . ," says the briefing avatar as it begins the countdown to tactical map insertion.

I switch to BattleChat. Before saying anything, I bring up the unit roster. Most of the player IDs have been set to the default position by the network. Can't be showing all kinds of disgusting images to the entire world. I check the names. They are the usual assortment of half-thought-through misspelled crud that marks amateurs. Some outright obscene name choices, almost half, have been changed by the network to "Player" then a random number.

That'll teach 'em to take this seriously. It's their one shot at going online to fight in front of the whole world and no one will ever know who they are because the network changed their tag and used a placeholder name instead.

On-screen I see the red-lit interior of the dropship Albatross. I pan right and look out through the cockpit canopy. We're cutting through a thick miasma of dark blue and black clouds. Rain assaults the windshield. I try to get a look at the facility from the air, but all I catch are tiny twinkling lights and shadowy buildings.

Moments later we're down on the landing pad and rushing from the Albatross. Players head away from the dropship and go prone in a circular perimeter.

So far so good, and I didn't even need to tell them to do that.

The dropship's engines spool up and the craft lifts off and away from us, cutting its lights and retracting its landing gears as it disappears into the rain and clouds above.

*King of the Hill* appears across my screen.

I hate this type of match. Means we've got to secure the access point to the next map and hold it for three minutes. A King of the Hill match always turns into a shooting gallery for the side that doesn't want to hold the access point.

"Listen up," I say over BattleChat. "Name's PerfectQuestion and this is the op . . ."

Meanwhile I'm selecting the streak rewards I'll receive after each kill plateau.

"We've got to secure the entrance into this lab. That's Map One. WonderSoft will try and do the same thing. Your first job, always, is to kill WonderSoft. Next, identify the entrance to the lab. Last, we'll hold that entrance for three minutes. This is a movement to contact for now, squad tactics. I hope you took weapons you can run and gun with, 'cause we ain't fightin' no defense. Okay?" No one replies. "All right, now's your chance to show ColaCorp something."

In the dim blue light of the storm, a wild collection of jungle combat warriors rises from the tall grass near the LZ. I use my CommandPad to organize five squads of ten. Sure, we're all wearing the same faded ColaCorp jungle green so that we look like a team and are only slightly different than

WonderSoft's standard digital gray jungle-camo pattern, but the similarity ends there. Some avatars have shaved heads. Some are wearing boonie hats. One guy even has a K-pot from World War Two. It's all stuff they've either bought through WarWorld's online store or earned as achievements. I couldn't care less how they look. I'm just hoping they've leveled up their weapons. I'd hate to be going into this with someone using the basic unmodded AK-2000 you start WarWorld Live with. But I quickly notice many of the weapons are skinned with high-tech paint jobs and scoped with state-of-the-art targeting systems. That bodes well for impending current events.

The network feed goes hot. Right now the game director is cutting in to watch the action. The superlab objective is critical, but not to today's battle. That's happening, win or lose, somewhere else. But the tech the lab might yield could be a game changer later, if ColaCorp pays to develop it, in the strategic outcome of the ColaCorp campaign against WonderSoft for Eastern Highlands. But we have to get it first.

I break the first three squads off into a group and form a wedge. The other two squads I put in reserve behind the main body and order them not to move until I tell them where the action is. With First Squad on the left flank, Second leading the tip of the wedge, and Third Squad on the right, we move out from the LZ, heading through the wet mud and dark for the dimly outlined facility. Low hanging mist shrouds the tops of the high mountains. Over ambient I hear nothing but the slap of rain as it sluices down from the tops of buildings and into the muddy streets below.

"Move forward," I say over BattleChat. "Watch for targets; call 'em as you get 'em."

"Lock and load, rock and roll!" screams some hillbilly named SonnyJim over the chat. Another player, LilStreet, opens up his feed. Hard-core drum and bass rap starts pouring out across BattleChat. The first spoken lines are about murdering hoes who cheat and being pushed down by white "so-sig-et-tee" while someone chants "Monee- Monee- Monee" over and over. I cut his feed.

It's so far so good as we move beyond the back-blast fences and onto the main street of the complex. The pouring rain begins to let up as a small breeze shifts the grass and some hanging industrial heavy tow chains nearby. They creak and jingle while our boots suck at the wet mud. It's only a matter of time before we engage WonderSoft and then all bets are off on whether I can keep everyone under control long enough to find and hold the access point.

"Hey, Question?" says a player tagged AwesomeSauce15. A girl's voice. Sounds young. I can hear the bubblegum snap in the background of her mic. "Sign over here says this is a bioweapon research facility. Weyland-Yutani. Never heard of 'em."

Smart. She's looking for clues. That's the other half of this type of match: solve the puzzle. Most people think WarWorld's all about shooting at one another. It is. But smart players use everything they can learn about the map to then shoot each other.

"Noted," I whisper over the chat. "Tighten up, Third."

We move farther down the main street of the complex. There are a few abandoned construction vehicles on the street. Their wheels are sunk in the mud.

"No sign of any Softies," whispers Bronco24, point man for Second Squad. We pass the first two buildings guarding either side of the small muddy street leading up to the main hub of the complex.

That's when it goes down.

"Comin' in from above," says AwesomeSauce15 as she cuts loose with three short bursts from her

HK Mini submachine gun. I check the sky and see nothing but cloud cover, then, drifting down through the mist, I see WonderSoft troops with night-gray parachutes blossoming above their avatars. They must have had the *Base Jump* option and gone off the top of the rock that overlooks this place. Bullets begin to strike at the wet mud all around us.

“First Squad, take that alley on the left. Third, go to the right. Secure both ends of the alley and set up a base of fire. Second, on me!”

I actually hear someone say, “What squad am I in?” But it’s too late for that.

“Squads Four and Five, hold the entrance to the landing pad. Stand by, I’ll advise you shortly of where to concentrate your fire.”

I go wide right behind the building. I check my CommandPad as we hustle into the dim wet alley. I’ve already lost two out of Second. The kid playing hard-core gangsta rap got it first. Probably for the best.

The firefight begins in earnest as WonderSoft gets onto most of the roof of the main complex. It’s not the worst scenario. I can handle that as long as we control the ground. Sometimes coming in the boring old way, out of a dropship and then in on foot, is the best way. I can control my troops and keep the unit cohesive for a time before it gets all “tag with guns.” WonderSoft’s arrival had some surprising value in it, but they didn’t get much out of it. Now they’re strung out all over the rooftops. We, on the other hand are still together, which allows us to work together.

“Who’s got sniper rifles?” I say over the chat.

Bucklebee and IrishRogue tell me they’re each carrying. “Good,” I say. “Fall back and circle wide through the jungle. Get up on to that construction crane at the far end of the facility and get us some cover fire going. Anyone with a heavy, watch the road ahead.”

I scan the other side of the street and see Third Squad already moving into the other buildings and engaging targets.

So they’re useless to me.

“First and Second, bound up the left side of the street and try to sweep this end of the complex. Watch the rooftops. Second Squad, moving now. Follow me.”

I push out into the muddy alleyway running alongside the main street. I take a couple of shots at a WonderSoft grunt on a nearby platform and hit him in the legs. He goes forward off the roof and falls into the mud farther down the street with a wet splat. Most of Second has followed me, and when someone uses a couple of grenades on a nearby roof, I check the dead WonderSoft player in the mud and realize we’re facing a Special Teams unit. The guy’s wearing a grinning skeleton motorcycle mask over his avatar’s face. WonderSoft must’ve spent some dough to get this unit involved in the fight, which sucks because it means, yes, they’re amateurs, but they’ve also trained together.

“Question,” says AwesomeSauce over BattleChat, “I can see a couple of guys from Third on the other side of the road. They’re about even with us.”

So maybe they are useful, jury’s still out.

The gunfire from both sides is deafening.

Ahead, there’s a small street and then what looks to be some kind of garage or hangar across the way. I check the CommandPad and see that Third Squad is down to half strength.

“Okay, First,” I call out over BattleChat. “Poppin’ smoke. Get ready to move up the street. We’re

cover you from here.” I scroll my mouse and right-click a smoke grenade. I toss it out into the main street to cover First’s movement. WonderSoft begins to fire into the thick, erupting smoke. Everyone with me begins to unload on the rooftops.

I get a head shot on one.

Now I have two. I need one more for my first streak reward.

“AwesomeSauce,” I call out over the chat. “Check that garage across the road and tell me if it’s clear.”

I watch as her avatar, a lithe, young, impossibly perfect-figured female soldier wearing standard issue fatigues, oversize boots, and a cocked jungle hat with a black feather in it dashes across the road and into the hangar. A second later I hear the tight *braaap* of her lethal HK Mini.

“Clear now,” she says breathlessly over the chat.

“Good work. Get ready to move into that hangar, Second, as soon as First says they’re in position.”

I check the CommandPad and see Third’s now completely decimated. I’ve lost two with Second Squad, and First hasn’t lost anyone.

“Four and Five, stand by to move up,” I say over the chat.

“Covering,” screams someone from First. Then, “Suppressive fire on that two-story at our one o’clock.” Someone’s got leadership skills. I make a mental note to watch the replay and find out who took charge of First.

“Move, Second, into the hangar!”

The gunfire from First is cacophonous, but we still lose a guy, Player9000177, as we cross the street firing and race for the low dark mouth of the hangar entrance. Once we’re inside, I tell what’s left of Second to watch the exits.

I bring up my CommandPad, watching as my avatar exchanges the smoking M4X for the battered CommandPad with the nicked and camouflaged edges. Game designers like to make things look frontline authentic. The satellite feed shows me where my squads are and any known WonderSoft positions that have recently fired weapons or been observed by any of my troops. WonderSoft appears strung out across the complex. We’re concentrated in three areas—First on the street, Second with me in the hangar, and the rest back at the LZ. Good. Now it’s time to find the “hill” and try to be king of it for at least three minutes.

Even though WonderSoft is firing on the hangar, I’m able to stand back and use my tactical monocular to scan parts of the complex. If I happen to land on the King of the Hill entrance, I should get an intel analysis timer. But it doesn’t happen.

I need my first streak reward.

*Baaanngg!* Suddenly my screen turns a blinding white as ambient sound dissolves in a high-pitched whine.

Someone’s just flash-banged us.

My first thought is that WonderSoft is trying to take the hangar.

Seconds later my screen shows me shifting, distorted double images of my surroundings. Someone fires wildly as tracers blur across my vision. I hit Z and throw my avatar to the floor of the hangar watching my screen throw wild ghost images everywhere.

“Boycott TarMart because of their racist policies!” screams someone on my team. When my o

screen vision returns, I can see that the someone is SGTSmokeLoveWeed, and he's preparing to pop another flash-bang and blind us all. I set my three-pronged aiming reticle over his chest and ventilate him with a short burst from my M4X. His avatar's body sprays blood spatter across the wall of the hangar, ragdolling from each impact, jerking in time to some grotesquely hip dance. He's dead and out of the game before he even hits the wall.

Great!

Third Squad was useless to begin with, and now I get a bonus round of "let's take this very public opportunity to make a personal statement at the expense of my online job."

Don't people ever get tired of protesting? Not everything's a March on Selma moment.

AwesomeSauce is hit, but she's not dead.

"What're we gonna do, Question?" she asks me over the chat.

*Yeah, I ask myself. What are we gonna do?*

One of Second Squad took a *Medic* perk and he's throwing out medical packs emblazoned with the red-and-white ColaCorp logo. In the dim little hangar, AwesomeSauce's health starts to return.

Surprise, surprise, terminating SGT-whatever has rewarded me with the kill I need to start my first streak reward. The refs were on that one. Good call.

Now I have access to extra equipment, supplies, air strikes, and a whole host of options depending on which streaks I've selected to unlock each time I reach a kill tier.

I activate my first streak. A moment later the gritty voice of the unseen game announcer calls out "*Drone Recon, inbound.*"

I scan the overcast skies and see the shadowy outline of the spindly recon drone circling the complex. I check my CommandPad.

*Recon Drone Intel package available.*

I click on it.

Two reports.

I can see everyone on the battlefield. WonderSoft is concentrated around a small area west of our position on the street. The main building separates us. They're moving toward it. The rest of the Softies are on the buildings all around us. I distribute the report to my squads, and seconds later I hear our two snipers begin to fire from the distant construction crane. I watch as a Softie blinks out of play on my CommandPad.

The other report reveals the entire tactical map, where the King of the Hill zones are and also other possible intel locations. I spot a King of the Hill zone at an entrance to the main building just ahead of us, a loading dock. But there's another entrance on the other side of the facility right where the smaller group of Softies is heading. Back near the landing pad there's another small secondary intel site, simply titled Sulaco Uplink.

I don't have time for that. We've either got to crack that King of the Hill zone at the end of the street or somehow stop WonderSoft from starting the clock on theirs.

"Listen up, Fourth . . . I need you to double-time it to the location I'm marking on your HUDs now. That's the King of the Hill zone WonderSoft's gonna try and use. I need you to stage here." I draw a red circle behind some smaller buildings near the WonderSoft door. "Fifth, I need you to move to that location and put some fire onto that target. Once you're in position, open up on 'em. Fourth, as soon



- [\*\*download online Religion and the Politics of Tolerance: How Christianity Builds Democracy\*\*](#)
- [read Jihad \(Stephen Coonts' Deep Black, Book 5\)](#)
- [The Garden of Last Days: A Novel online](#)
- [download online Bobbi Brown Makeup Manual: For Everyone from Beginner to Pro](#)
- [read online iPhone: The Missing Manual \(9th Edition\) pdf, azw \(kindle\), epub, doc, mobi](#)
  
- <http://deltaphenomics.nl/?library/Professional-C-.pdf>
- <http://redbuffalodesign.com/ebooks/Kerrang---UK---31-October-2015-.pdf>
- <http://unpluggedtv.com/lib/Haptic-Human-Computer-Interaction.pdf>
- <http://diy-chirol.com/lib/Llewellyn-s-Truth-About-Witchcraft--Truth-About-Series-.pdf>
- <http://honareavalmusic.com/?books/iPhone--The-Missing-Manual--9th-Edition-.pdf>