

serial experiments 12313



Serial Experiments Lain

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Serial Experiments Lain Ultimate Fan Guide

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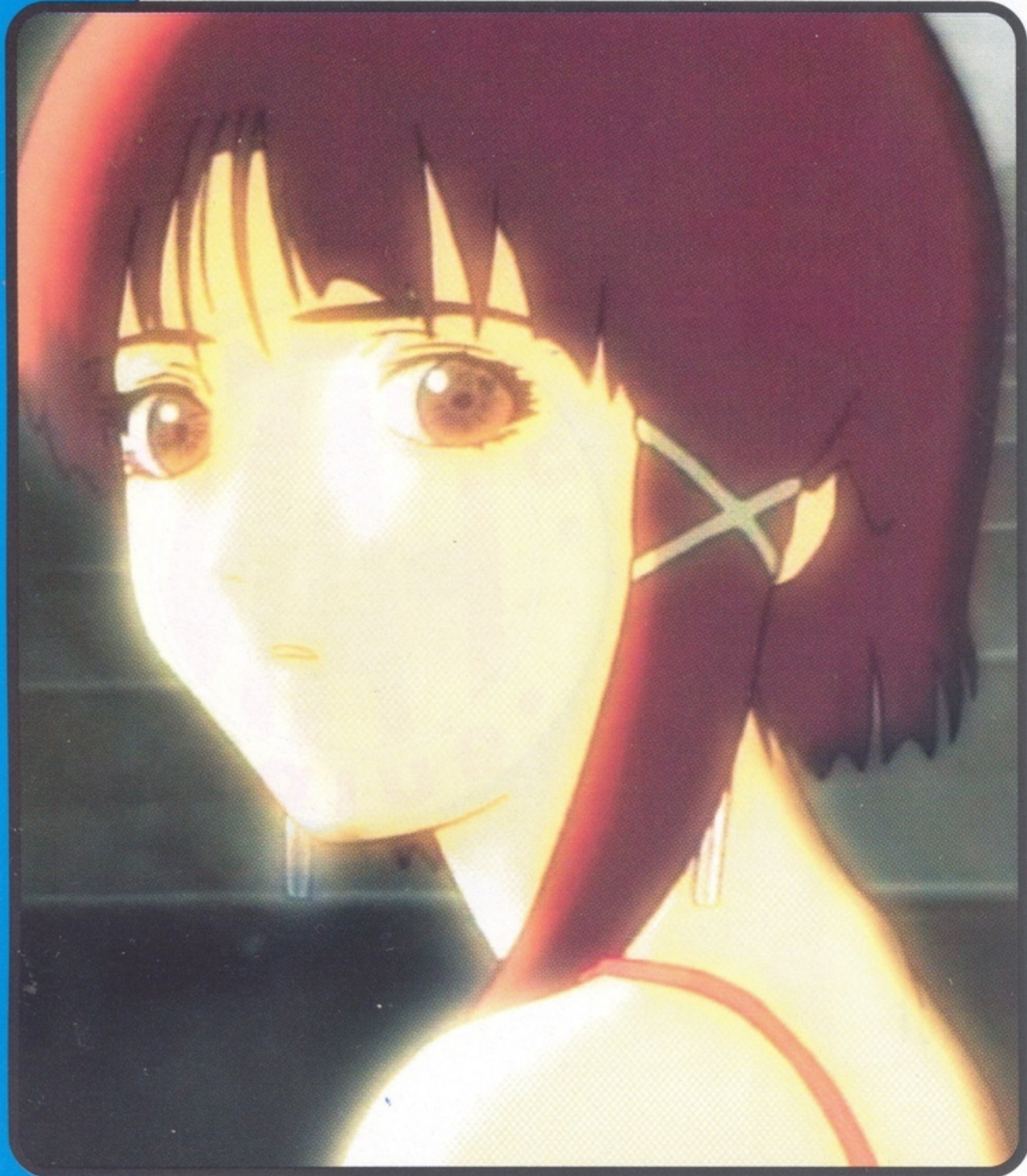
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Serial Experiments lain is a 13-episode television series created by Triangle Staff for Pioneer LDC. It aired in Japan in July, 1998, with subsequent release there on videotape, DVD, and laser disc; imports to the United States began in 1999. Ryutaro Nakamura directed the series, with character designs by Yoshitoshi ABe. The music is by Reiichi Nakaido.

Lain Iwakura thinks of herself as a typical Japanese schoolgirl, but she is not. In the course of the series she learns that everything about herself is an illusion when the walls between the physical world and the Wired, the realm of digital networks, collapse. In the end she must face her creator and struggle for the power to decide the world's destiny. The framework for all this is essentially science fiction, involving the growing power of computers and networking. The emotional impact of Lain's changing awareness and its consequences draw on fantasy and horror. There are no "secrets man was not meant to know," but there are truths that can and do overpower a mind not yet prepared for them. People who push beyond the bounds of their abilities can pay a very high price indeed for learning things meant for others to know first.

Lain is an allusive series. Much remains ambiguous, suggested, and evoked rather than spelled out in concrete terms. In the course of this guide, readers might notice many uses of phrases like "it seems" and "perhaps." Anything else would be unfaithful to the spirit of the show, in which the state of mind is more important than most particular details. Some key questions remain altogether unanswered; here the guide tries to present various options, but in the end the interpretation belongs to the reader to make and re-make. Where the series avoids definite answers, so does this guide.

The Secret World, Secret Self Subgenre

Lain belongs to a tradition found in both anime and print fiction, in which the protagonist discovers that little or nothing of reality is what it seems. The heroes must learn their true nature, which explains the true nature of the world or vice versa. The heroes' ignorance of their real basis inevitably turns out to be the result of someone else's machinations, and the schemers must be stopped before they can enslave the world forever.

The subgenre straddles the boundaries between science fiction, fantasy, and horror. The explanation is often essentially science fiction involving super-science, alien technology, or something of the sort. The effects are another matter. Some scenes in *Lain* are flat-out horror, dealing with the emotional ramifications of crumbling reality and the forcible intrusion of apparently impossible opposition. In other stories, the expansion of reality's apparent boundaries can produce flights of high fantasy and wonder. Scientific plausibility seldom matters significantly, with the technical issues only a stage on which to perform the drama of the impossible-made-manifest. At that, this series is unusually technically rigorous, with background history drawing on (among other things) the development of the protocols supporting the Internet. Such attention to detail is rare in the subgenre.

Religious motifs often play a prominent role in Secret Self, Secret World stories. They deal with crucial questions most religions try to address: Who made the world? What is our purpose? How will it all turn out? These stories often reveal there is at least some truth to traditional religious answers, even if there are also distortions and additions as well. The world does not just happen, it reflects an underlying creative power which, in some sense, intends well for its creations. Terrible things can happen, but at the right time virtue may yet prevail.





Duvel
And you don't seem to understand
A shame you seemed an honest man
And all the fears you hold so dear
Will turn to whisper in your ear
And you know what they say might hurt you
And you know that it means so much
And you don't even feel a thing

I am falling. I am fading. I have lost it all

And you don't seem the lying kind
A shame then I can read your mind
And all the things that I read there
Candlelit smile that we both share
And you know I don't mean to hurt you
But you know that it means so much
And you don't even feel a thing

I am falling. I am fading. I am drowning.

Help me to breathe

I am hurting. I have lost it all

I am losing

Help me to breathe

I am falling. I am fading. I am drowning.

Help me to breathe

I am hurting. I have lost it all

I am losing.

Help me to breathe

serial experiments lain

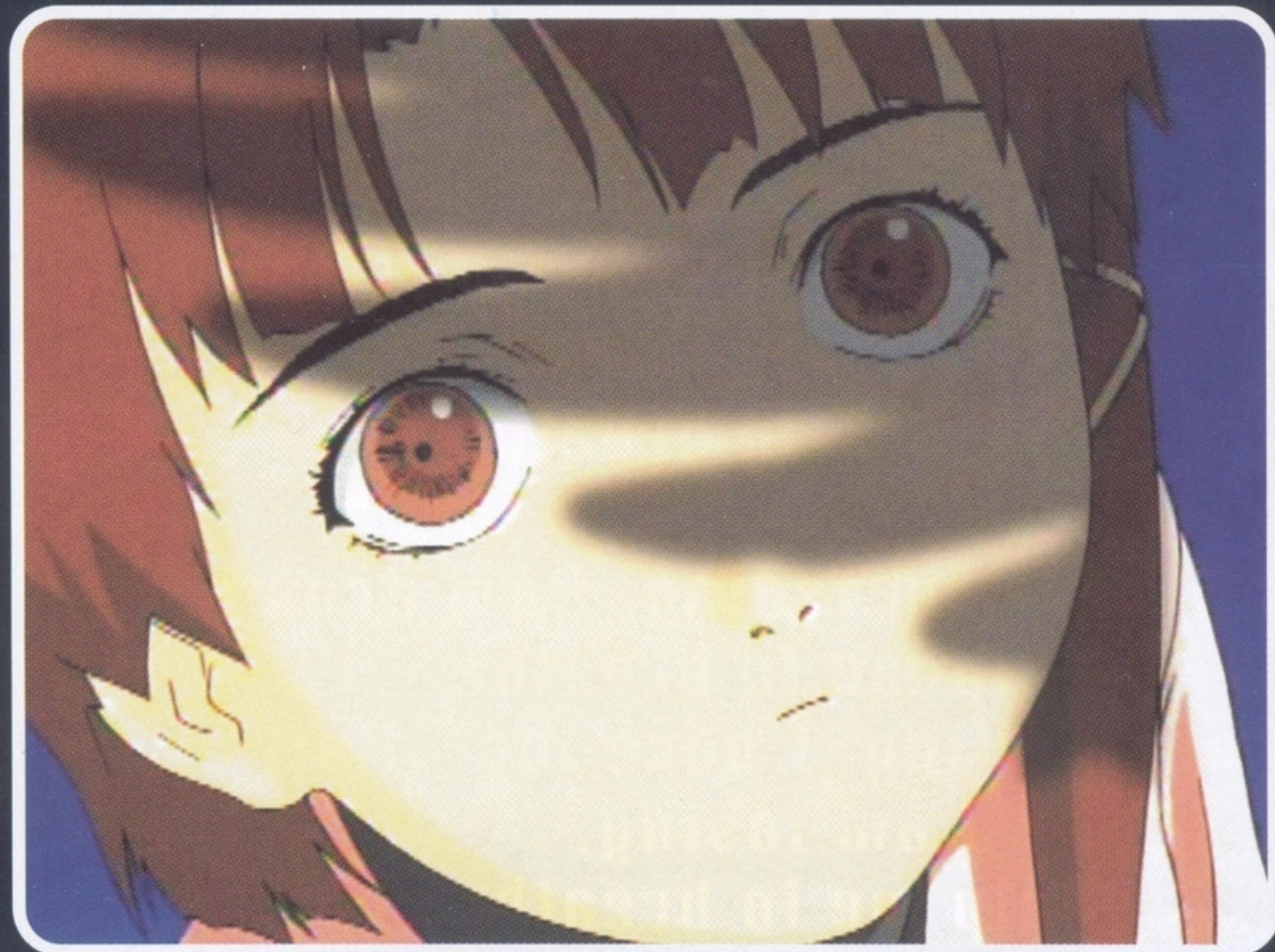
EPISODE SUMMARIES



Serial Experiments lain is full of scenes that are not entirely clear-cut. The show contains layers of allusion and implication, with images presented sans full explanation, foreshadowing left ambiguous, and extensive use of colour, point of view, and other artistic features to evoke characters' mental and emotional states. Many scenes include voice-overs, and it is not always possible to know who is speaking; some characters can and do imitate each other perfectly. During transitions, many viewpoints come and go without any serious effort at explaining them all.

The descriptions here aim to summarize what appears on screen, what the major characters say and do, and the crucial things that happen around them. The series cannot and does not aim to exhaust the full potential. It would take a book much larger than this one to identify, for instance, all the technical diagrams, handwritten notes, and other features presented in the background during the encyclopedia-like mini-lectures that explain parts of the show's world. Likewise, it is not always clear precisely what a character feels at a crucial moment, or what that character may intend by an ambiguous action. Tallying all the possibilities could take very long.

So this guide is understandably an overview, not the definitive word on every aspect of each episode. It clarifies some mysteries and points at the answers to others, but some enigmas remain for viewers to study and puzzle over on their own. In the course of the many viewings that went into preparing this guide, it became increasingly clear that sometimes looking for any single answer may be the wrong approach. Sometimes the answer is both "yes" and "no" and "all of the above," as suits a world of unexpected and unending potential. The repeated appearance in descriptions that follow words like "apparently" and "seemingly" reflects a fundamental truth of the series, which is that more than one truth often applies.





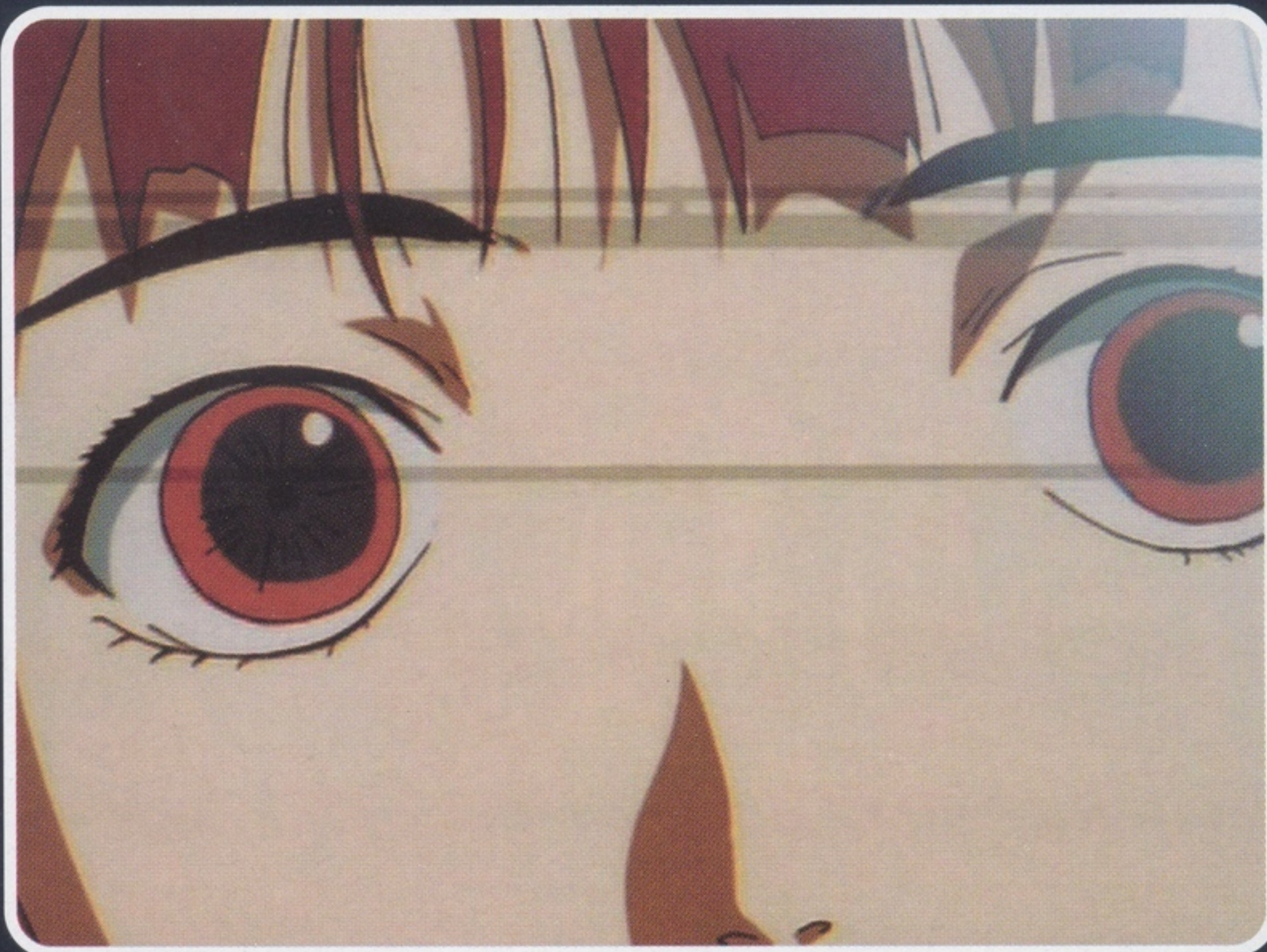
Layer 01: Weird opens with a series of nighttime shots of Tokyo, a sequence that appears again and again throughout the series as a backdrop for voice-over commentary. A girl asks in voice-over "Why won't you come?" and pleads with an as-yet-unidentified target to join her.



Shots of couples and groups enjoying the nightlife alternate with the movements of a tired, unhappy girl. Against a silent background of



kaleidoscopic pastel color swirls, letters ripple into focus and fade again, continuing the initial voice-over



serial experiments lain

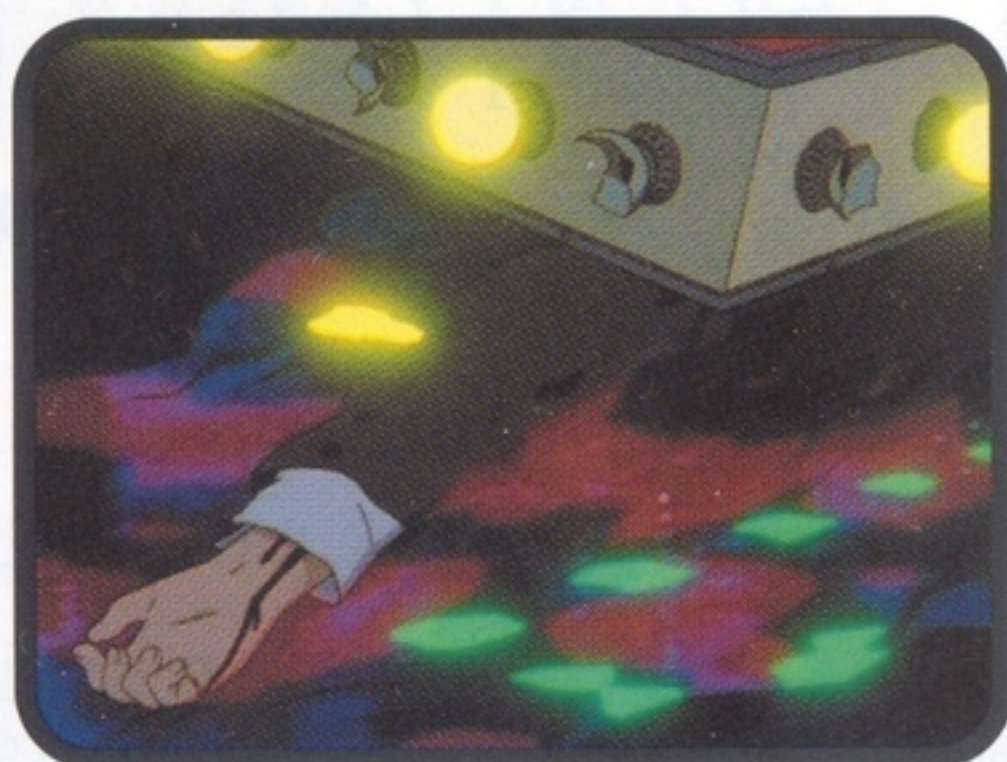
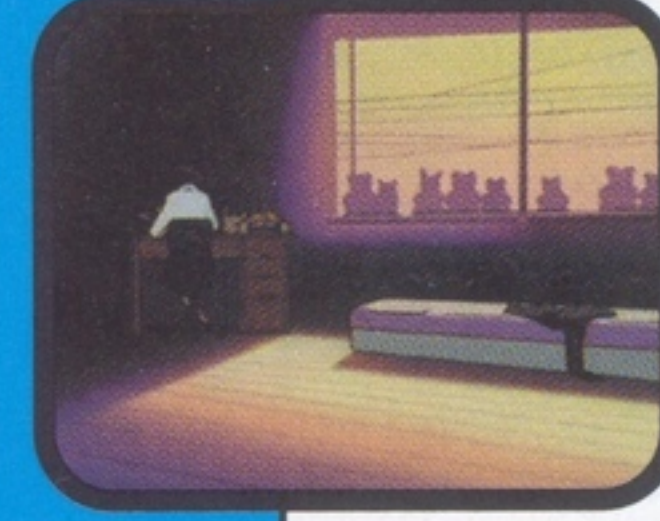
EPISODE SUMMARY LAYER: 01



speaker's invitation, aimed at the tired girl on the streets. This background is one manifestation of the Wired, the world of online communications, and will also appear throughout the series as the environment for speeches, questions, and conversations among people interacting online. In some cases, like this one, messages originating in the Wired leak out into the real world, or flow from the minds of people in the real world into the Wired.

The tired girl next appears on the roof of a downtown building, suddenly seeming relieved and happy. She loosens her hair and leans far over the edge, mouthing something silently. Against

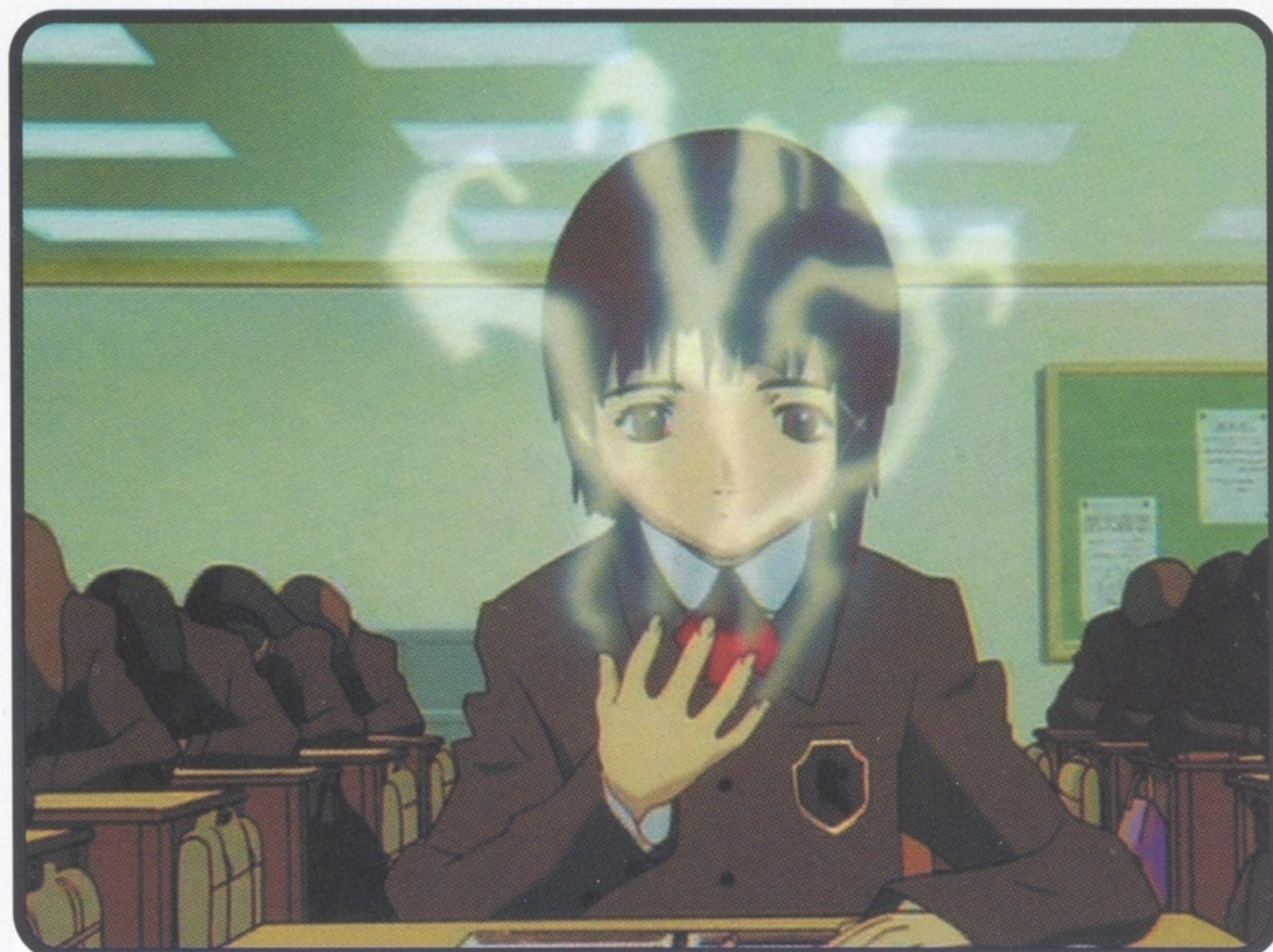




the Wired background, her thoughts appear: "I don't need to stay in a place like this." She lets go of the railing on the roof's edge and plummets through neon signs and alley debris to her death, leaving confused bystanders to protest their ignorance and confusion.



In this sequence, one quiet mystery of Lain's world makes its first appearance. The shadows are not empty. Coloured streaks and blotches fill the darkness,



sometimes moving slowly, sometimes remaining still. Most of the characters seem unaware of the things occupying the shadows, at least most of the time.

what's it like
when you die

The next scene takes place a week later, and introduces Lain Iwakura, the heroine of the series. We see her leaving home and riding the train to school. An increasingly loud babble of background voices surrounds the high-power lines she passes, and her first words are a request to shut up (which briefly startles her fellow passengers, who hear nothing). At the entrance to her school,

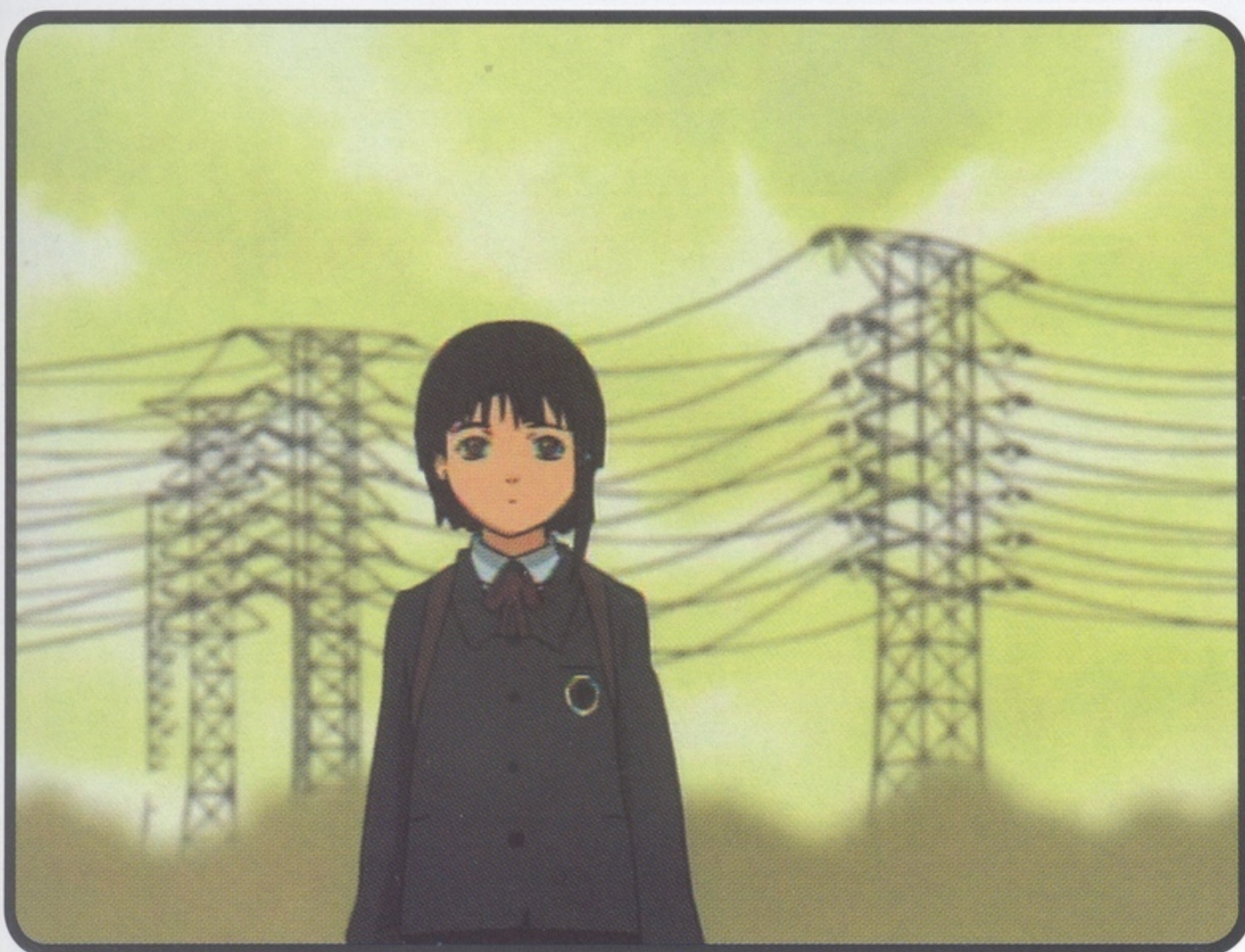
she sees rippling forms reminiscent of landscapes as seen from space in her own shadow and catches a fleeting glimpse of her fellow students shimmering into sketchy figures.



In her classroom, she encounters her classmate Julie (Juri) crying. Alice (Arisu) and Reika explain that Julie is upset over an e-mail from someone claiming to be Chisa Yomoda, the girl whose suicide opened Layer 01. Alice and Reika lecture Lain on the importance of keeping up with e-mail, with which Lain has the vaguest acquaintance.



During the lessons, Lain sees the words on the blackboard dissolve into pixels, many layers deep, and watches smoke or mist ooze out of her fingertips to swirl through the classroom. In the Wired, the question "What's it like when



Iwakura's Password

Mr. Iwakura logs onto his network with the password "Think Bule Count One Tow." This is an allusion to a 1963 science fiction story, Cordwainer Smith's "Think Blue Count Two," in which an artificial personality is created to love and shelter a girl on a colony starship. Smith's future history stories wrestle with profound questions of what it means to be human, whether and how we can overcome our nature, and what, if anything, the Creator wants from us. The questions are very much in the same probing spirit of the series.

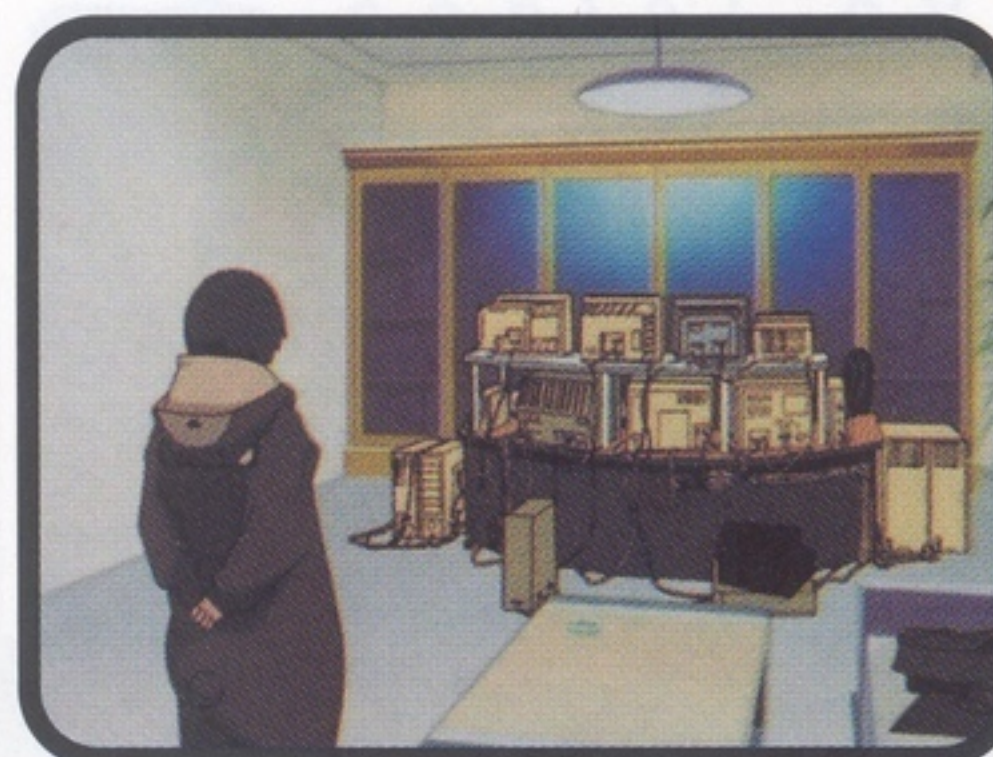
you die?" earns the answer "It *really* hurts! :)" Lain walks home at the end of the day, showing no emotion beyond a slight, innocent bewilderment. At home, she passes through empty rooms to her bedroom, and digs out a clearly neglected computer to check her e-mail. The login sequence shows the very sophisticated, cheery interface characteristic of Navi computers that appear throughout the series. She discovers she too has e-mail



from Chisa, explaining that these messages are not hoaxes; Chisa is dead only in a limited sense, having surrendered her body for the freedom of the Wired. Chisa concludes, "here there is a God" (or "God is here").



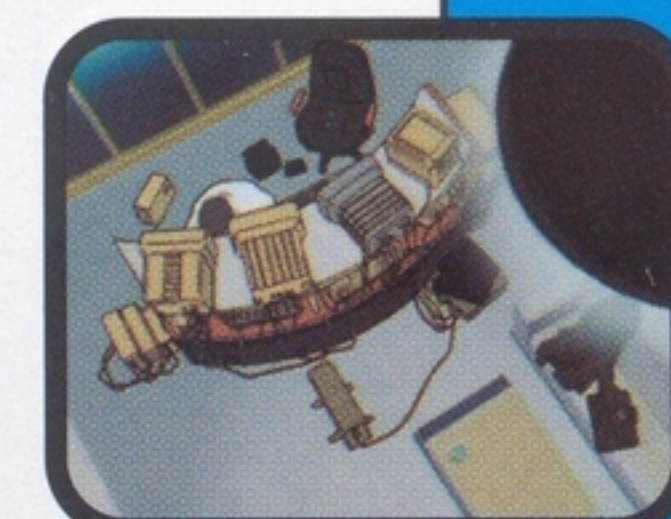
Lain tries broaching the subject of Chisa's e-mail with her mother at dinnertime, but her mother is so unresponsive that Lain drops it. Later, wearing her favourite teddy bear sleep



suit, she asks her father about getting a more powerful computer while he installs new hardware in one of a dozen computers arranged in his study. He provides distracted encouragement, explaining that the Wired is connected to the real world and offers her many opportunities to make friends and explore. The graphic models he is working on, however, quickly preoccupy him. His work screens suggest that he is assembling some sort of digital pornography. On a quick note, one file reads *óyaji.txt*. *Óyaji* is vulgar Japanese argot for "old man" or "father."

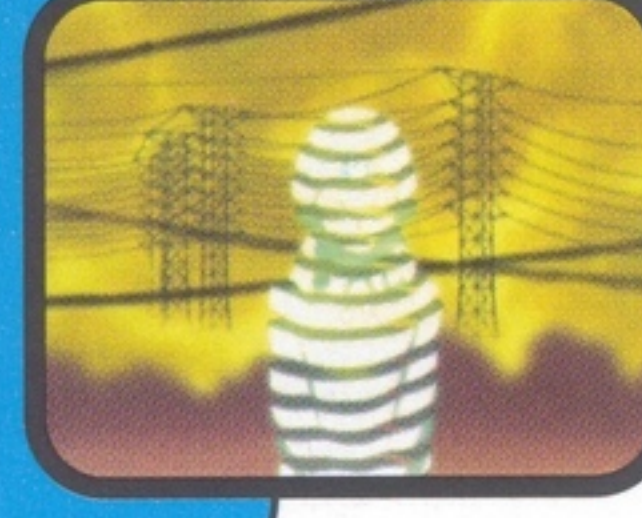
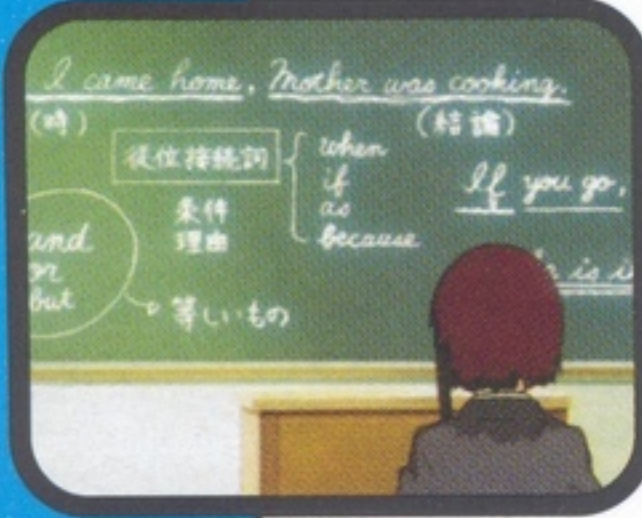
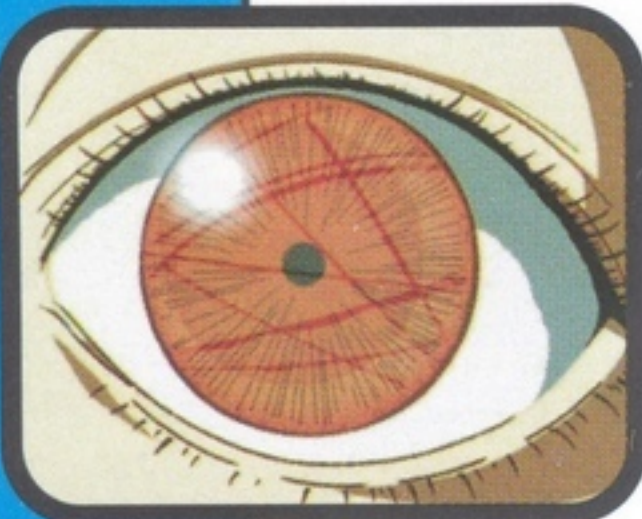


The next day, or some time thereafter, an emergency stop interrupts Lain's train ride to school. She looks out her usual window to see blood dripping from the power lines, first a few drops,



lain

Episode Summary Layer: 01



then a cascade. The world around her fades into white, and back in with her downtown, then, without transition, at the bottom of a subway stairwell. The people above her shimmer and fade like her schoolmates earlier. For an instant



she stands in the empty family home, then in a foggy landscape where the only feature is a train track. A fellow schoolgirl, her hair obscuring her face, runs out onto the tracks. Lain calls a



warning, but cannot make a sound. The girl turns to look at Lain and the approaching train, and her face changes repeatedly. There's Chisa's face, beneath it a shouting angry version of Lain's own face, an adult face lined in the style of traditional Japanese theatrical makeup, a skull, and a grown woman reminiscent of Lain's mother. The train rushes past Lain, filling the hitherto quiet vision with noise, before it all dissolves into white.

soo where
are you?

Lain awakens in the midst of class, the teacher calling on her for a blackboard assignment. As she stares at the chalk-written notes, they again



dissolve into pixels, this time forming the message "Come to the Wired as soon as you can." She looks up again and the scene returns to normal. On her walk home, the shadows are particularly rich in mysterious splotches or stains. A girl walks past her. Only after she has gone by does Lain realize that it is Chisa. Lain's question "So where are you?" brings only a cryptic smile and a melancholy expression. Chisa dissolves into a glowing helix; the episode ends with Lain alone on the street.

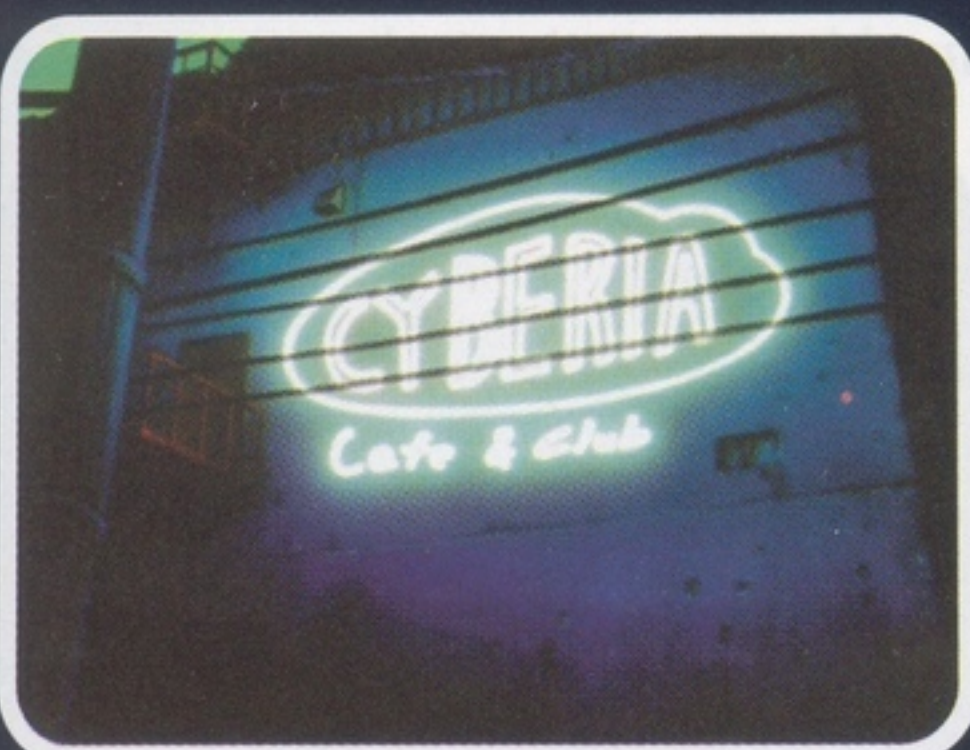


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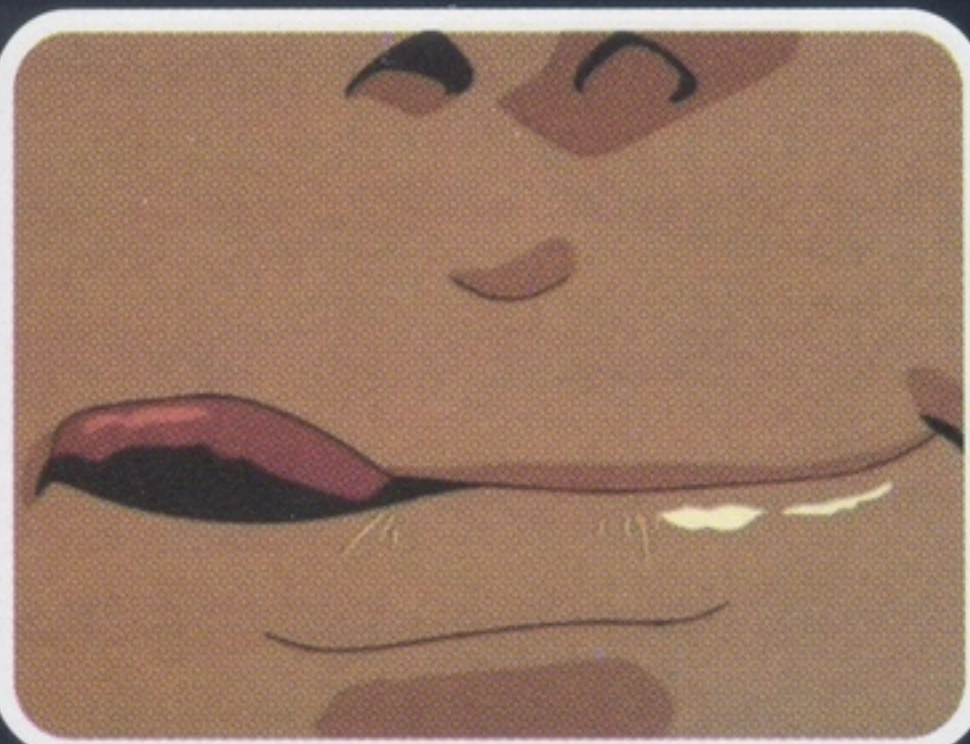
Episode Summary Layer: 02



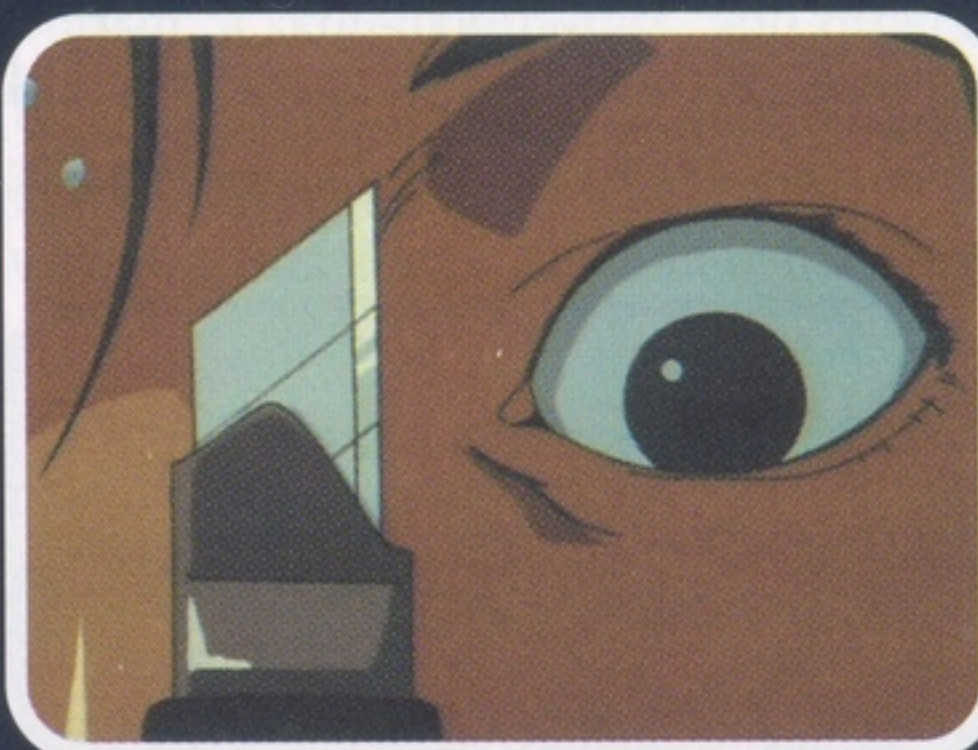
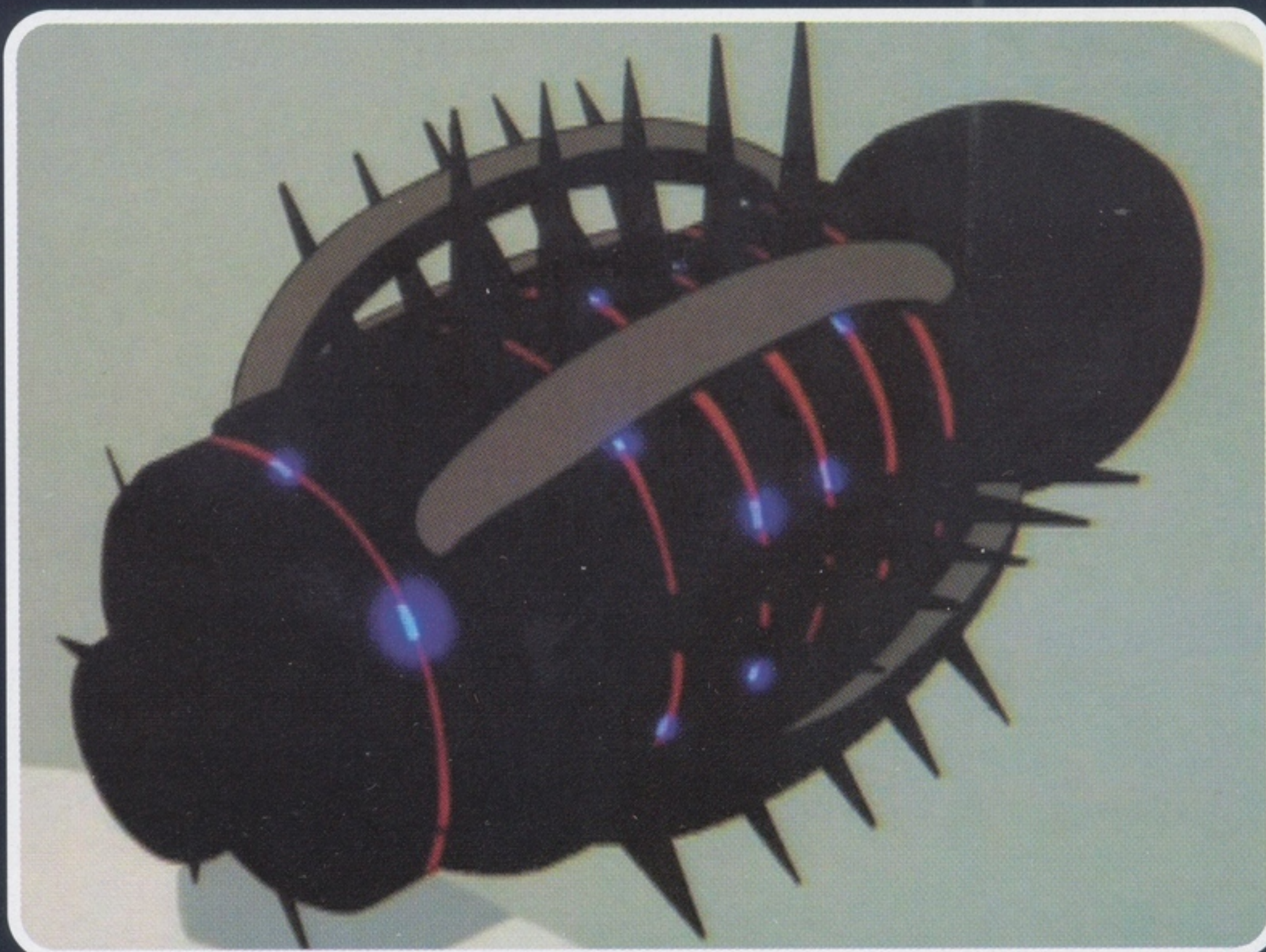
Layer 02: Girls begins with the nighttime cityscape seen in Layer 01 and a girl asking in voice-over, "What is it you're so afraid of? Why don't you take a chance sometime?"



The scene shifts to the Cyberia nightclub, where shots of club activity alternate with commentary from within the silent pastel Wired environment. A boy makes what looks like a typical drug deal with a waitress (her features are concealed beneath a gas mask). An



observer in the Wired says "I don't come here because I *want* to," remarking on the boy paying a grossly inflated price for his drug; he finally adds that Accela isn't a drug, but requires the same hassles to obtain.

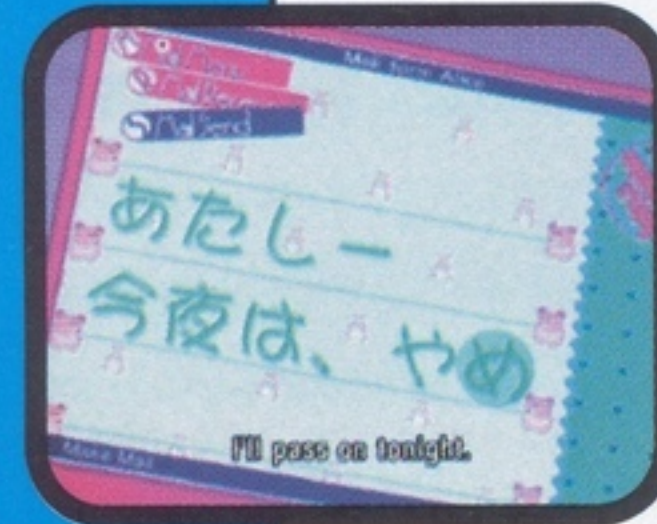


The boy cuts open the gel capsule he purchased, revealing a pill-sized machine, covered in blinking lights and complex tubing. After he swallows it, his



thoughts appear in the pastel Wired, proclaiming "I feel ... accelerated." He sees the people around him moving more slowly and hears the music blur. Lain's

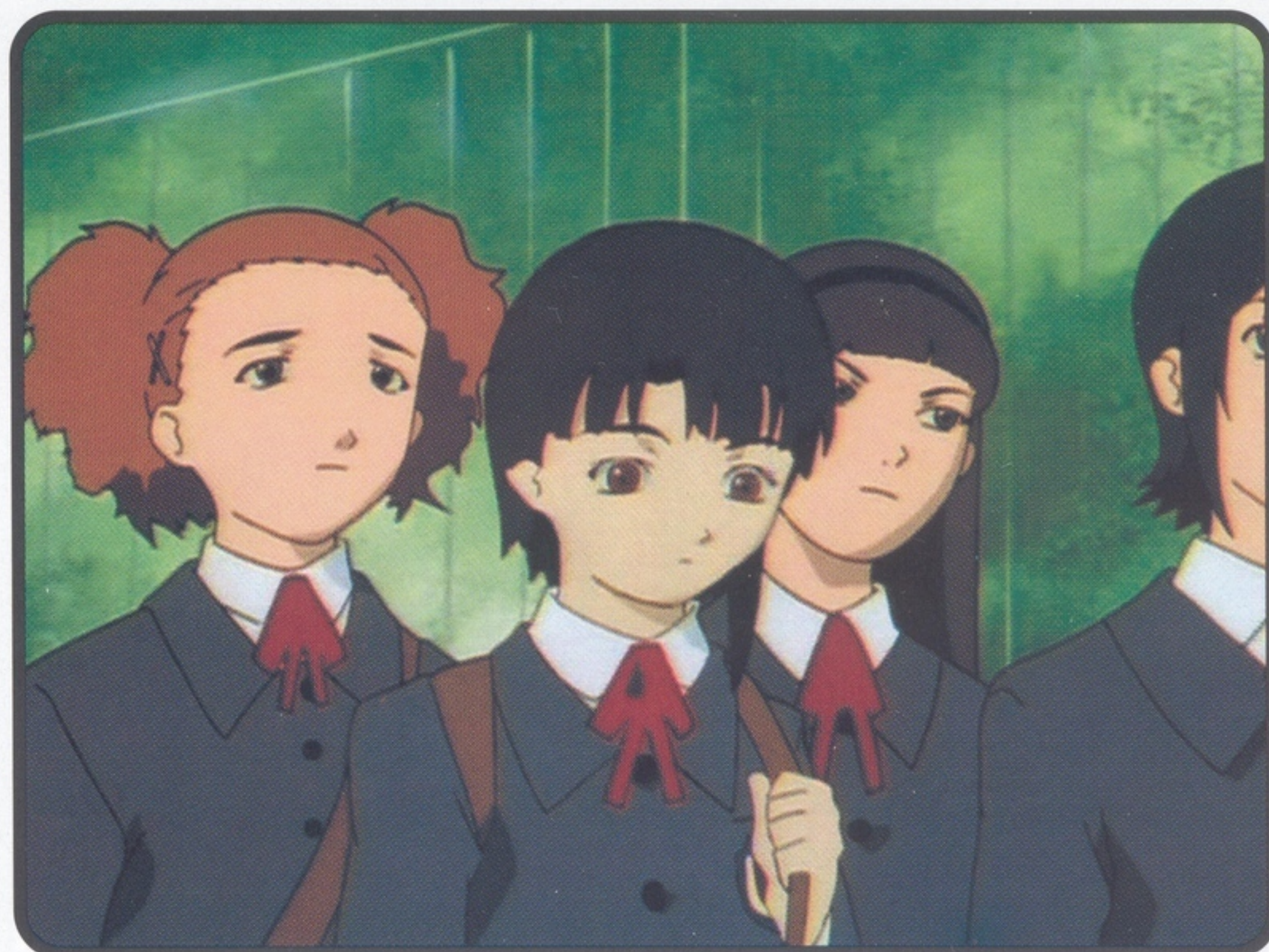
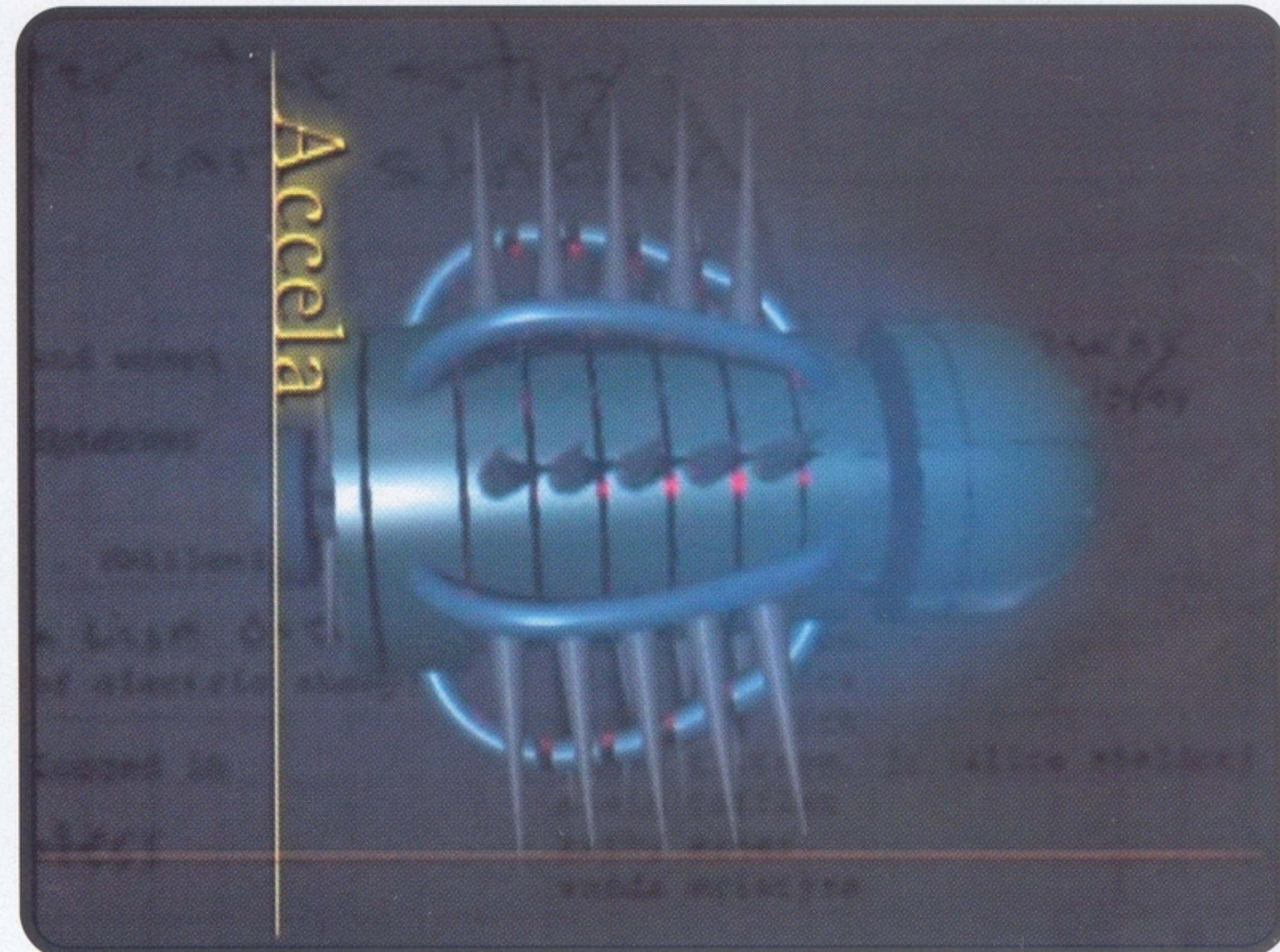




friends giggle and chat at a table off to one side. Another girl, fashionably dressed and carrying herself with great confidence, turns to look at the boy, and shows herself to be Lain. He sees her with video-like distortion and possibly perceives her telling him through the Wired, "Hurry up and come to me."



Lain, in her usual bear sleep-suit, next appears at home, checking for e-mail before readying herself for school. Her sister Mika looks in briefly with a scornful



remark about Lain and her "imaginary friend." Upon leaving the family home, Lain sees a bearded man in a black suit, watching her all the way down the street. He stands motionless as she walks by and runs out of sight. At the school gate, Lain's friends describe someone who

what is it
you're so
afraid of?

looked like her at Cyberia the night before, but with a very different attitude. They eventually decide it was not Lain, and Lain establishes that none of them are receiving further e-mails from Chisa.



An encyclopaedia-like vignette displays technical diagrams and detailed illustrations of the Accela unit. The narrator explains that Accela uses nanotechnology, molecule-sized machinery, to trigger the creation of a



hormone that speeds the brain by up to 12 times. The user senses the world differently and thinks more rapidly. The user's body digests the hormone, and presumably the Accela device itself,





like in the train vision in the preceding episode: Chisa screaming, a leering older woman, a skull-like morass, and others. The figure walks directly through a sobbing Lain and fades into thin air.



Lain walks home to find a deliveryman waiting with the components of a top-of-the-line Navi computer, intended for her. He comments, with admiration and envy, on its capacity to handle all sorts of software and Wired interactions without



within 24 hours, but it is unknown how long the effects may last after that. In the background, computerized scrolling text competes for space with hand-written diagrams and notes of all kinds, suggesting endless layers of information waiting for examination.

Copland OS Enterprise

The name "Copland OS Enterprise" is an in-joke, referring to the working name of one of Apple Computers' operating system updates. The series' creators are Macintosh users and have embedded a number of allusions to their favourite system.

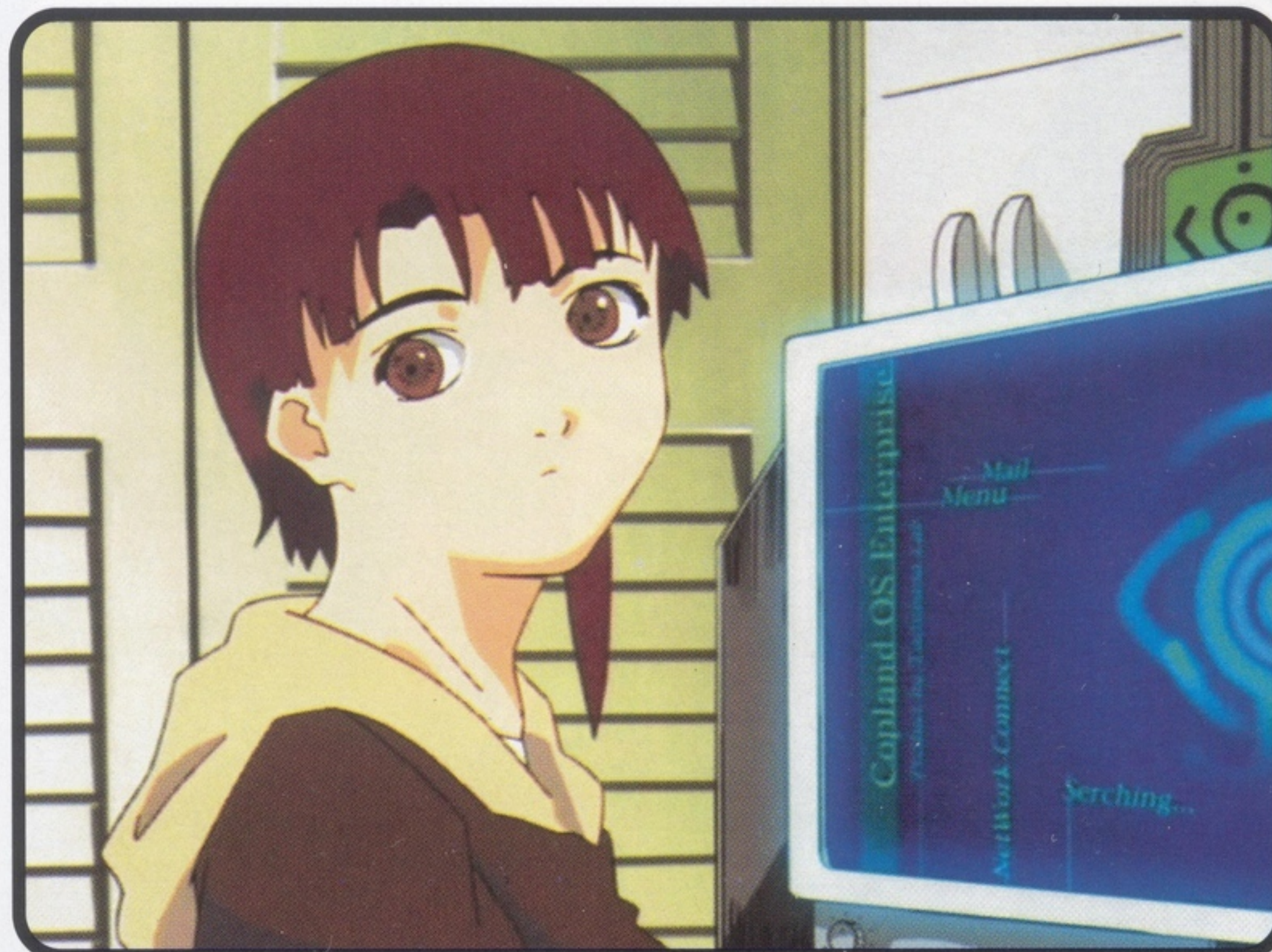
The action resumes with Lain in class, receiving an invitation from Alice



on her handheld computer to join her friends at Cyberia. She declines. Alone in the hallway after class, Lain encounters a girl with shadowed



features. When the girl approaches, shimmering distorted silhouettes of people emerge from the walls, passing around and even through Lain before disappearing again. The girl looms over Lain. Her features become clear, showing the overlay of rival faces much

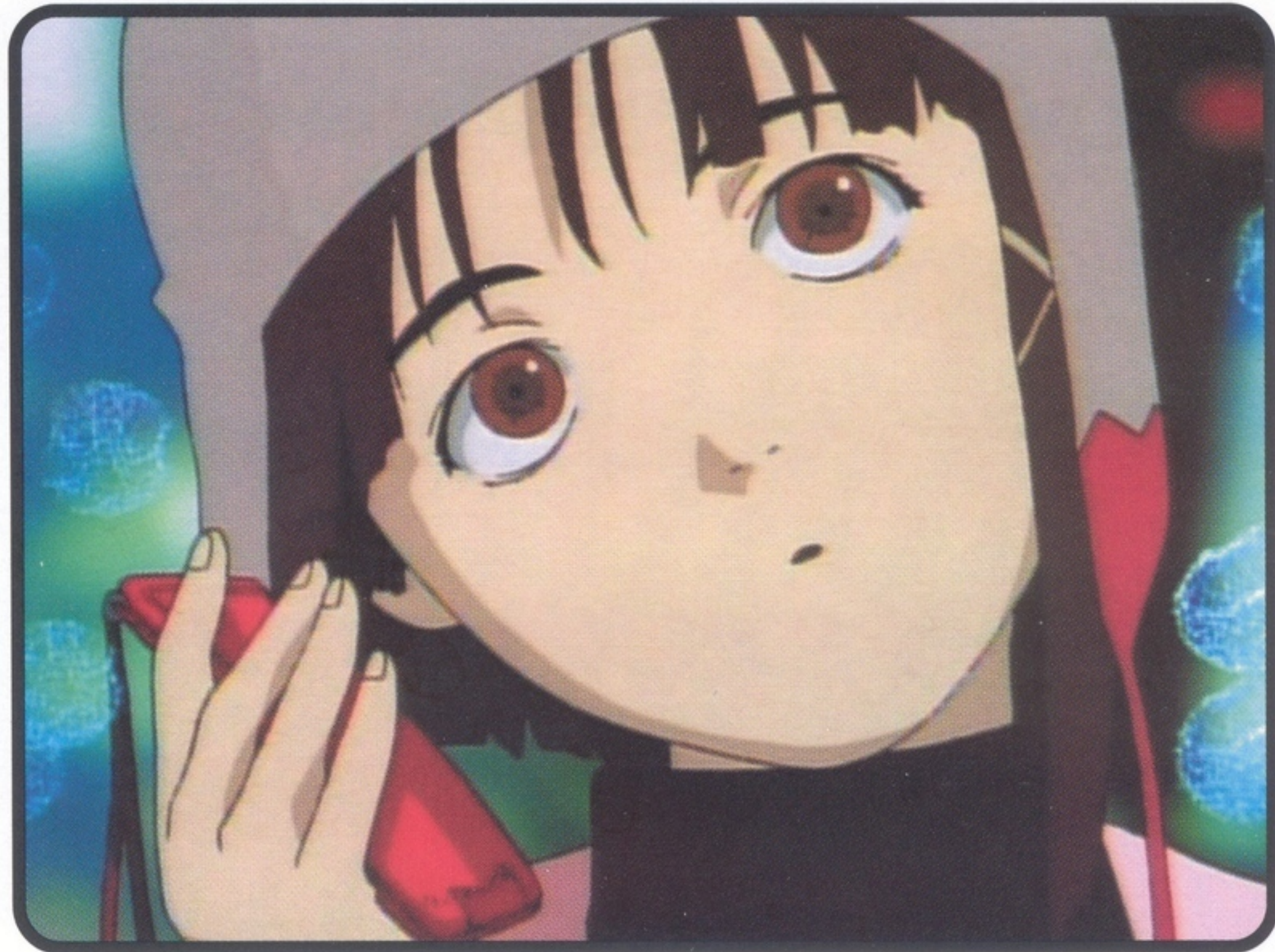




crashing. She says she hardly knows anything about it; he assures her she will figure it out soon enough. When her father comes home that night, he sets it up for her. A voice-driven interface, far more sophisticated than the one on her



old computer, welcomes her, and she settles in to work with it. A few minutes later, Lain receives a pager message from Alice, again inviting her to Cyberia. On the spur of the moment she accepts.



On her way down to the club basement, Lain passes three children a few years younger than herself; the two boastful boys discuss hacking matters like whether a technique will attract the attention of the Ministry of Information Control and whether it is a legitimate response to someone else's attack. In the

it's not
my god

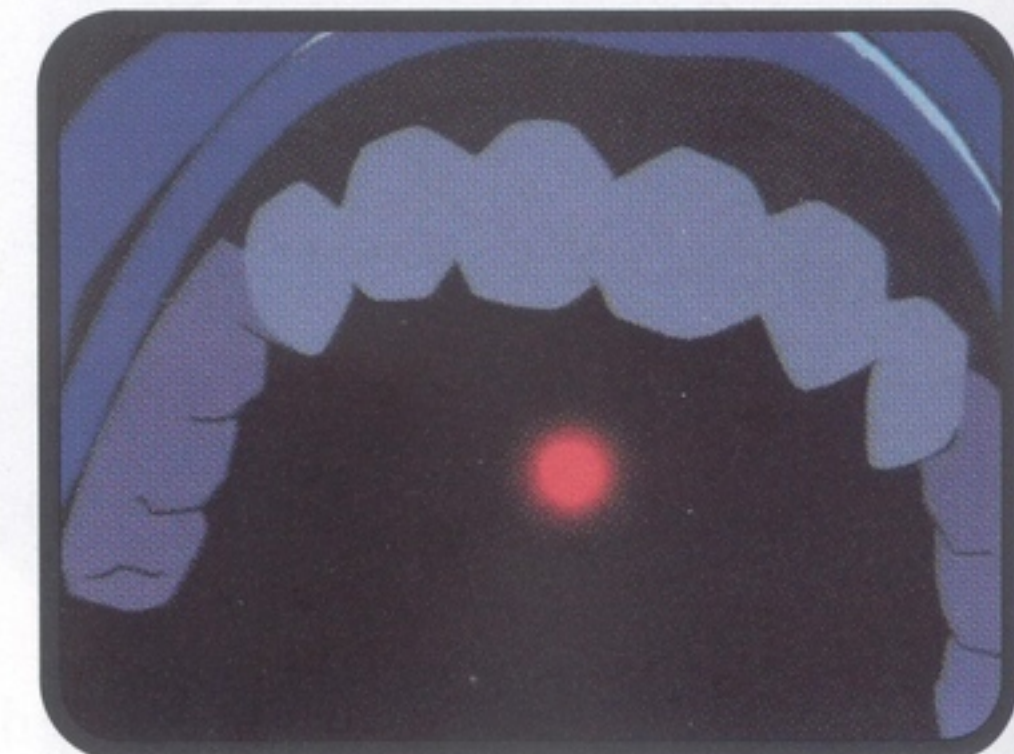
club, Lain's friends again discuss the girl who looked so much like her but behaved so differently, until gunfire interrupts them.

The boy last seen using Accela stands on the dance-floor brandishing a

pistol with a laser sight. He shot at least two people before everyone else fled,



leaving Lain to stare, captivated by the flood of blood. When a spotlight illuminates Lain, the boy recoils in fear, demanding to know why she made him do this, saying "it's not my God" and "the



Wired can never interfere with the real world." She calmly walks toward him, unperturbed by the laser sight moving over her chest and face. With the slightest trace of a smile, she says, "No matter where you are, everyone is always connected." Reluctantly, as if fighting against internal resistance, he turns the gun on himself and commits suicide, spattering her with blood.



Layer 03: Psyche opens with some of the usual shots of the city at night, then cuts to Cyberia and the police escorting survivors away. A girl says in voice-over, "There's a girl named Lain. You may have heard of her. She's on the Wired." The police officer questioning Lain asks whether her family is away on vacation, since nobody answered, but reassures her that they do not doubt her story; she is not in trouble.

Alice begs Lain's forgiveness for getting her into the situation, and finds little comfort in Lain's detached, distracted responses.



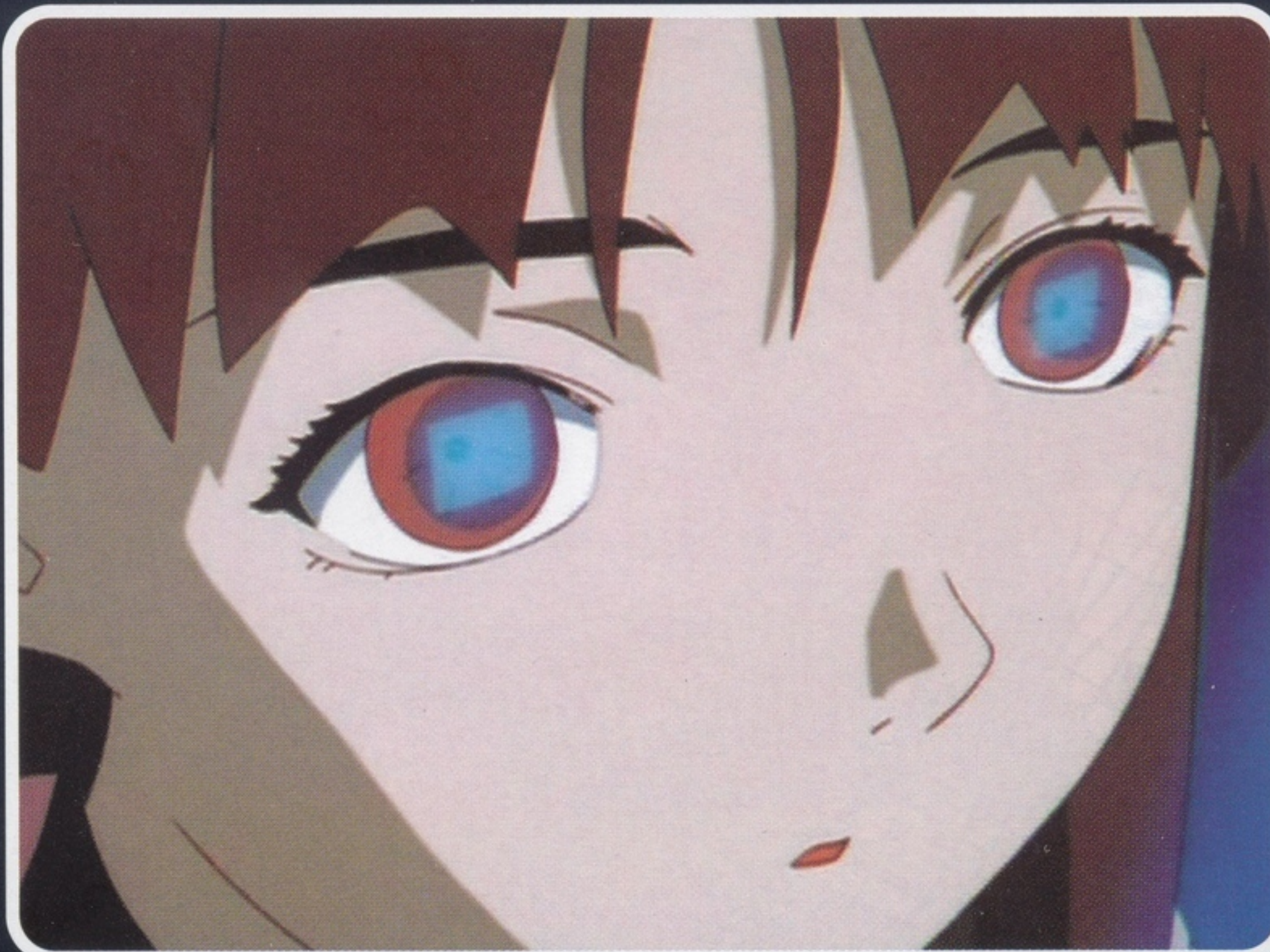
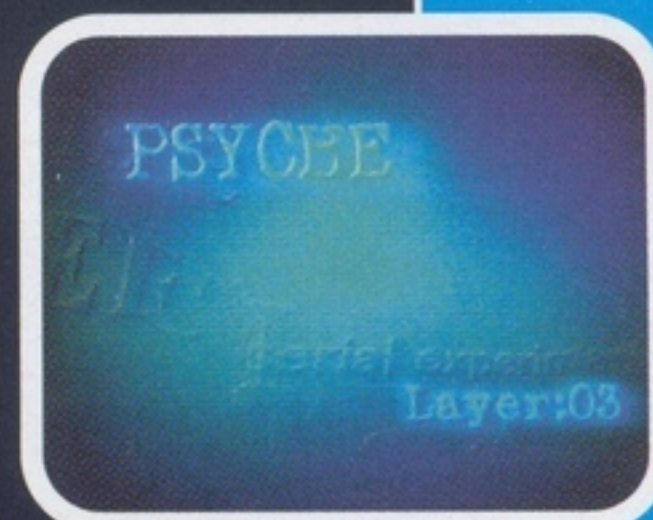
Another police officer gives Lain a lift home, but she enters to find the place thoroughly deserted. Her parents' and

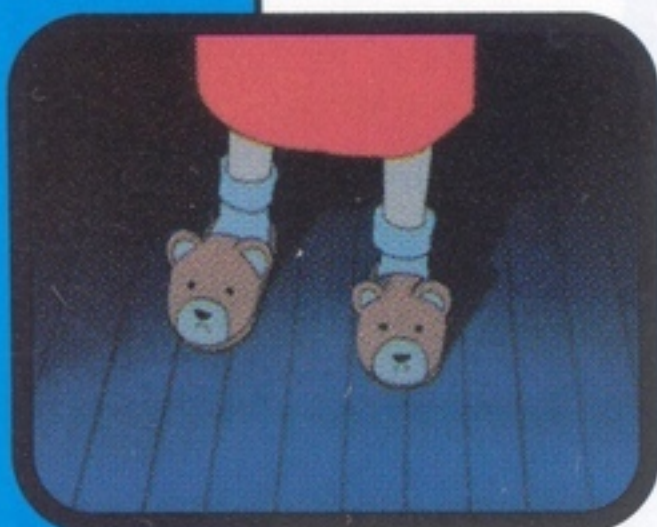
serial experiments lain

Episode Summary Layer: 03



sister's beds are neatly made and obviously not slept in. The kitchen and living room are tidy and unused. The house is as pristine as if the Iwakura family had all moved out, or not yet moved in. Lain repeatedly searches the house, then settles in front of her new Navi for a while; she seemingly does not notice the unusual blotch that appears

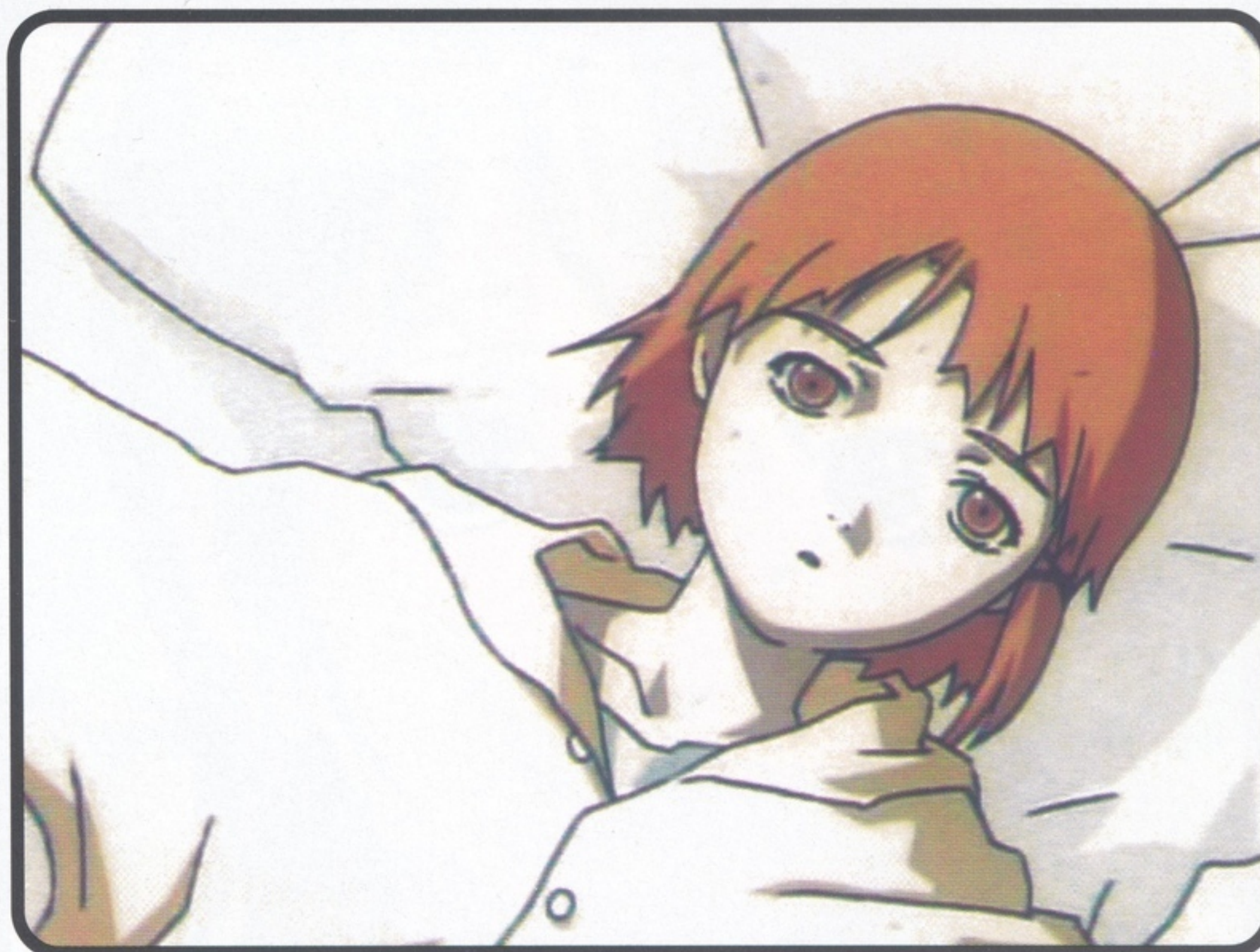
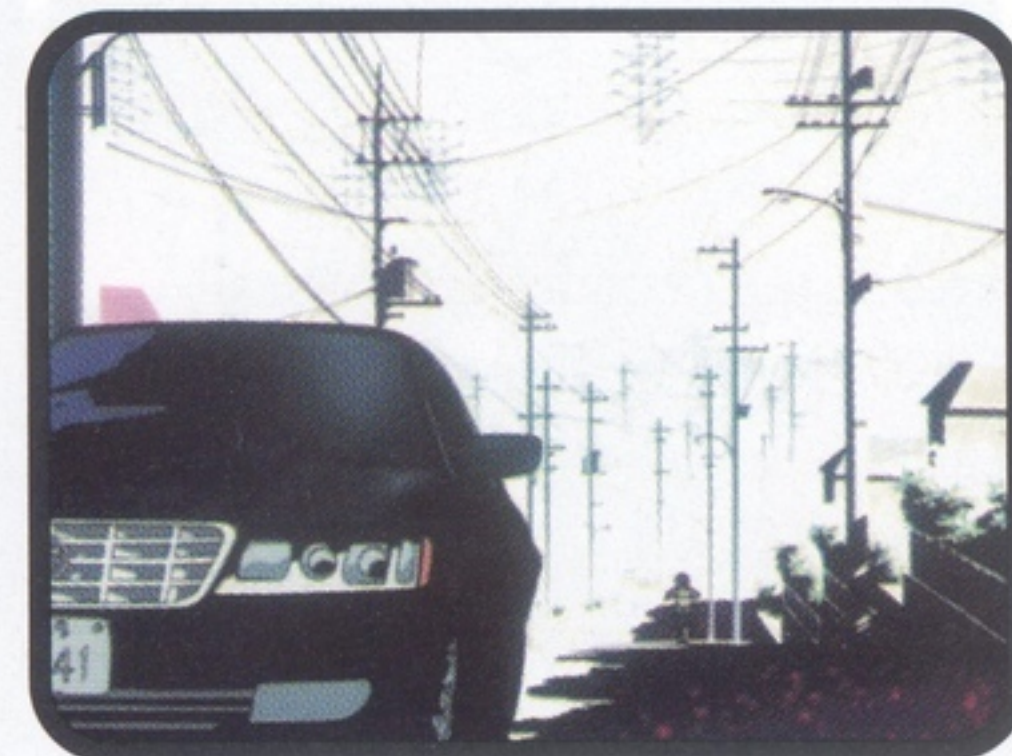




layered in among the regular applications before it expands and dissolves. She dozes and searches the house again, checks for new messages but finds none, and heads to bed. She does notice when the computer responds, "Good night," in response to her own vocalized, "Good night, Navi."



It is morning when she wakes up; brilliant sunlight floods the room. Her mother works in the kitchen as if nothing were out of the ordinary, and Lain sees



the remains of the others' breakfasts. Mrs. Iwakura asks matter-of-factly, "Don't you think it's embarrassing to over-sleep and be late for school?" Lain starts to ask about the night before, but cannot bring herself to finish the question. When she heads out of the house, she sees a black sedan parked near

**you are
not alone**

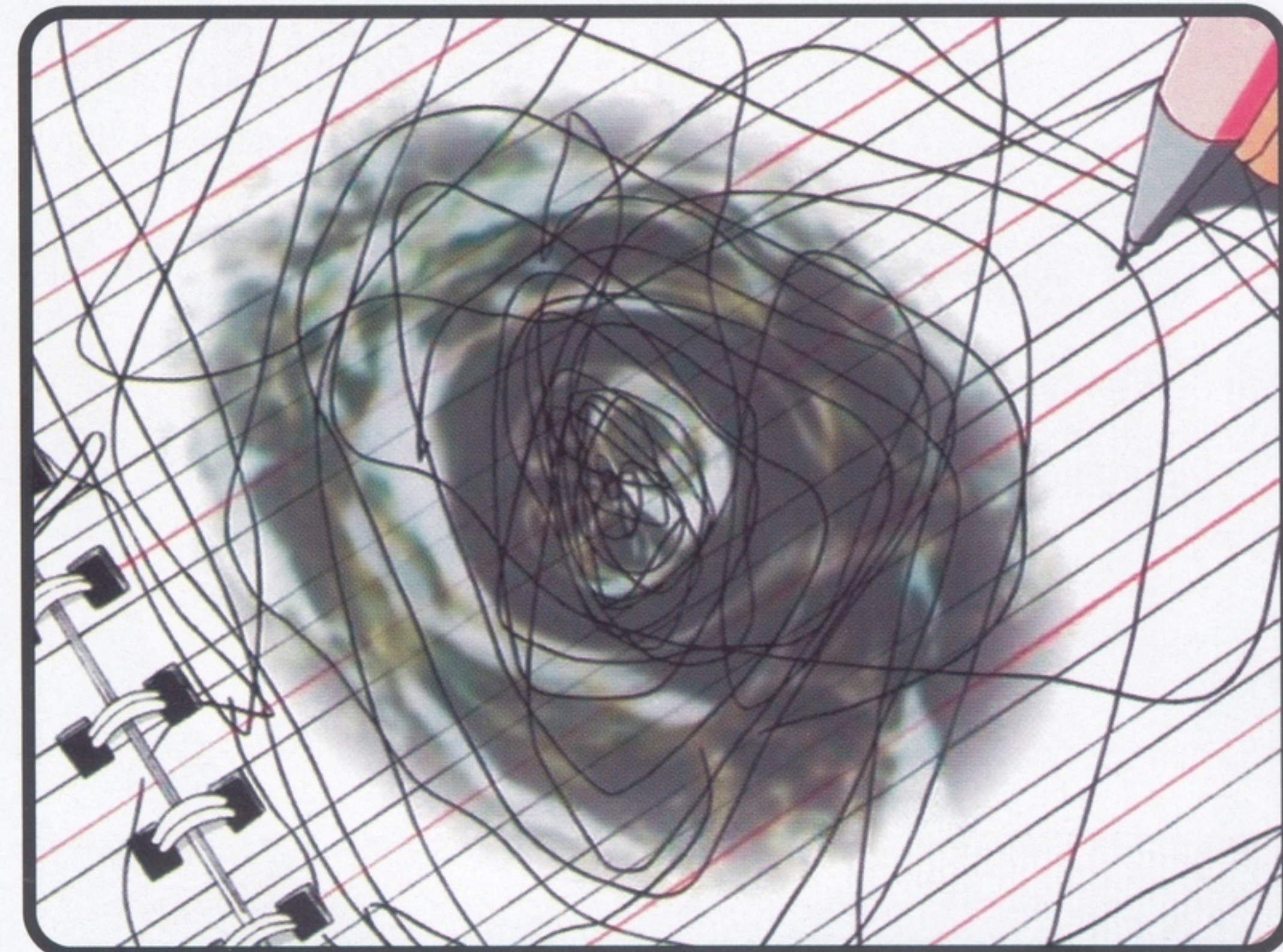
where the man had watched her earlier; while passing it, two laser tracking lights flick on behind the tinted windows and follow her down the hill.

On the train, she stands at her usual spot by the doors. A disembodied

man's voice calls to her by name. Nobody else seems to hear it, nor do they notice her ensuing conversation. The man speaks in a friendly tone, telling her, "You are not alone." Lain arrives in class to find her friends surrounded by classmates, all discussing the shooting (in typical junior-high girl fashion, their questions range from "Was it gross?" to "Was he cute?")



During class lecture, Lain listens absent-mindedly to a different disembodied voice than the one who spoke to her on the train. Her personal, interior lecturer explains how Navis have become ubiquitous, nearly universal computers, and how the Psyche processor can enhance Navi capabilities in ways not yet fully understood. She looks down to see the spirals she has





been drawing on notepaper surrounded by layer upon layer of swirling knotted circles and corkscrews, with occasional glimpses of forms similar to the unusual shape that appeared on her Navi the night before. Chisa's voice reiterates how having a body was only holding her back. When Lain rears back in bewilderment, she sees Chisa in the window of the classroom: not so much in the hallway beyond, as in the glass itself, like a television screen. The voice she heard on the train asks again and again, "Who is Lain? Who is Lain?"



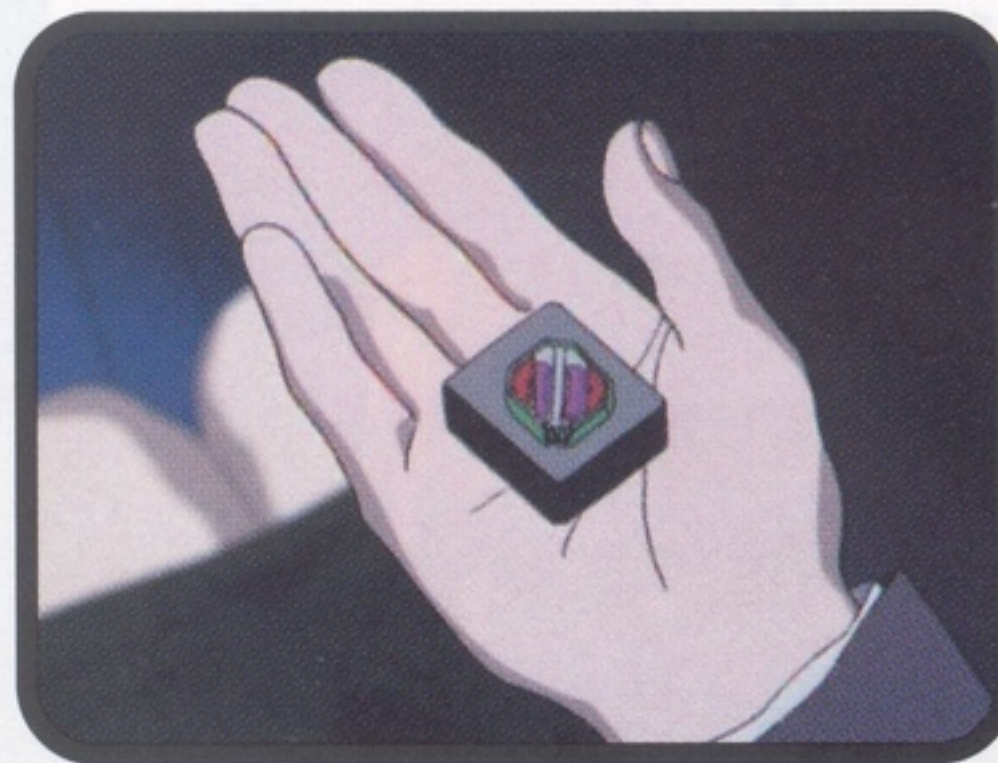
In the hallway after class, Lain's friends discuss their sense of detachment about the shooting. Alice is bothered that she cannot take it as seriously as she believes being close to a death deserves, but the others dismiss her concern. They



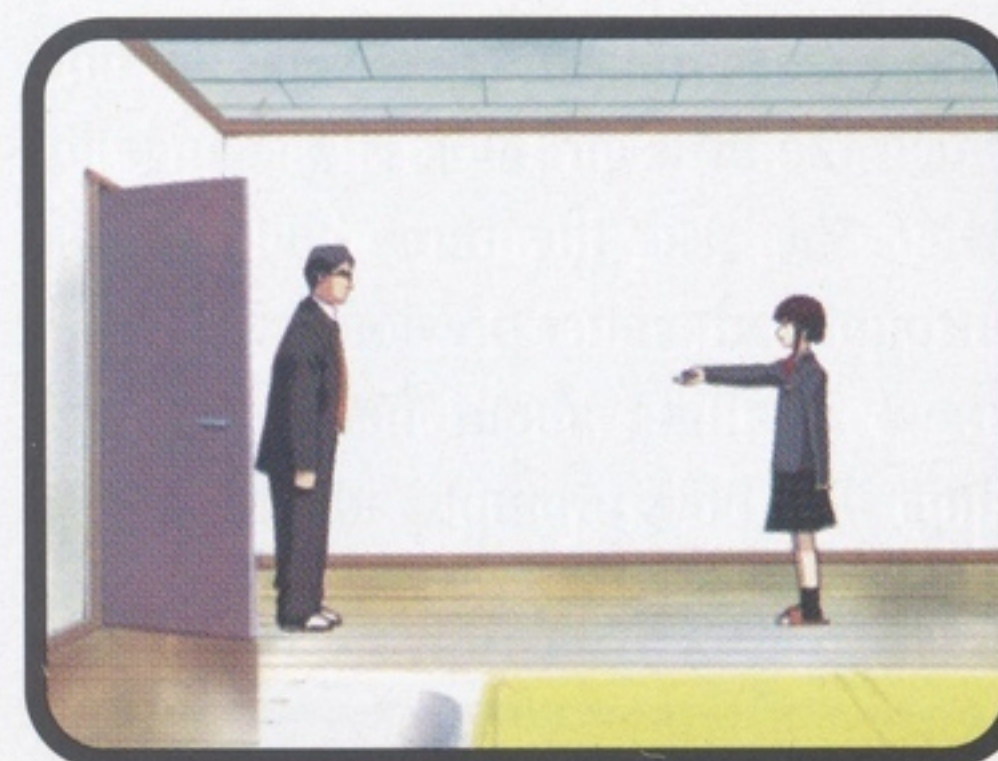
cluster around Lain when she finds an envelope in her locker. Their hopes for a love letter or other token of affection end in disappointment when it turns out to be a small computer chip. On her walk home, Lain looks at it again and whispers, "Psyche," to herself.



Against highly stylized images of power lines, voices speak out samples of the Wired's traffic that night. Some are prosaic, involving business deals and



romantic confessions ("I love kissing"). Some of it is related to recent events, with complaints about how Accela's become hard to find, or theories that the Psyche chip is allegedly the creation of a group of hackers known as the Knights (though the speaker is skeptical if they are anything but urban legend). Some conversations are outright peculiar, with a woman insisting a little person in red and green clothes is watching her. Chisa's voice asks Lain, "Why won't you come here?"



Lain's father enters her room to see how she is doing. She asks him about the Psyche chip, but he emphatically and rudely denies knowing about it. She asks again, and he denies again, with a manner suggesting he is hiding something. Lain heads outside, and





must again pass the black sedan (with its unseen occupants and laser sight dots) on her way to Cyberia.



JJ, Cyberia's DJ in residence, greets Lain with familiarity, remarking on how much the little-girl look is a change for her. She asks the three children she encountered on her previous visit if they know anything about her mysterious chip. The boys promptly identify it as a Psyche. One produces his game

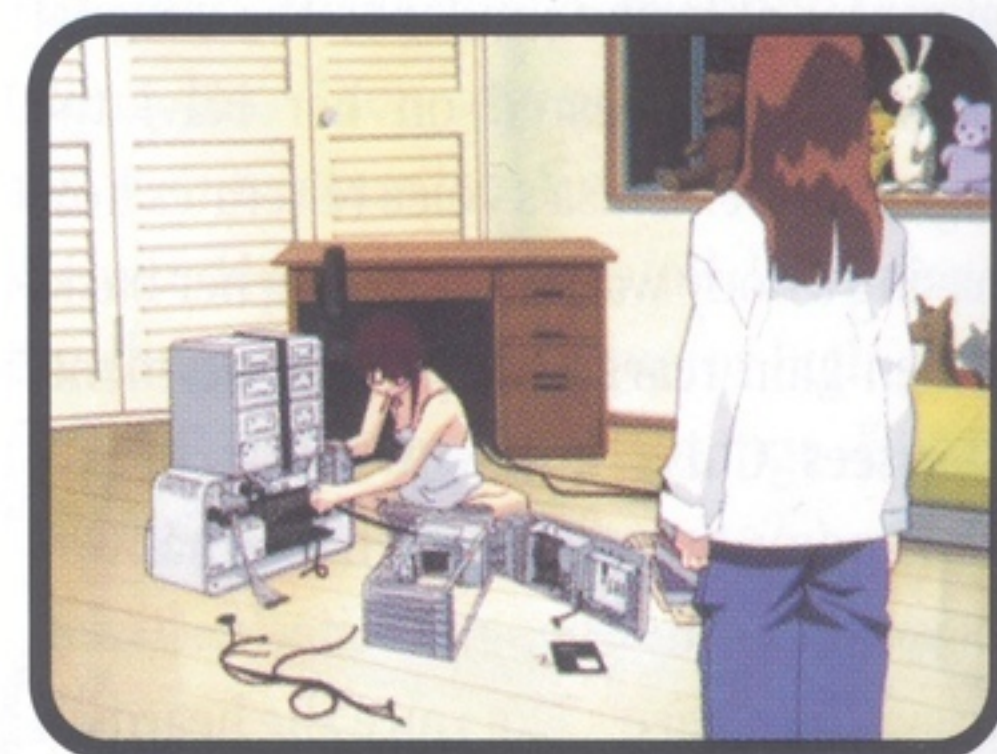


controller/handheld computer and says that if he installed the Psyche in it, he could have full access to the Wired and do whatever he wanted. They enviously explain how to install the chip and use it. Taro, the boy with the game controller, says that he has seen Lain in the Wired in a more assertive, aggressive persona, and asks for a date with "the wild Lain" as the fee for his information services.

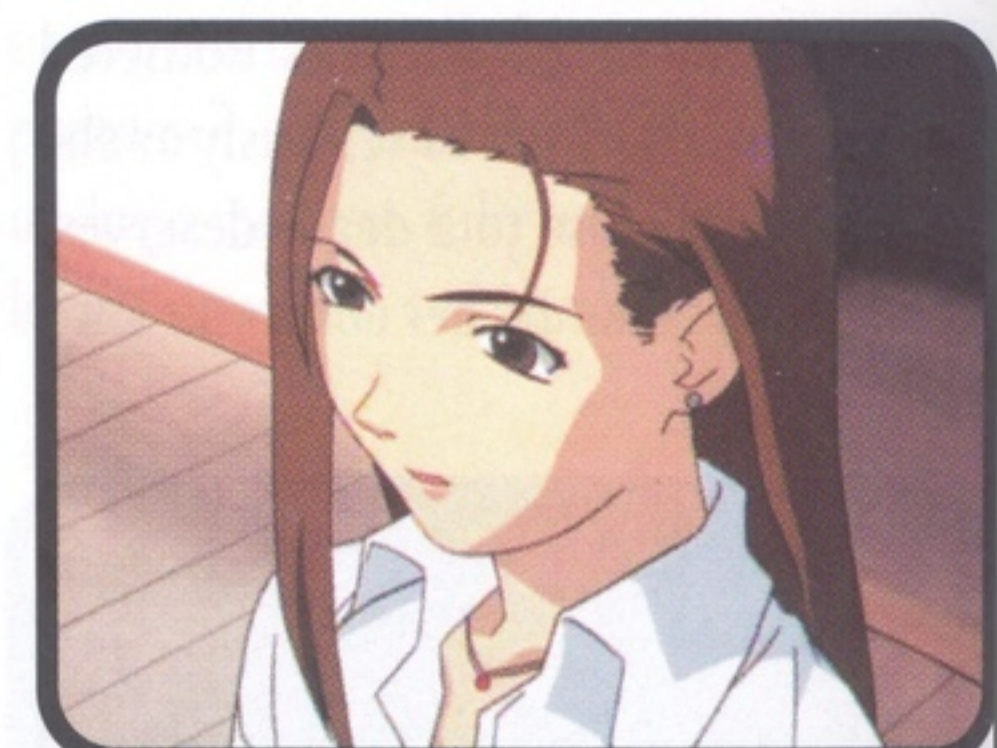
**we're not
even here**

The next day, Lain's sister Mika comes home to find Karl (a bearded man in black) and his ponytailed partner standing on the Iwakura porch. Both

wear glasses with futuristic targeting and other hardware attached, with a laser sight mounted on the bridge of the



nosepiece. She threatens to call the cops; they calmly reply before leaving that it would do no good, since "we're not even here." Mrs. Iwakura refuses to take Mika's complaint seriously, and Mika angrily heads upstairs. She finds Lain almost entirely undressed and immersed in the exposed innards of her Navi. Lain is installing the Psyche, and says she is working with little clothing to avoid static electricity. The episode ends with her big, happy grin aimed at Mika.





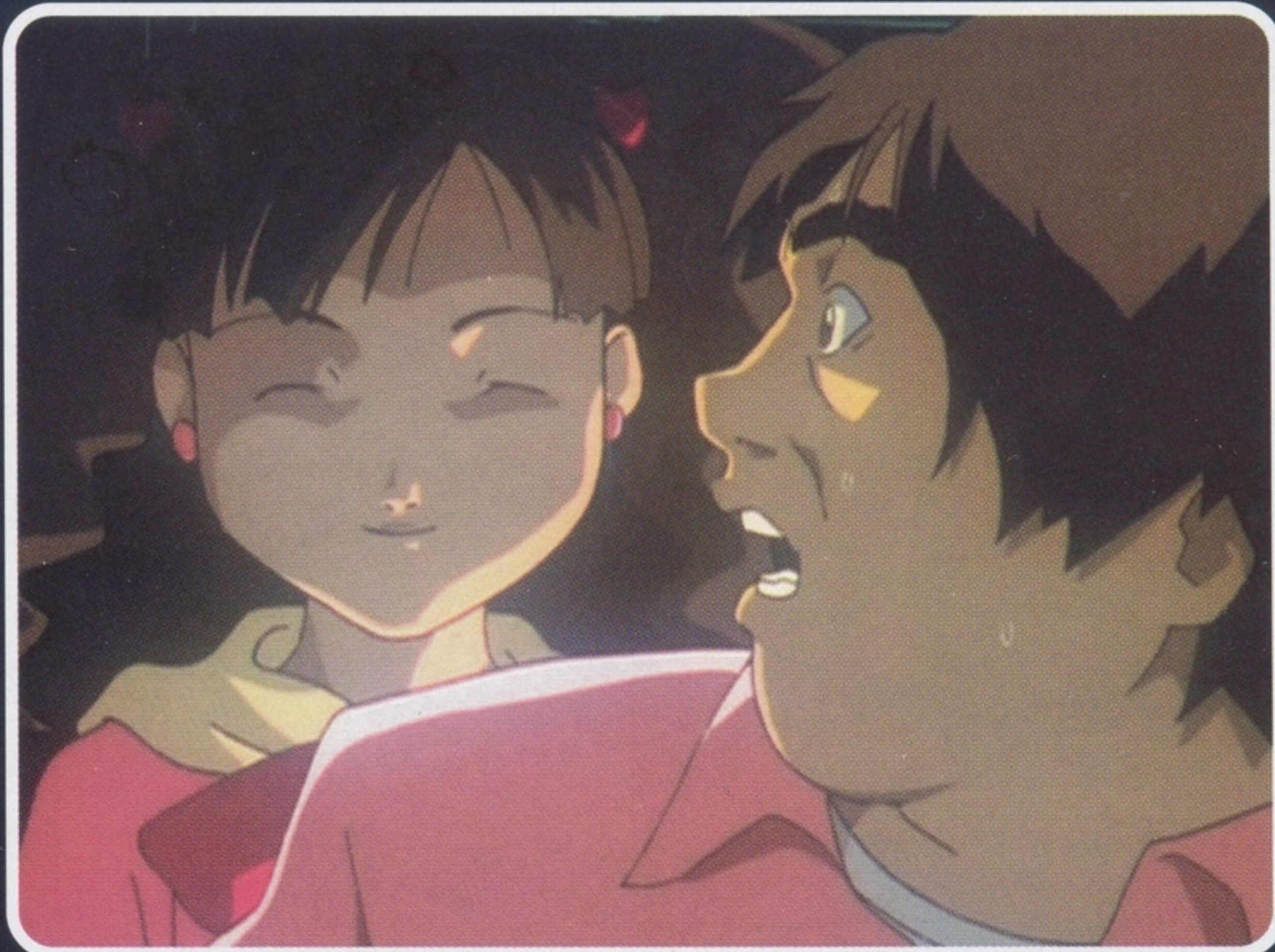
Layer 04: Religion opens with the usual cityscapes. Lain says in voice-over, "I don't need parents. Humans are connected to no one, nobody at all."



Lain is in her room, working on her computer. Stacks of hard drives and other peripheral devices, some piled higher than Lain surround her. Power cables criss-cross the floors (and walls, and ceiling), while fans blow cool air past open chassis. Lain's father again watches silently from the door before finally closing his eyes in weariness or sadness.



Downstairs, Mika suggests that something is wrong with Lain. Neither parent accepts her concern, though when the couple is alone Mrs. Iwakura seeks reassurance herself. Throughout this scene, Mr. Iwakura's glasses glow with reflected video light even when there is no video in the area.

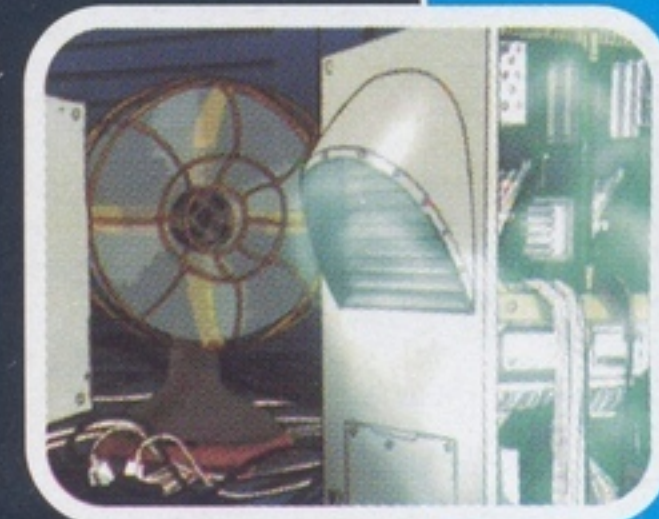
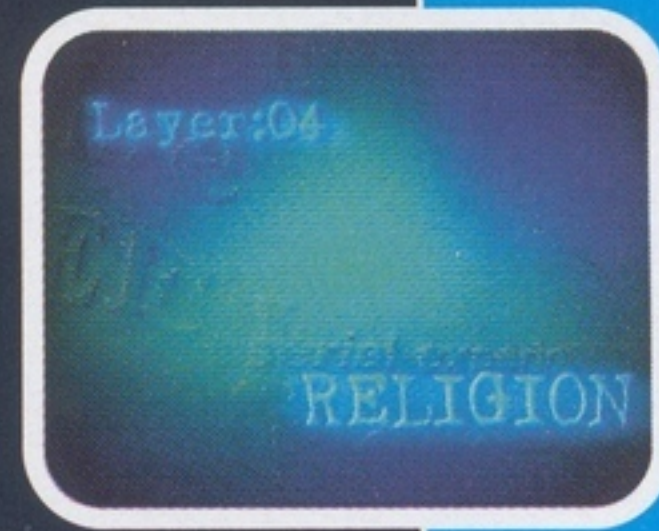


serial experiments lain

EPISODE SUMMARY LAYER: 04



Elsewhere in the city, a young man flees from an unseen pursuer. He reaches his apartment but fumbles with his keys, giving the hunter time to catch up. It proves to be a small girl, innocuously looking apart from the deepening shadows around her eyes. In successively closer views, her eyes become empty

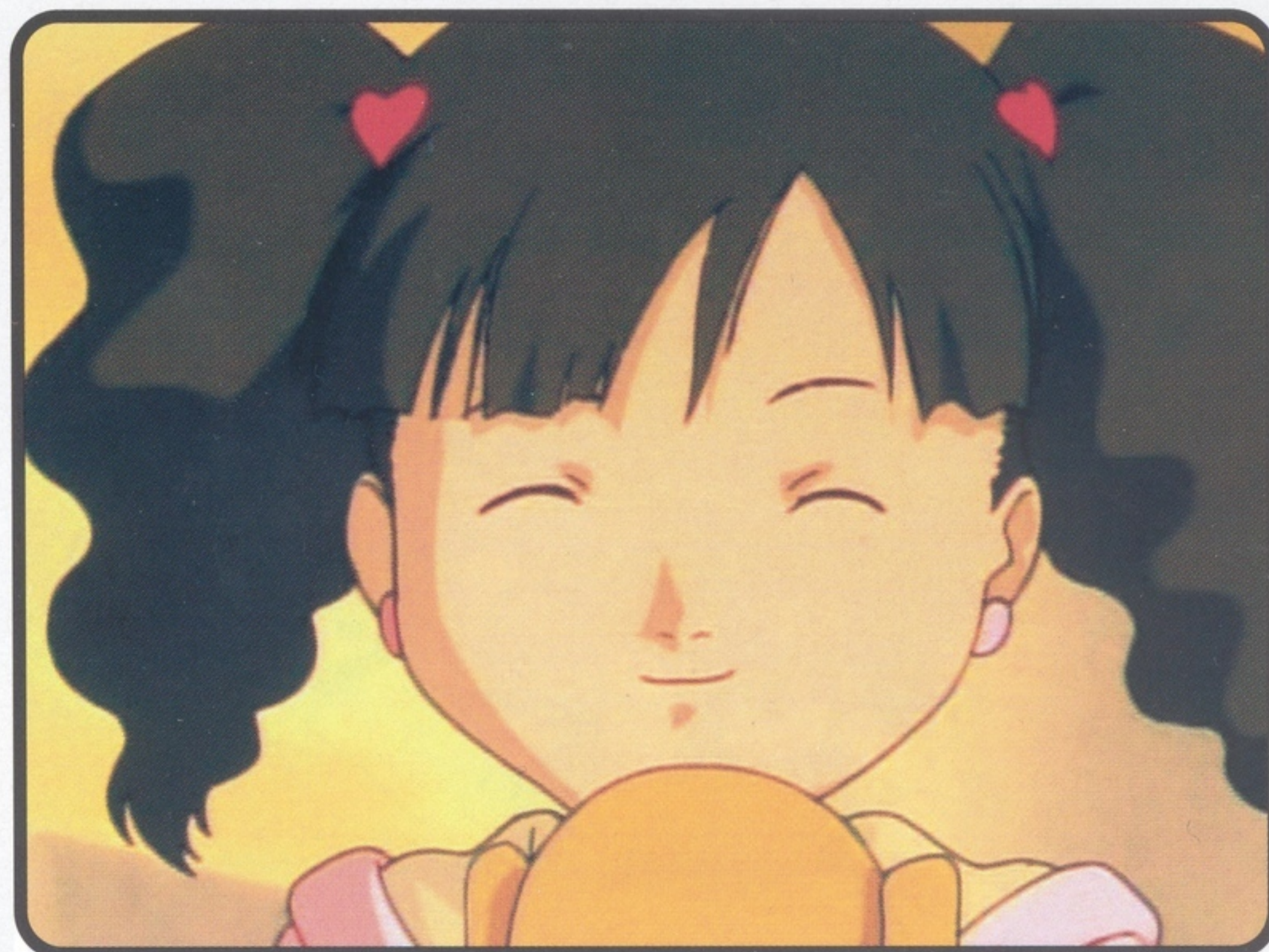
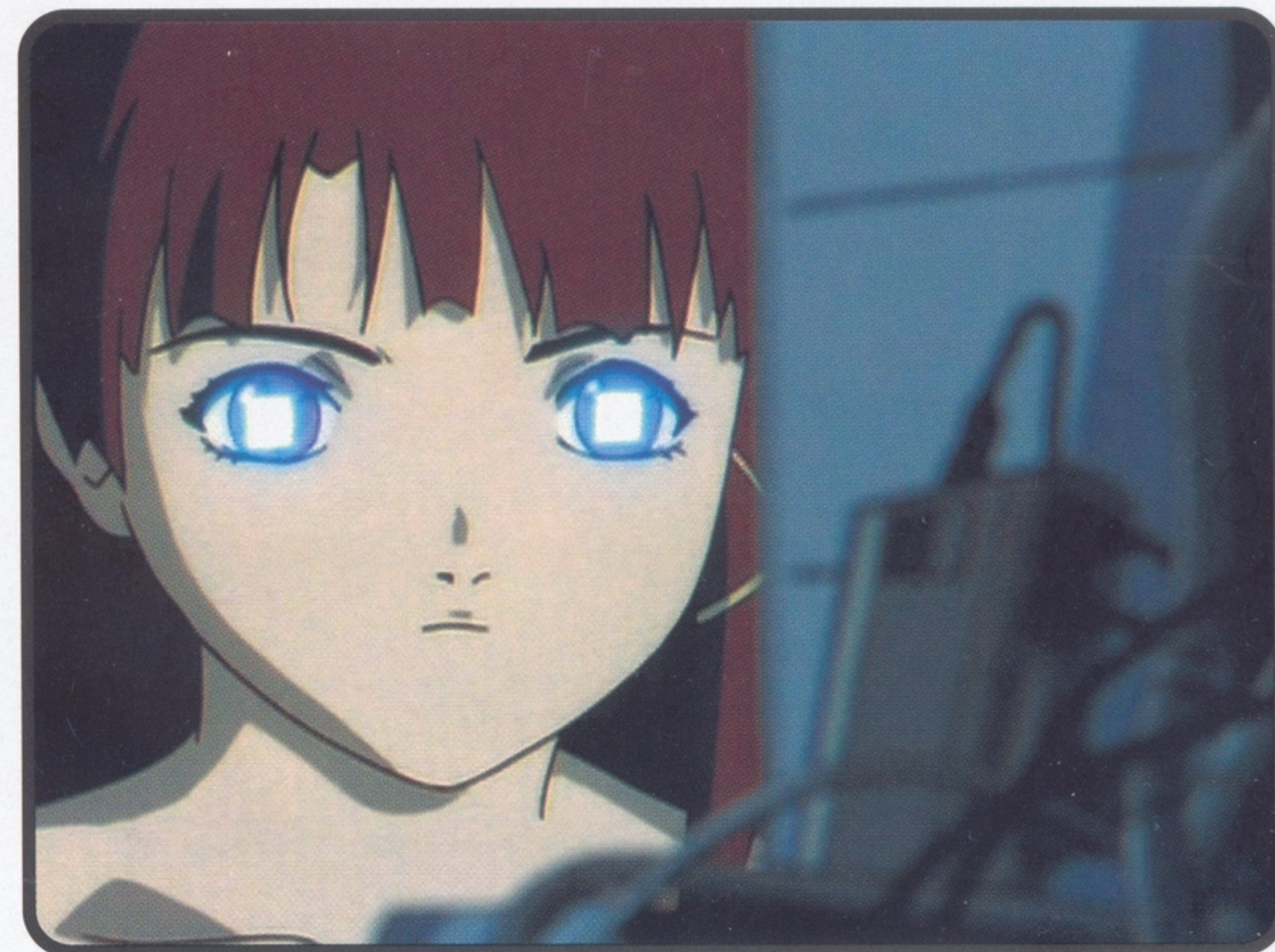




sockets wrapped in darkness. He desperately tries to get inside the apartment but continues fumbling. Finally he turns to find her standing directly behind him. She smiles and says, "Gotcha." Against a long view of the city at night, he screams.



The next day, Lain's friends discuss the suicide of a senior at their school, and the report of another suicide (presumably that of the hunted man in the previous scene). Lain enters and startles her friends with her display of knowledge about the Wired and her computer. They feel uncomfortable about the changes in her, despite their inability to articulate it very clearly even to themselves. While shopping after school, Lain passes along the rumour that the suicides were all players of some new interactive game.



She then leaves to resume working on her computer. Immediately afterward, the little girl from the previous night appears, now seeming entirely innocent as she literally runs into Alice, apologizes, and heads off.

i can't go
where you are

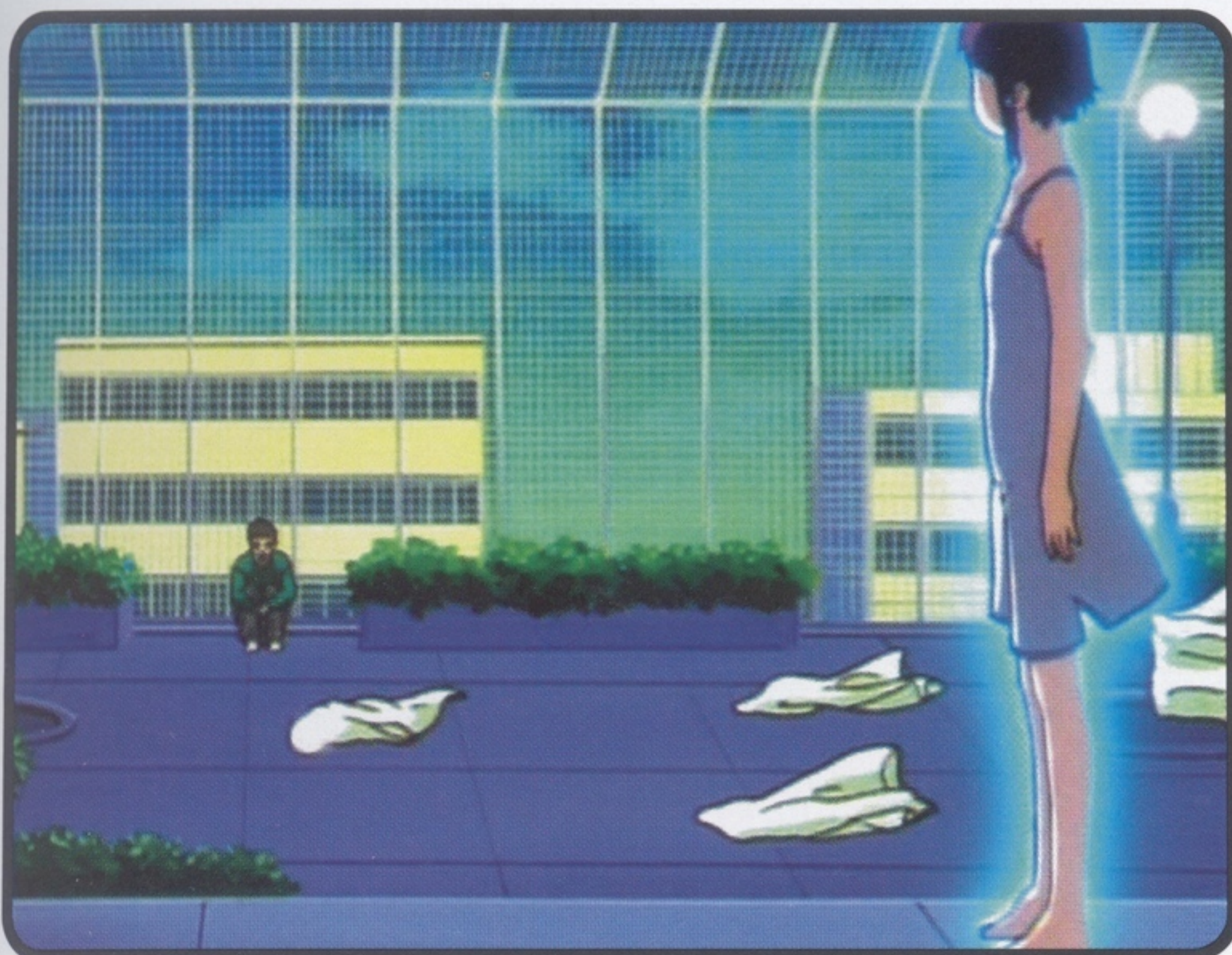
Lain checks e-mail in her room, which is filled with even more computer hardware. Her first message is from a man answering a question about motherboard configuration; he confirms her analysis, and she works away while listening to the Navi read out the message.

JJ, the Cyberia DJ, is facing the bar wall, answering a question from an unseen woman about the new popular game on the Wired, "Phantoma." When he turns around, there is nobody there, and he wonders if he is just hearing things.



A boy runs across rooftops in deep panic. We see from his point of view that he is trapped in a computer game environment and stalked by the glowing figure of Lain. Reality asserts itself and he collapses for a moment before the game's dark corridors wrap around him again, persisting even after he breaks his game computer. He flees more or less blindly. When Lain's voice tells him not to run away, he asks, "Are you a PK, too?" ("PK" is a slang abbreviation for "Player Killer," referring to participants in multi-





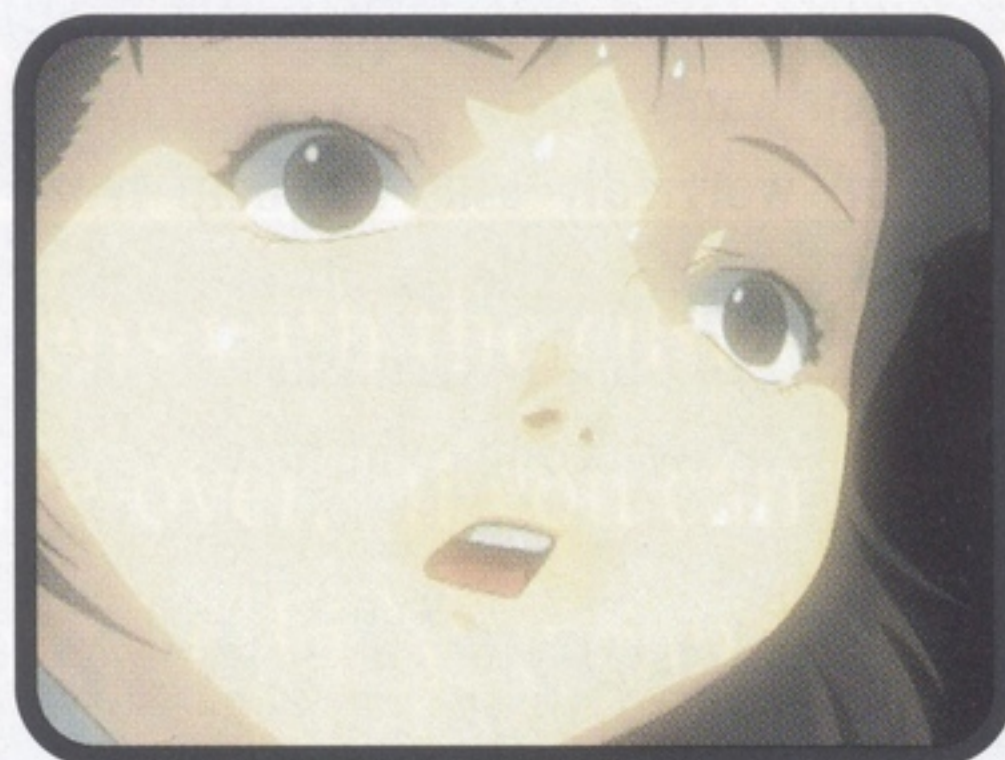
player games who kill the other characters rather than non-player-controlled adversaries). She says, "I can't go where you are," and moves to block his escape with a wall of glowing hands. He turns to find the small girl from earlier scenes right behind him. Her face contorts into an inhuman snarl and she lunges at him. He gropes for an unseen gun, calling out the steps involved in preparing it to fire; he closes his eyes, wishing it would work. It does; imaginary bullets shred through the child-demon's body, which regains its childish features as she collapses.



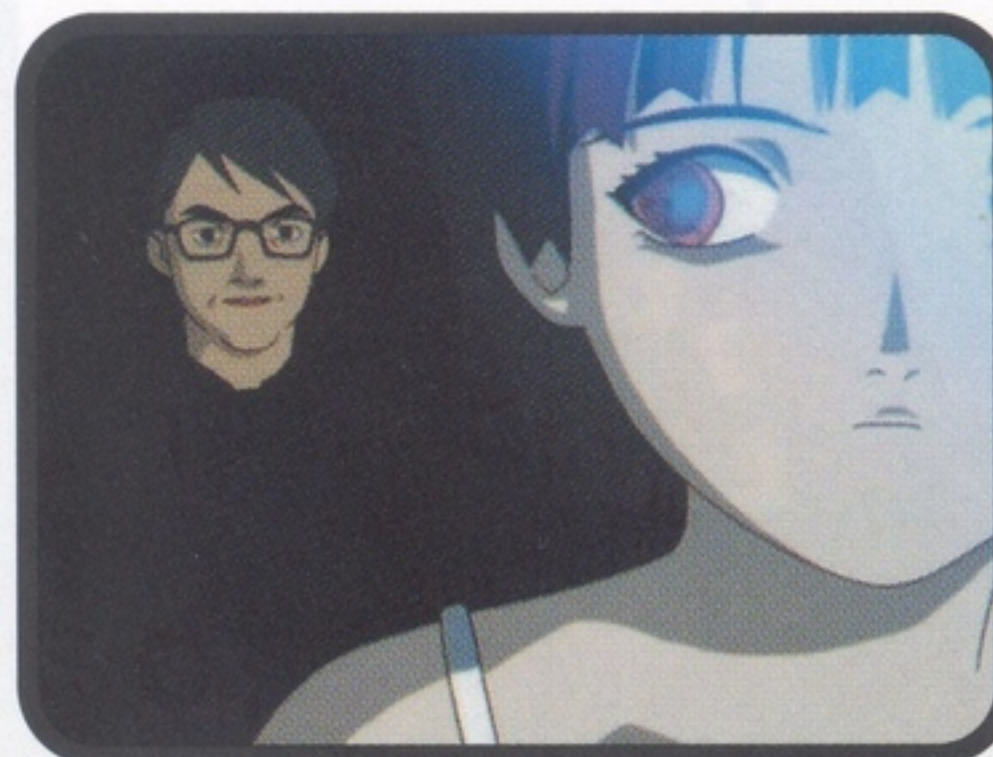
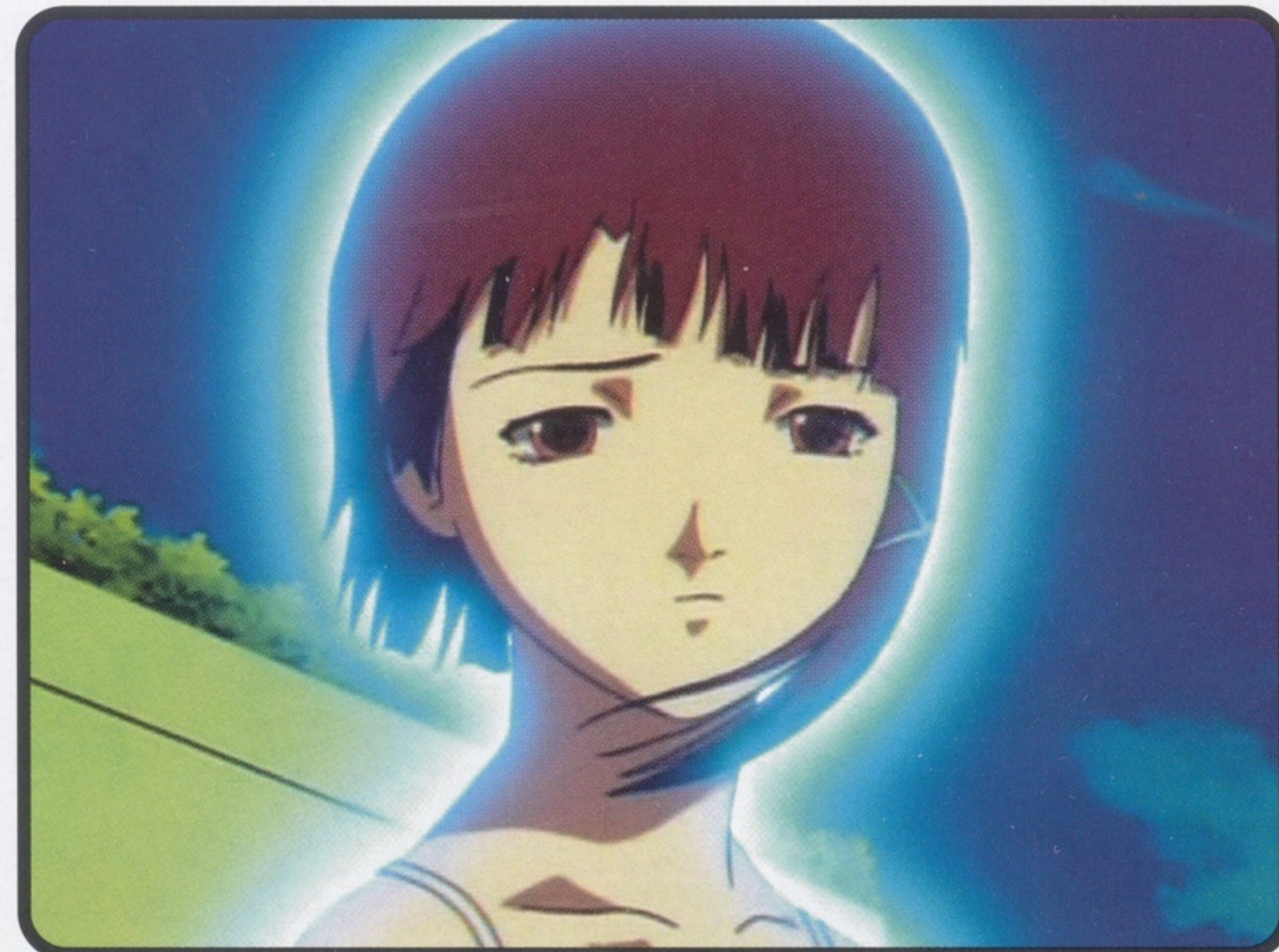
The game environment fades after his imaginary gun runs out of its ammo. He huddles on the rooftop, staring at a small body wrapped in a loose sheet. Glowing Lain watches with a sorrowful expression. After a fade to black, video



footage shows him insisting it wasn't his fault. He was playing *Phantoma*, and it somehow crossed over into a game for



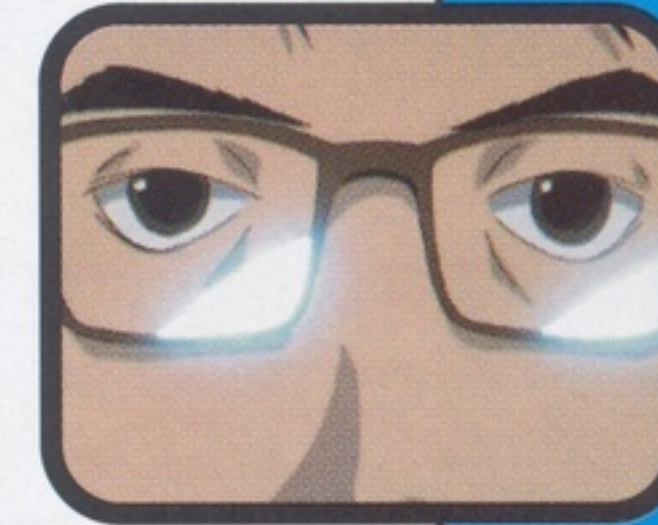
kindergarteners. He apparently shot her in reality while imagining shooting the creature in the *Wired*. Lain listens to some of this news coverage, then takes mail from JJ the DJ. He says the game itself is pretty straightforward but it exploits a peculiar hole in underlying net protocols to allow free roaming. His



friends suspect that it is the work of the Knights, the previously alluded-to mysterious hackers credited with everything innovative or unusual.



Lain's father enters. He remarks with some disapproval on her growing computer familiarity. He warns her that the *Wired* is nothing more than a communications medium, not to be confused with the real world. She disagrees, saying that the border is not so

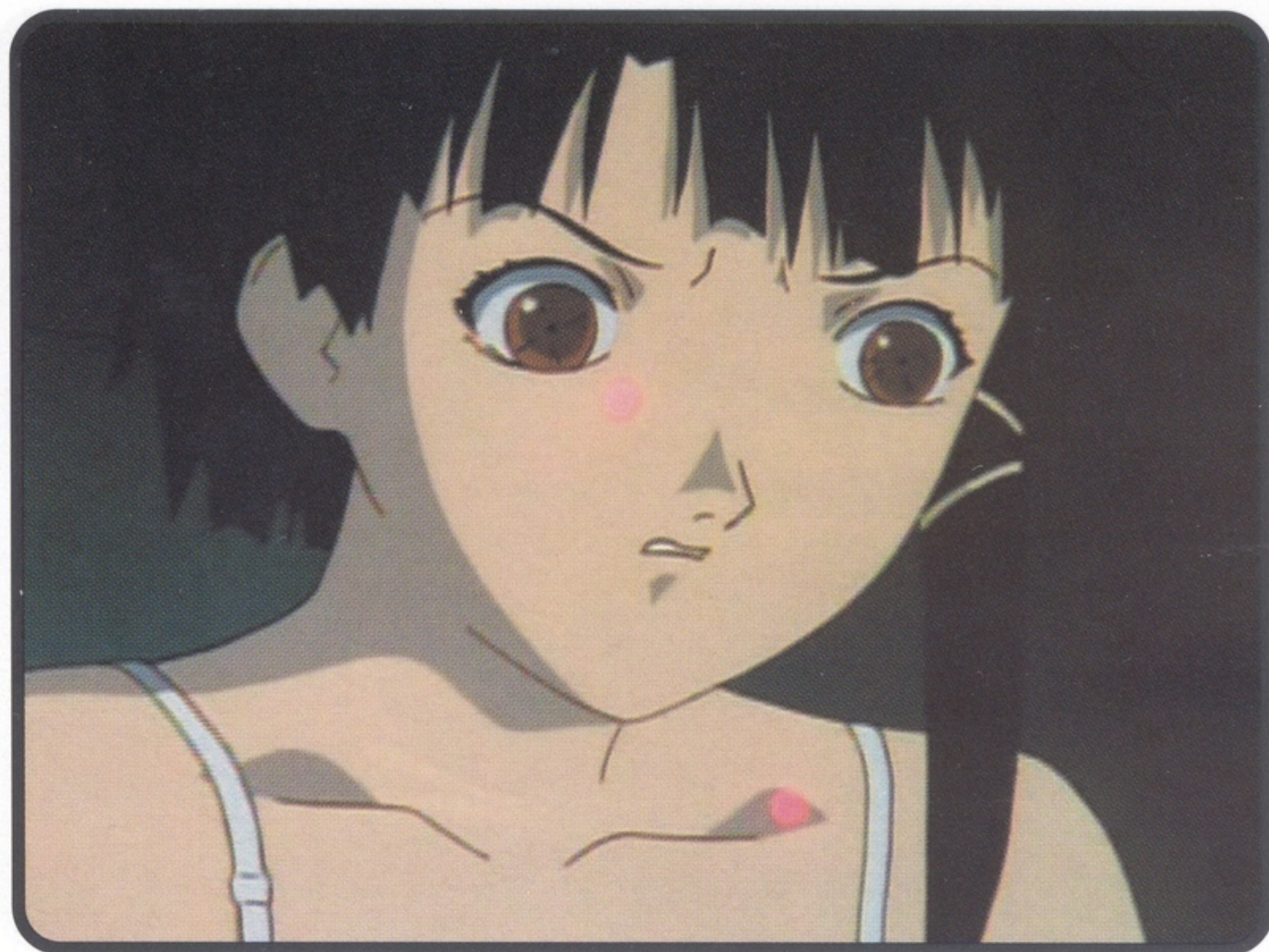
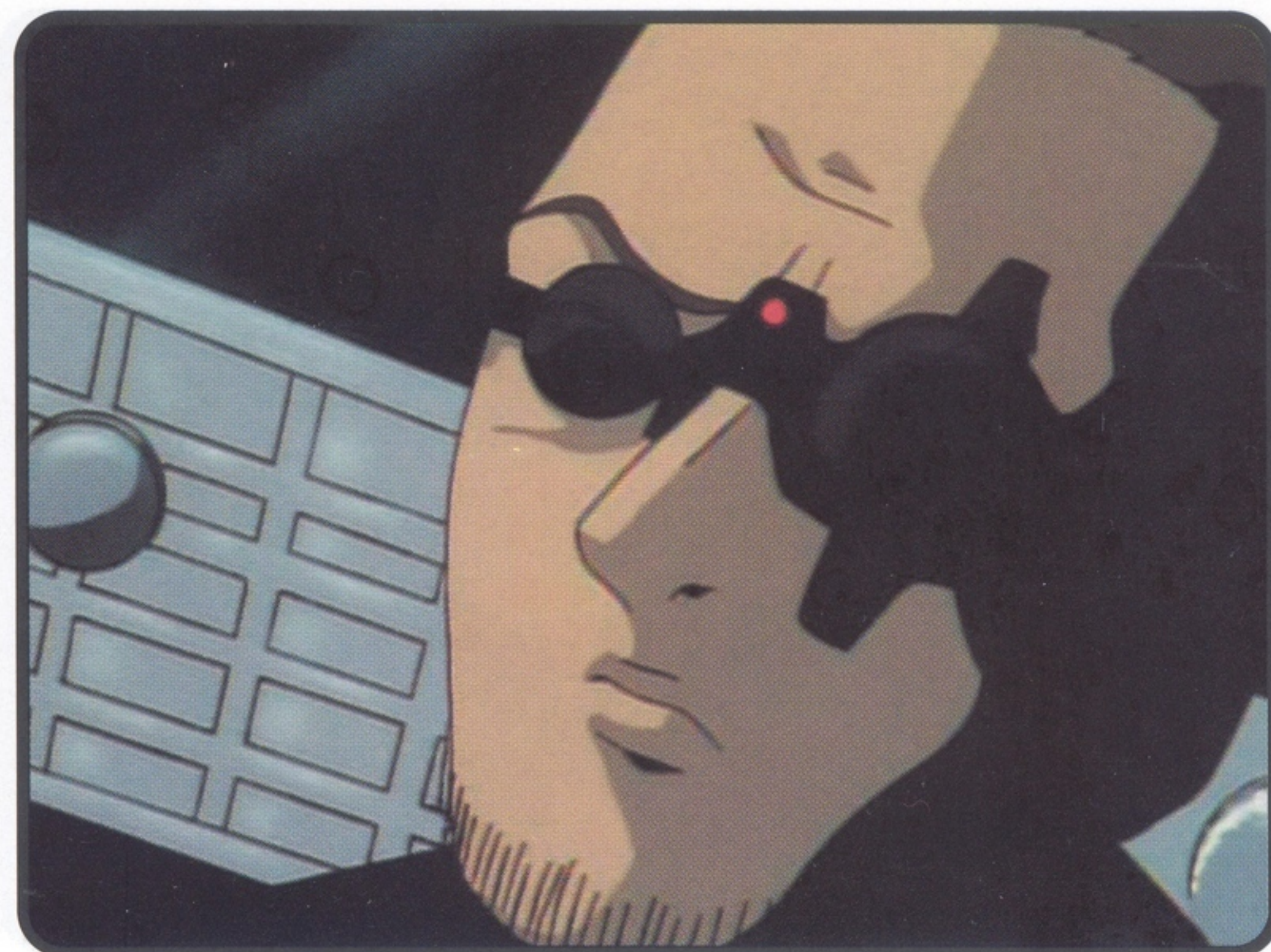
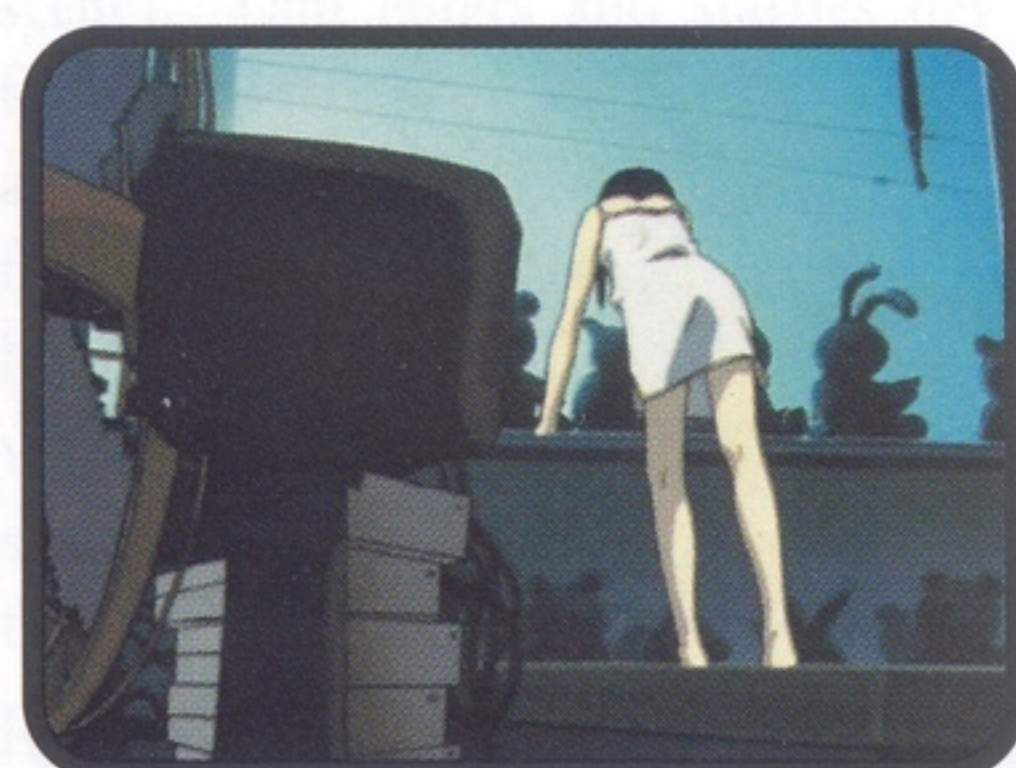




clear and that soon she will be able to project herself fully into the Wired. He seems unaware of how much computing gear she now uses, but when she smiles and says, "Don't worry, Daddy, I'm still me," he is aware enough of changes to answer, "Sometimes I wonder."



After he leaves, Lain resumes her monitoring of the Wired and its traffic: angry lovers, someone shouting "Damn you! Damn you!" over and over, junk



commercial e-mail, an earnest explanation that the Knights are a concept existing in the Wired rather than a real-world group, a request for a date (apparently from someone wanting to go out with Lain). A woman worriedly asks for help from anyone, saying she is always being followed, and Chisa's voice asks Lain once again, "Why won't you come here?"

why won't you
come here?

Lain looks up from her computer and sees laser light on the walls. She steps to the window and finds the men in black looking up at her, their targeting systems tracking her face. When she

shouts at them to leave, a ripple of force lashes out, shattering the lens of one man and sending a surge of energy through her computer. The episode ends with a security monitor saying, "Intruder interrupted" while Lain continues staring at the retreating men in black.

Hal Power 5000

In the briefest seconds after Lain lashes out and destroys the MIB's goggles, the scene quickly flashes over to the computer where a stream of activity surges through the hard-drive. The computer brand name? Hal Power 5000. In 1968, Stanley Kubrick produced and directed his seminal piece, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, based on Arthur C. Clark's "The Sentinel." A frightening glimpse into humanity's past and future, the movie's most human component is HAL 9000, a neurotic program who suffers a nervous breakdown and murders the ship's crew. Now whether this is an artist's joke or not remains unknown, but given 2001 deals with humanity's engineered evolution, people as commodities, and society's often primitive nature, it is more likely the movie influenced Lain's creators. This leaves the audience to wonder whether Lain's ending is somehow similar to 2001, where its main character undergoes an apotheosis into the foetus of an eventual superbeing (at the hands of aliens playing God no less).



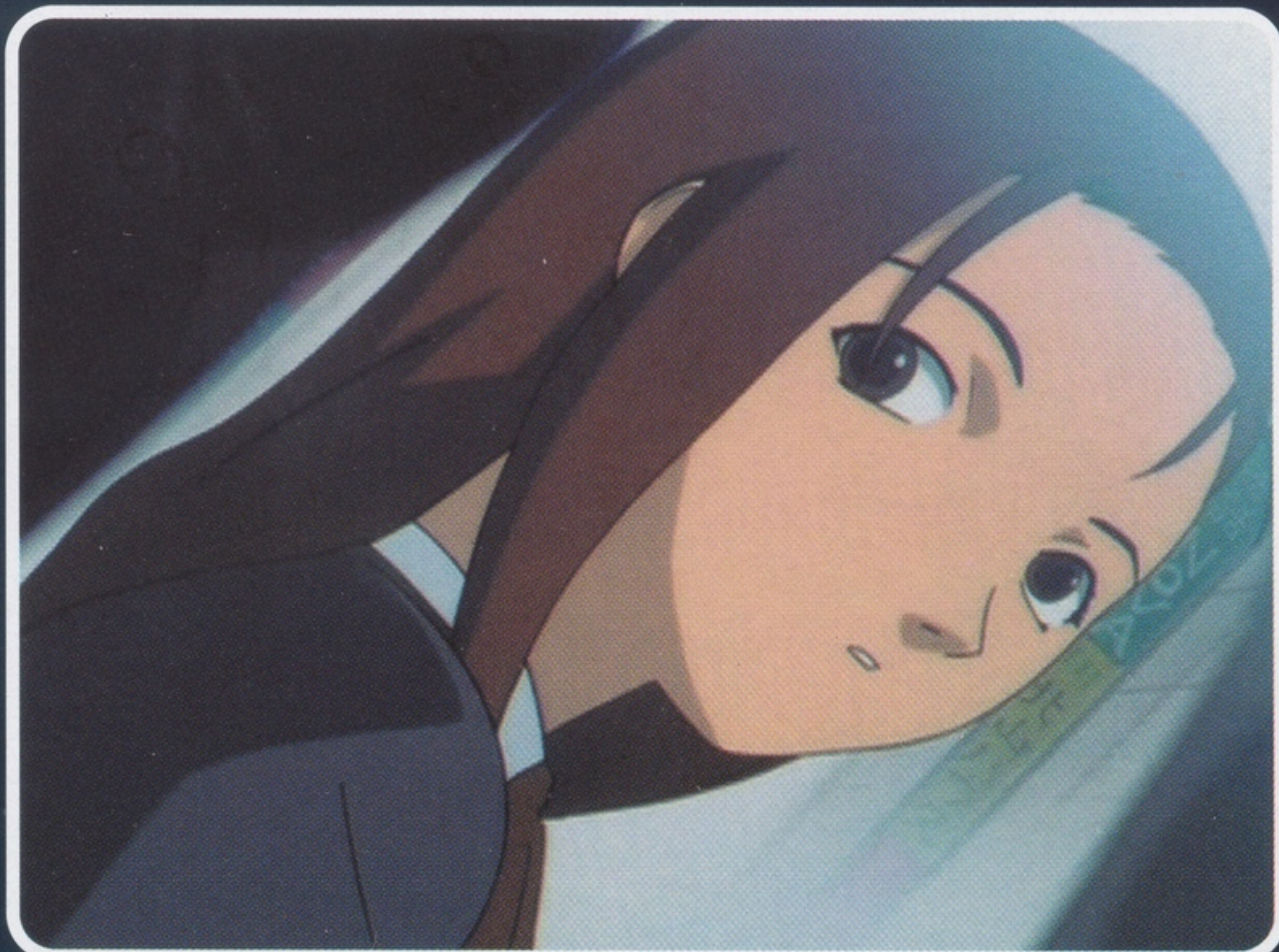
Layer 05: Distortion opens with the customary cityscape. Lain says in voice-over, "If you can hear it, then it's speaking to you, and if you can see it, then it's yours to have."



The disembodied male voice, which has spoken to Lain before, speaks over video footage of the city, ranting about how humanity has lost the capacity to evolve. He denounces it as a pointless species, suitable only for gratifying physical pleasures and lacking purpose or direction. The



video footage gives way to views of Lain in the midst of the crowd, and he speaks directly to her, telling her that she does not have to remain stuck in humanity. The Wired exists as a way out. She asks who he is, and receives the answer, "I ... God."



serial experiments lain

Episode Summary Layer: 05



Mika dresses and leaves her boyfriend's bedroom. Downtown, she has a close brush with an out-of-control speeding car. Meanwhile, Lain asks one of her dolls to tell her a story. It answers



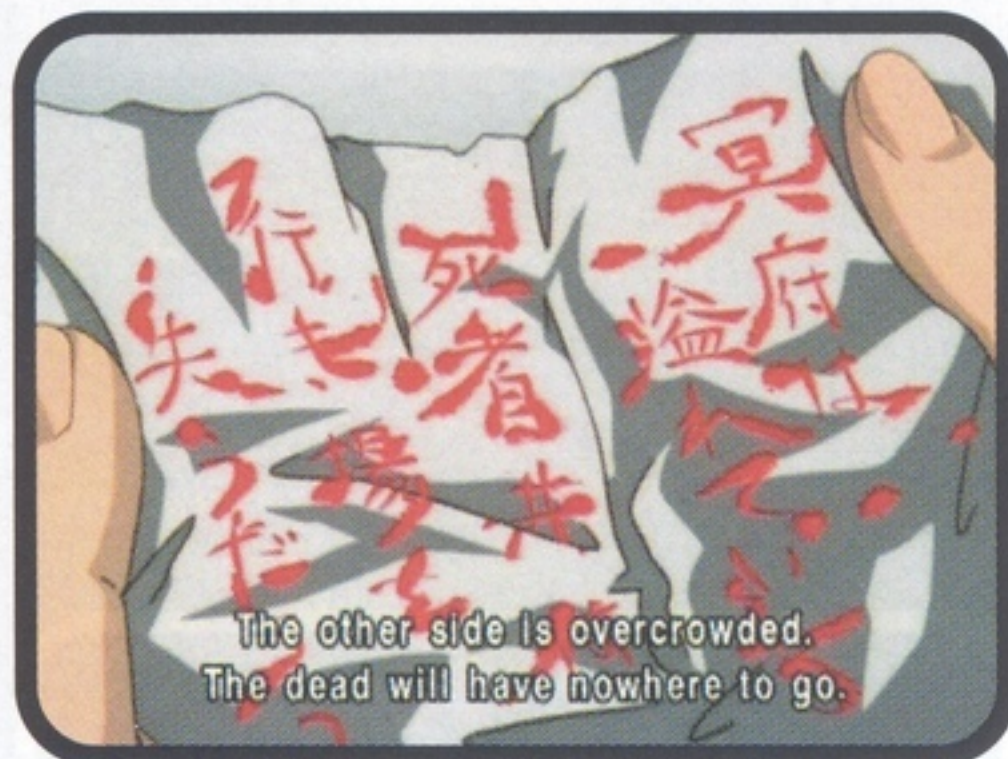
in a mature woman's voice that she already knows everything that exists in the world. The woman goes on to add,

DISTORTION

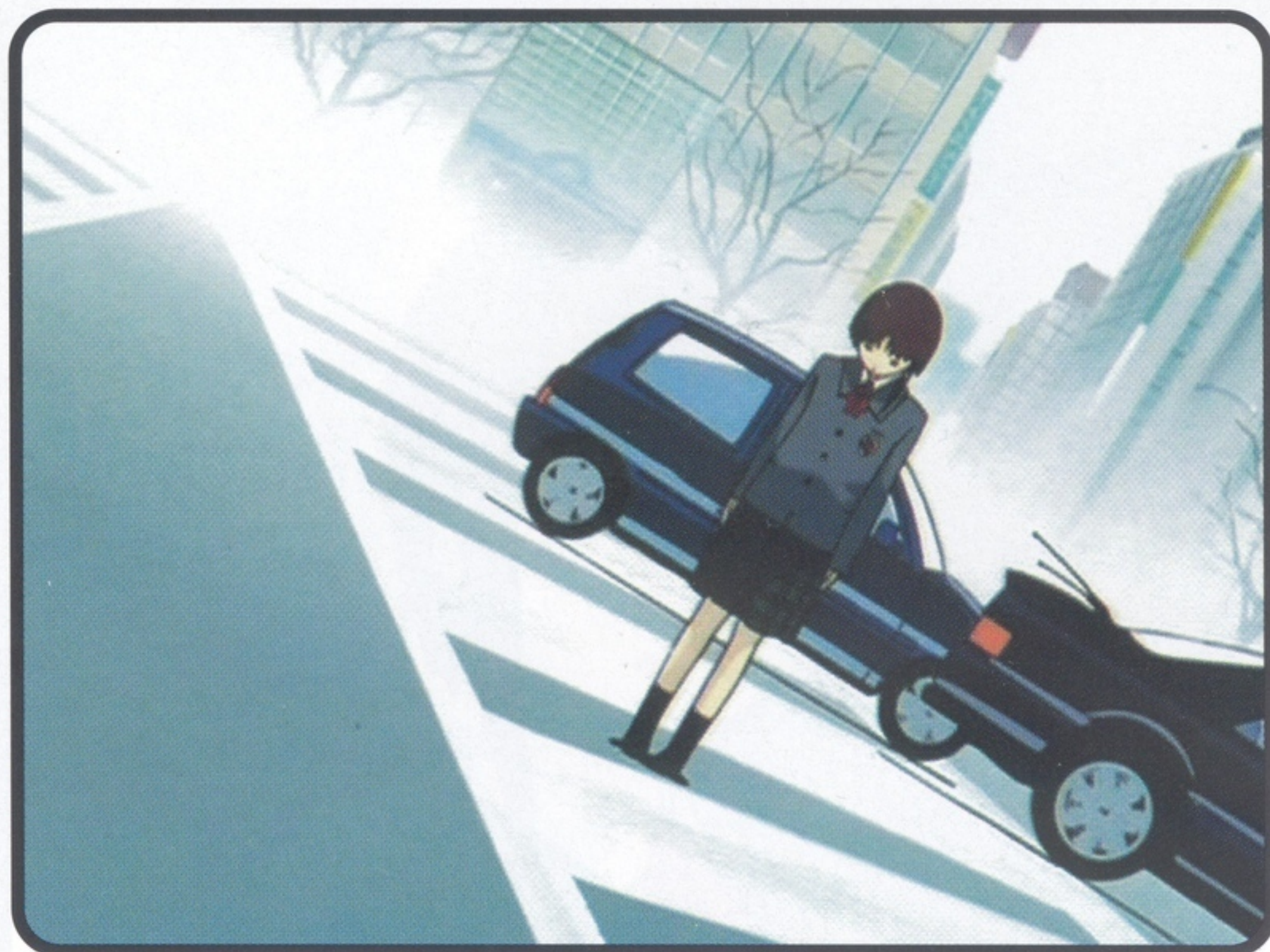
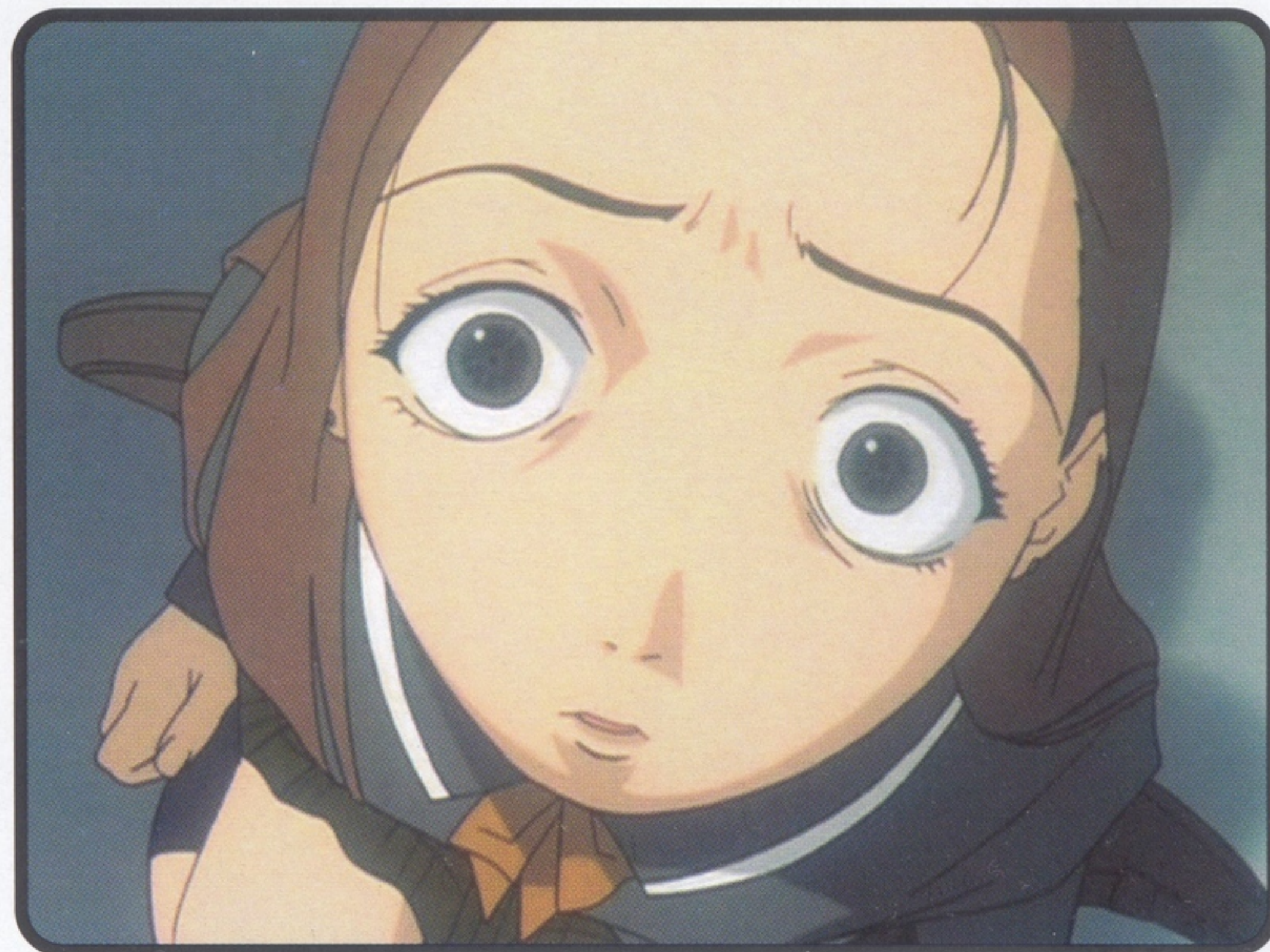




"For every event, there is first a prophecy foreshadowing the event. An event first comes into existence when there is a prophecy." Lain asks who makes the prophecies, but receives no answer. The Navi displays a news item about how erroneous data made computer-controlled cars and traffic signals misbehave, causing one death and multiple accidents.



Lain heads downtown and just misses her sister; both receive packets of tissues from a passing street vendor. The boy who told Lain about her Psyche brashly asks Mika for a date and knocks her arm so she spills her drink. She opens the tissues to blot the spill, only to find a message written on them: "The other side is overcrowded. The dead will have nowhere to go." Angrily, she tosses



it away. Bystanders call her attention to Lain standing in the middle of traffic, repeating quietly, "Everyone gets connected, everyone gets connected." Mika looks up to see Lain's face displayed on one of the billboard video screens.

the prophecy will be fulfilled

After a fade to black, the scene shifts back to Lain in her bedroom, in her nightgown. She speaks this time to a decorative mask, which says in a deep male voice, "The prophecy will be fulfilled." It explains that history is not random occurrences, but events linked on a line, or rather *made* to connect to a

line. She asks again who makes this happen, and again receives no answer.



At school, Lain's friends ask if she was responsible for the traffic hack. Someone claiming to be her took credit for it, and they are not entirely certain she was not responsible. Back home, she listens to a news item; the Ministry of Information Control acknowledges that the traffic problems were a deliberate act but that the Ministry has taken steps to ensure it does not happen again. The news display on Lain's Navi dissolves into the same view of her face that Mika saw in public.



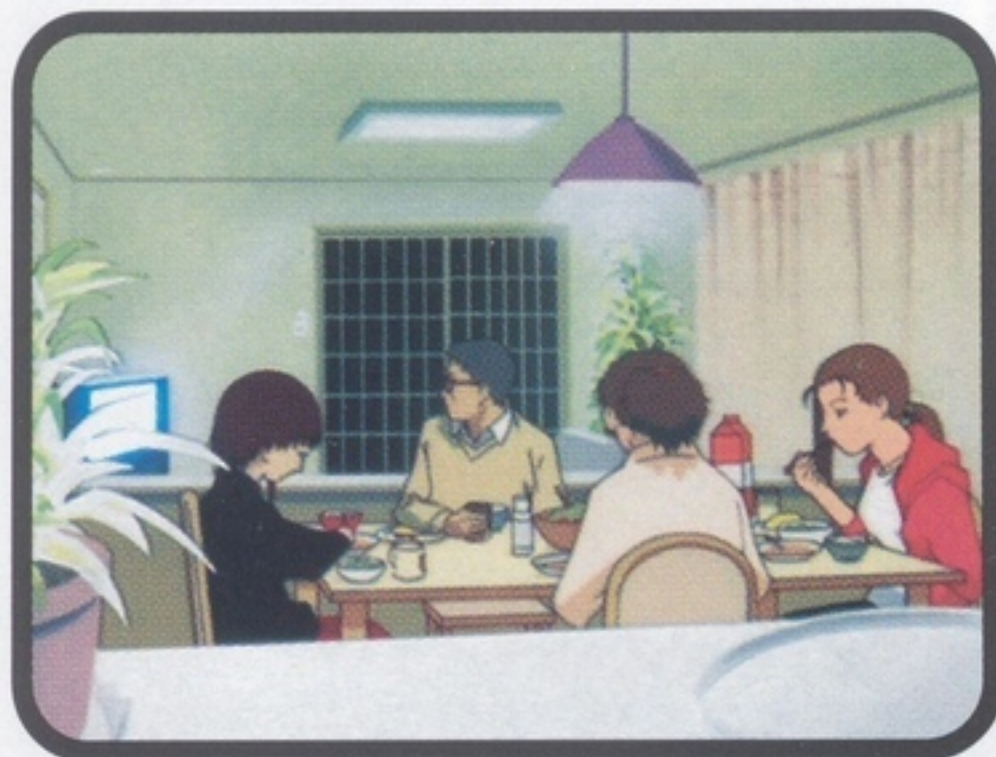
In a fast food restaurant, Alice receives spam, junk e-mail, and mentions that she keeps receiving mail saying, "The prophecy must be fulfilled." She says her geek friends think it might be



the work of the Knights, though her friends are sceptical. Alice wonders; whoever they are, they are not in it for either fun or money, but for some other purpose altogether.



In her room, Lain speaks to a ghostly manifestation of her mother, which tells her that the Wired is an "upper layer" of reality. Physical existence is merely a hologram, a



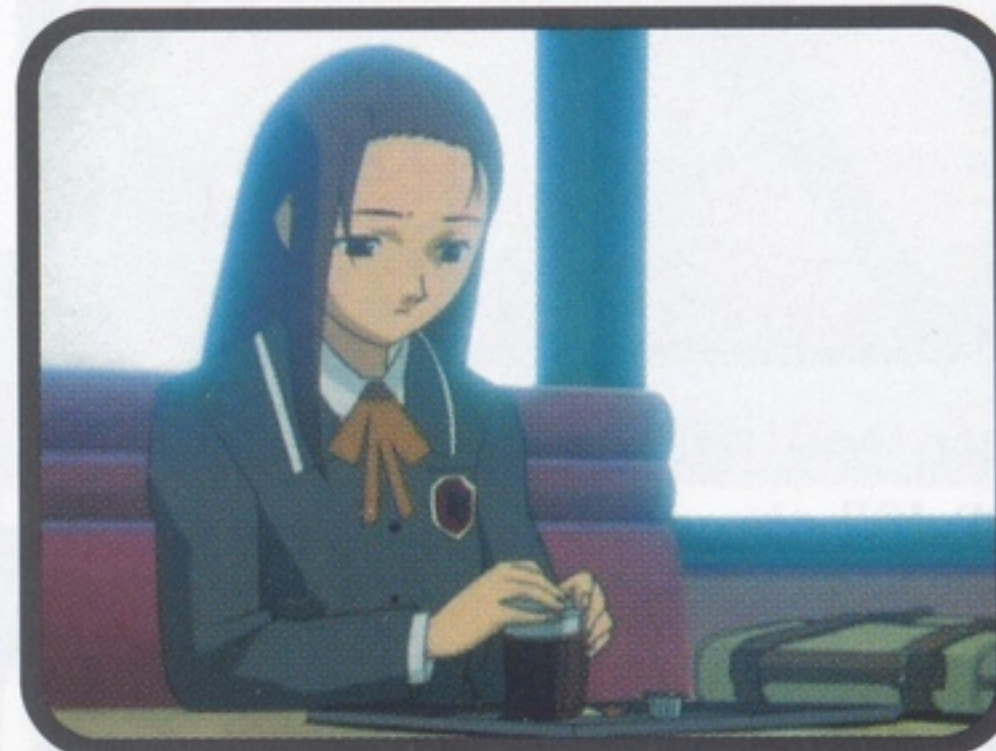
projection from the Wired. The flow of information manifests through electrical impulses to provide a readily comprehensible validation for existence, but the body is secondary to the world of the Wired. The figure dissolves without answering Lain's question as to whether it is really her mother.

At dinner, Mika starts to mention seeing Lain downtown, but cannot continue, and breaks off. Mika stares into her milk, and after a dissolve to white, finds herself in the middle of traffic, where she saw Lain. The bystanders dissolve into vague grey ghosts. Obviously frightened, she

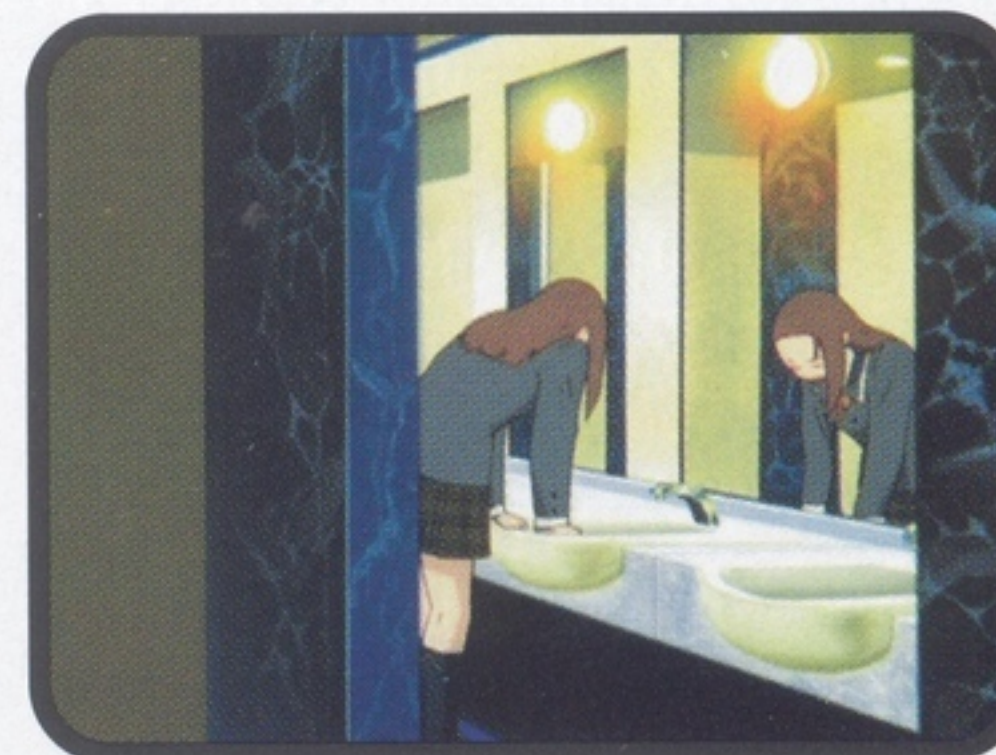


glances up after something overshadows her. For now we see only its shadow; it

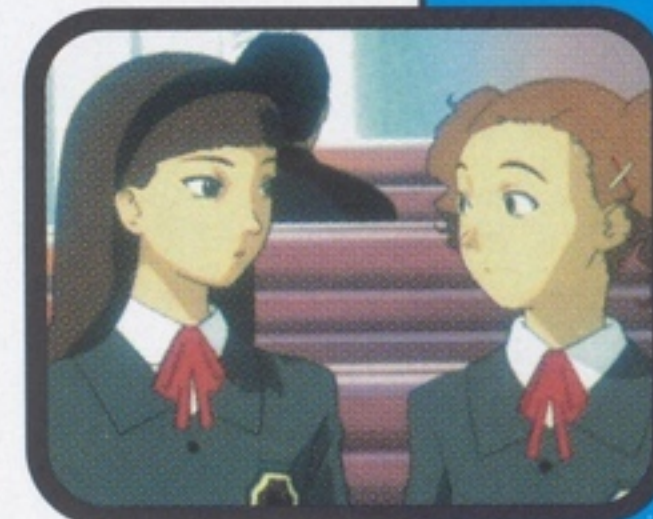
resembles a pair of callipers measuring a pyramid, with dagger-like characters arranged in a ring around it. The thing is apparently huge and looms over her.

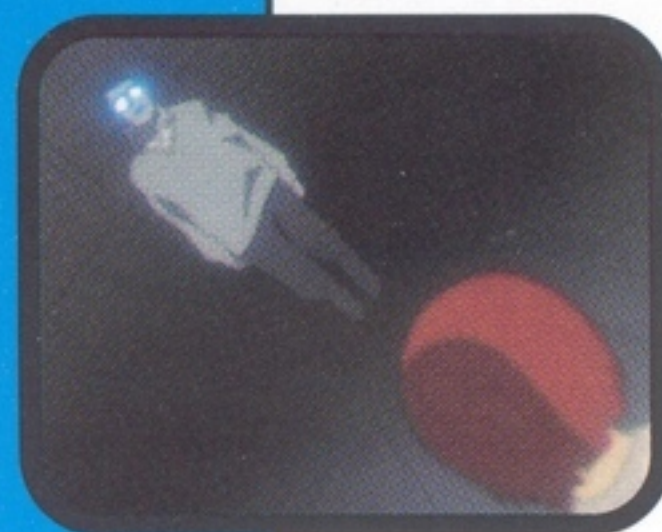


Mika comes to her senses after a fade to black and is now sitting in a restaurant. Other people happily chat at other booths. She spills her coffee, but before she can wipe it up, the spill draws into itself, leaving gaps that spell out, "Fulfill the prophecy." Mika stands up,



and finds herself alone; everyone else is suddenly gone. There is a brief flash of blue static, as in the opening credits, after which Mika tries to regain composure in the restaurant's bathroom. The lights go out, and a stall door swings open. Reluctantly, she steps inside. The door swings shut behind

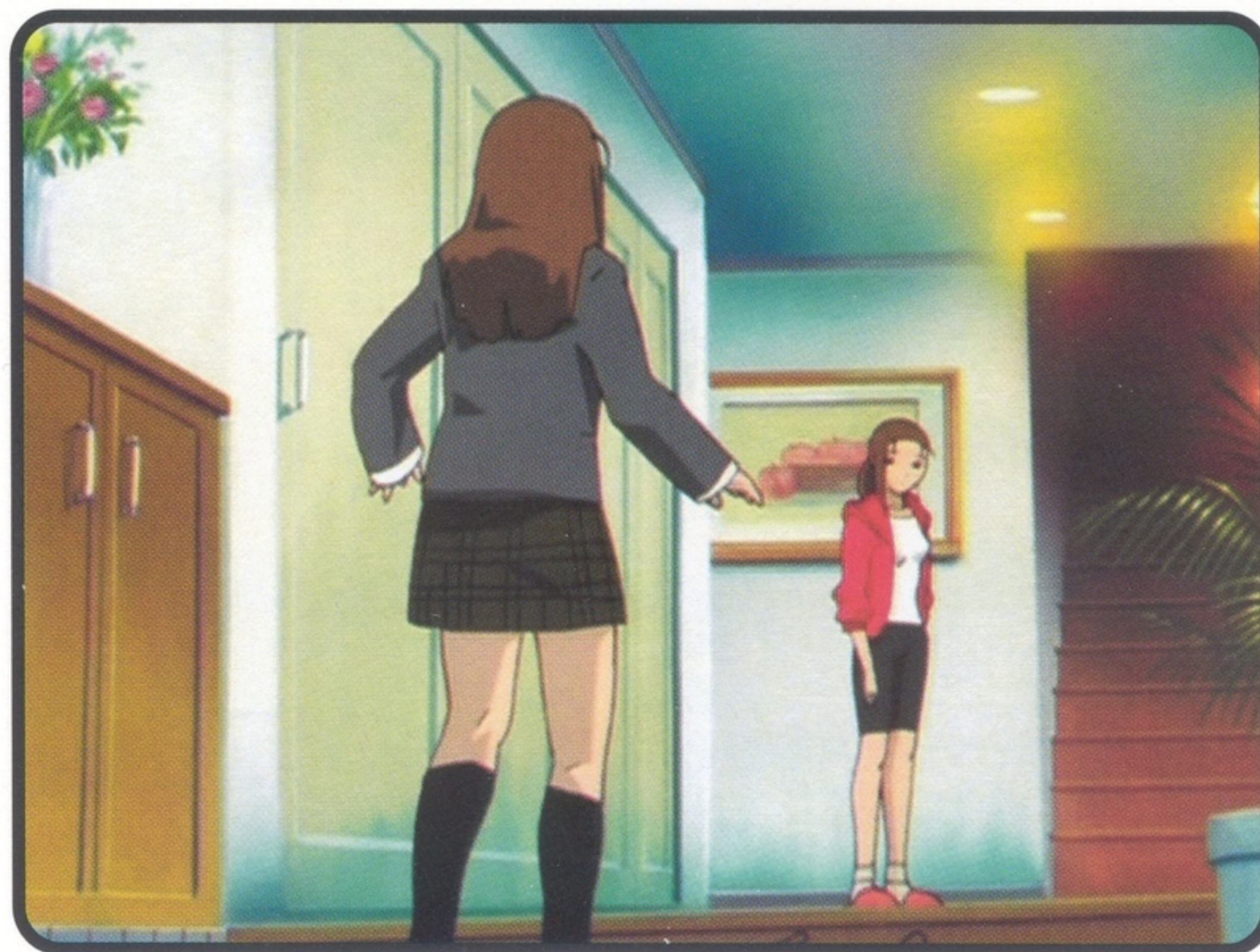
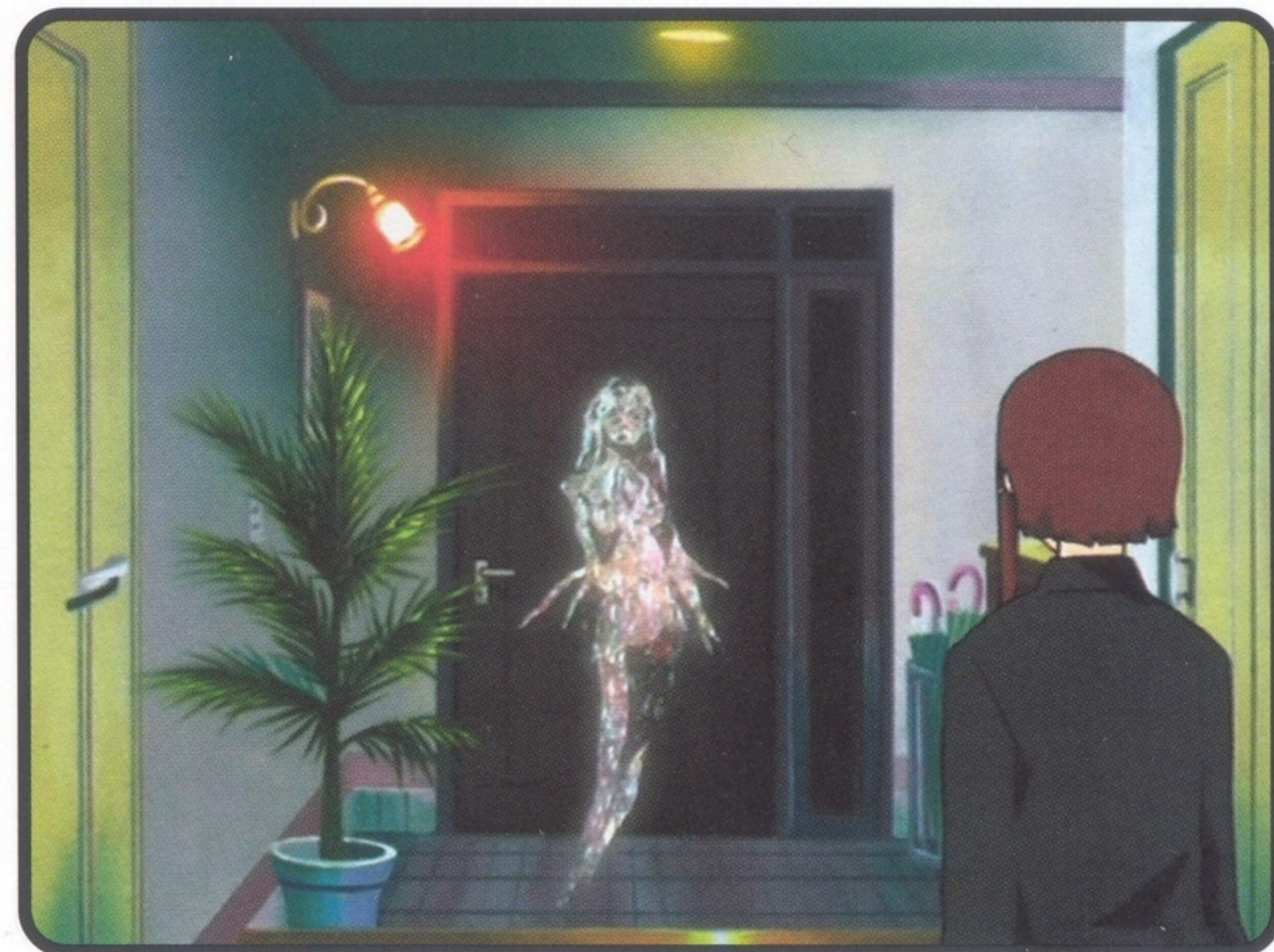




her, and red characters proclaiming, "Fulfill the prophecy," fill the stall's interior walls.



We next see Lain in her bedroom, speaking to a ghostly version of her father. It points out the Wired may be an entire realm created by electrical and electronic activity but not consisting merely of electron flows. If it is a world of its own, then it can quite plausibly have its own God, the "Deus of the Wired."



That God could conceivably cross back over the electronic bridge to affect the real world just as the real world affects the Wired. "It's true, in the form of a prophecy," the figure says before disappearing.

if if people can connect...

Now utterly exhausted and panic-stricken, Mika staggers home, slumping against the inside of the front door. A duplicate of her, dressed casually rather than in a school uniform, walks down the hall to stare blankly at her. Lain walks up and asks the duplicate what is the matter. "It's nothing, nothing at all," the second



Mika responds, and she is nearly correct. The original Mika is now gone, leaving behind only shimmering lights that show her with an anguished expression before dissipating altogether. The second Mika heads upstairs. Lain enters her room, its walls now completely covered with computing gear, and looks into Navi's monitor. The episode ends with her asking, "Who will it be today?"



serial experiments Lain

Episode Summary Layer: 06

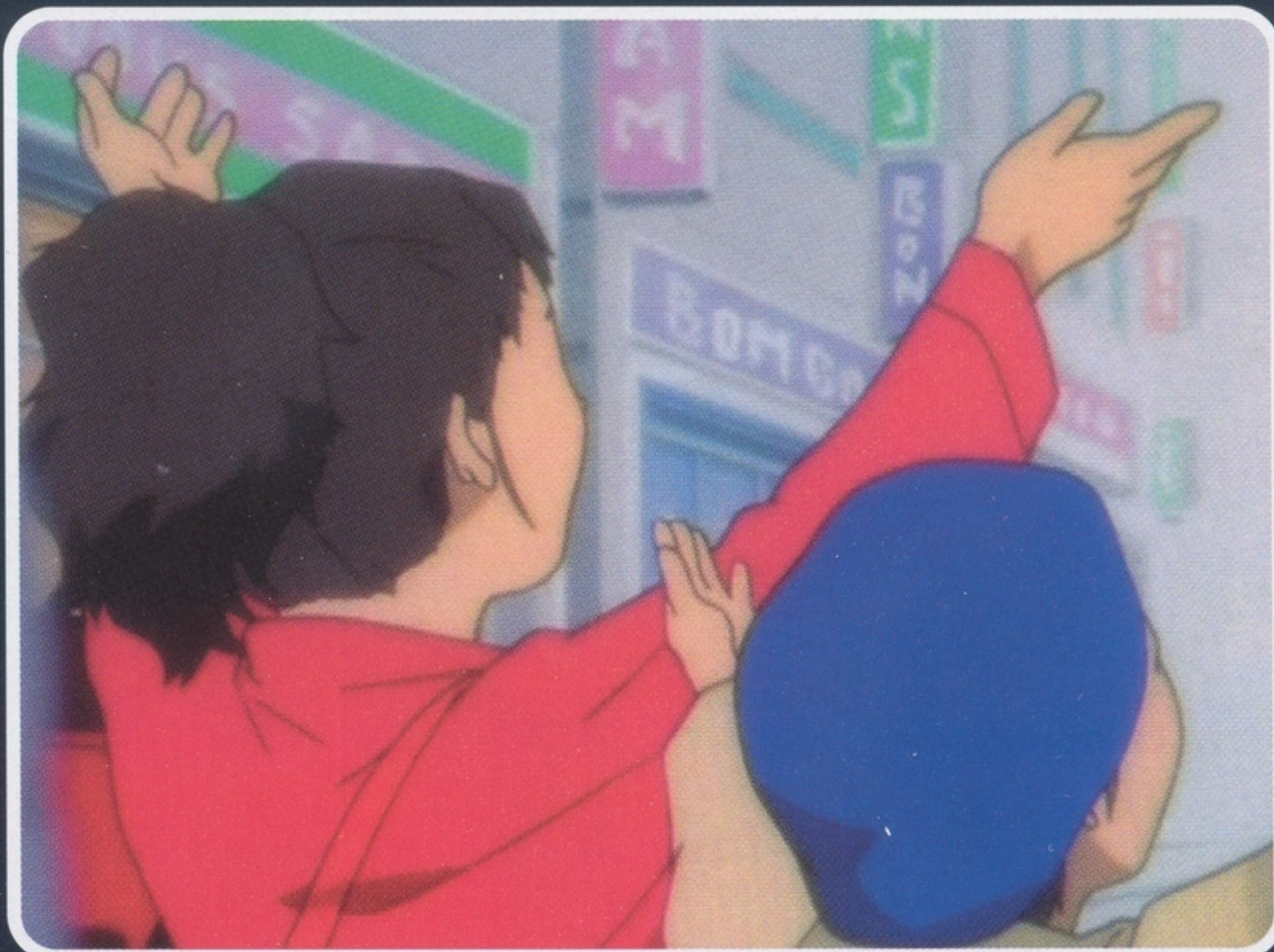


Layer 06: Kids opens with the usual views of the city. A woman says in voice-over, "If people can connect to one another, even the smallest of voices will grow loud. If people can connect to one another, even their lives will grow longer. So."

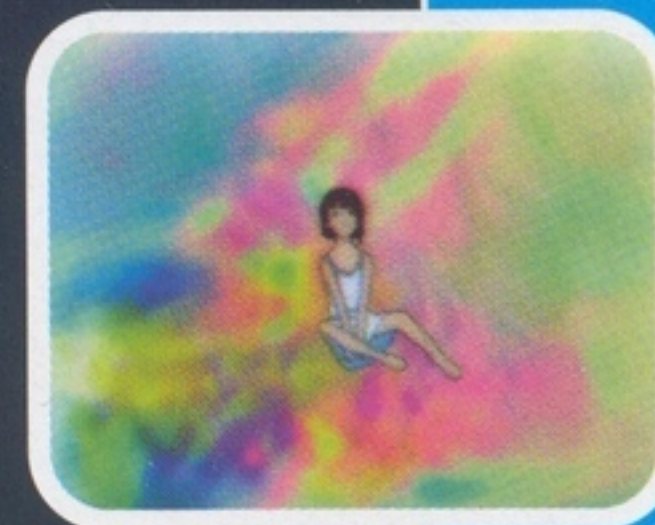


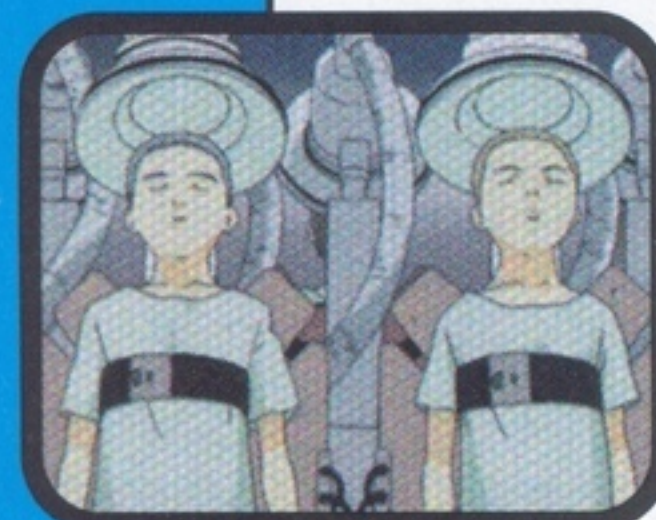
Mr. Iwakura approaches and enters Lain's room with some trepidation. Cutting-edge (and beyond-cutting-edge) hardware, puddles of cooling fluid on the floor, and holographic displays fill the room. Lain stares into the monitor. We see her point of view as a consciousness in the Wired, drifting in a white void. Others speak to her in incomprehensible bass rumbles and rainbow flares of light. She clearly understands everything they say, and identifies her friendly contacts as the Knights.

Walking down the street toward school, she sees a boy standing with arms outstretched toward the sky, as if adoring something he sees but she does not. In class, her friends try to draw her out of her burgeoning Wired obsession. Reika



rejects the notion that Wired contacts are comparable to face-to-face friends, and while the others disagree somewhat, they share her concern. The quartet goes out shopping, and they all notice more children in the arms-upraised posture of the boy Lain saw earlier. Lain peers up into the sky, and now sees the clouds part to reveal a celestial figure, glowing with





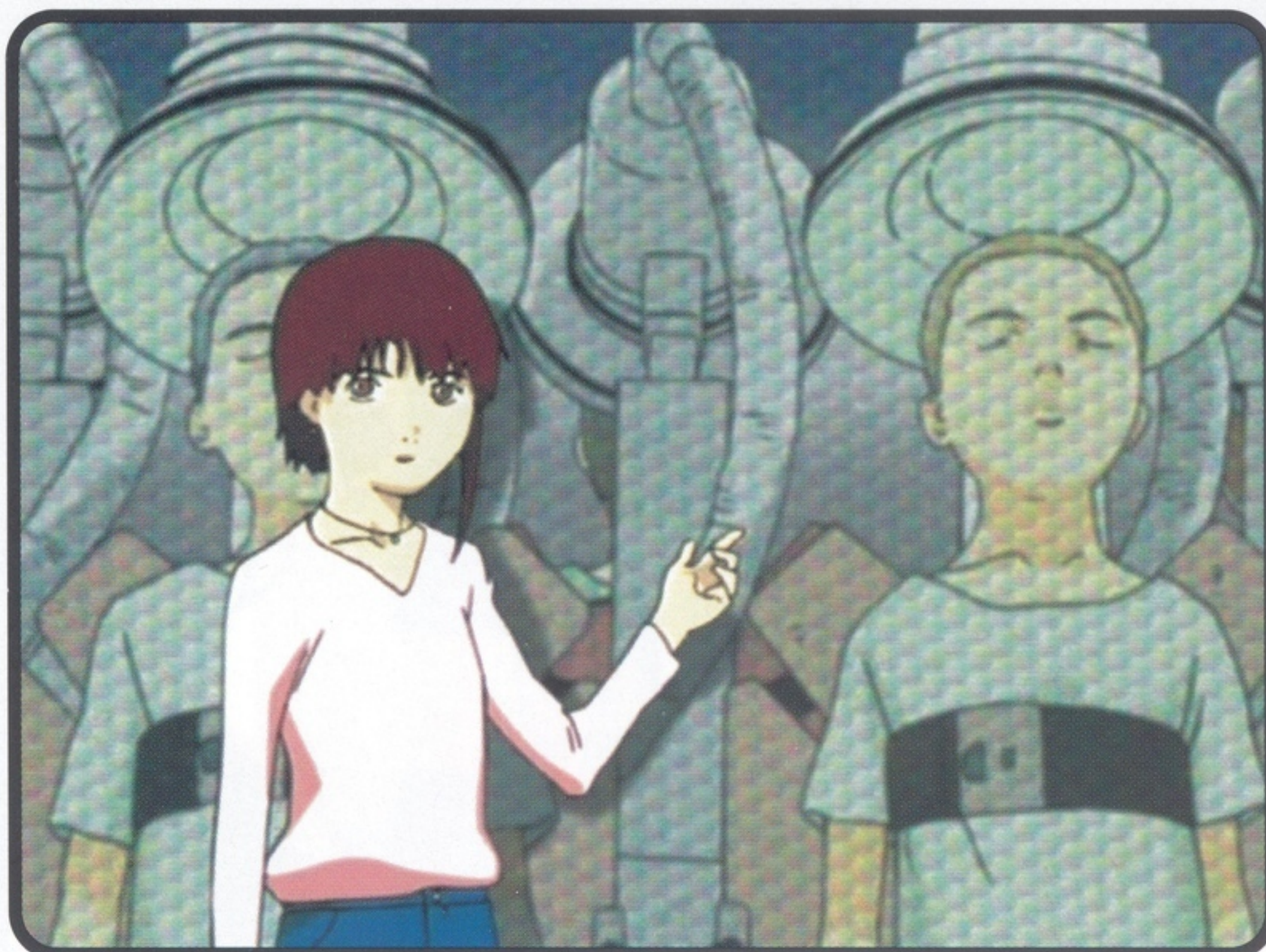
light. It is her. Alice and the others see it as well; the background crowd noises suggest that adults do, too.



At home, Mrs. Iwakura speaks distractedly to the second Mika, who responds only in vague grunts. Lain passes them by to go to her room. A news item refers to the apparition, but she dismisses it to connect to the Wired. After a transition through geometric patterns, Lain stands on a white path floating in a limitless black void. Another master user speaks to her as a



giant floating mouth, doling out tidbits of information in response to her impatient queries. She passes on to a door-like slab showing an old man she identifies as "the child-killer scientist," somehow associated with Phantoma.

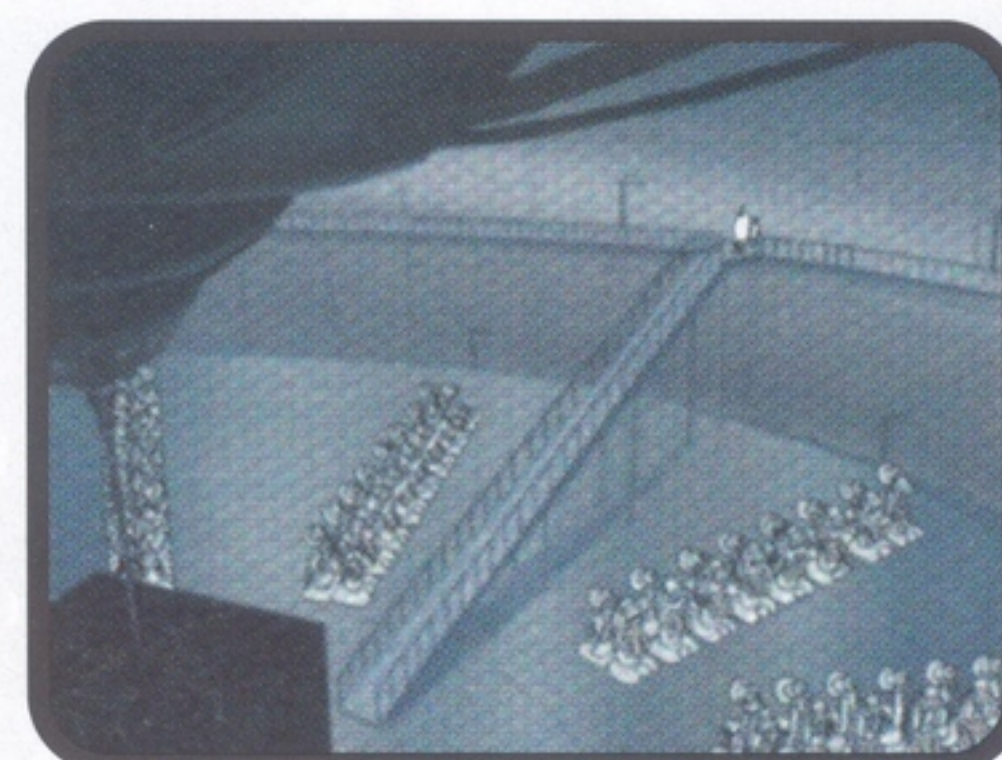


The slab takes on three-dimensional form. She addresses the figure as Professor Hodgson, telling him to tell her all about it.

you are truly blessed



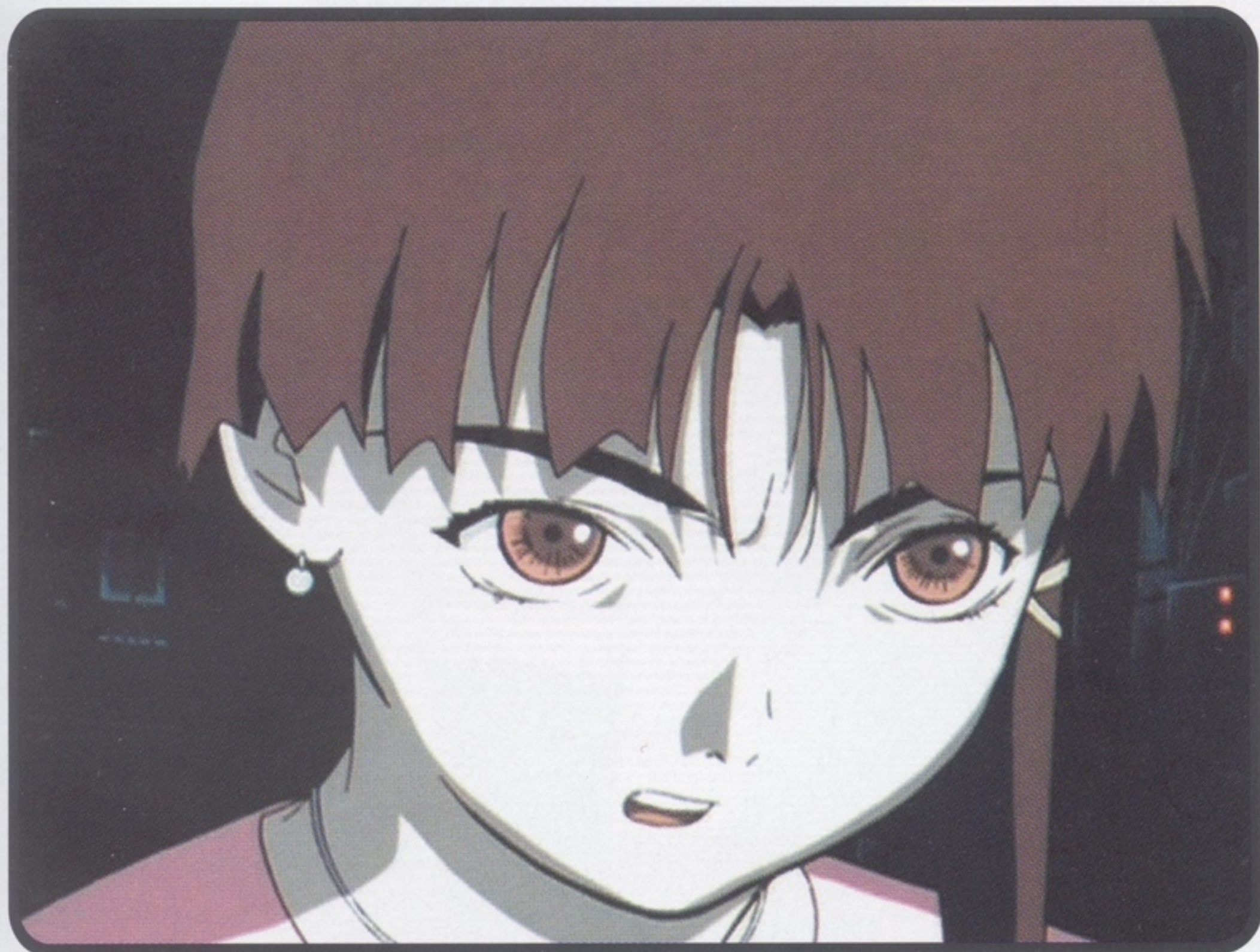
The scene blurs into a sunset landscape, a stone balcony platform covered in vines. The professor reclines in a lounge chair and speaks tiredly. She demands information about fifteen-year-



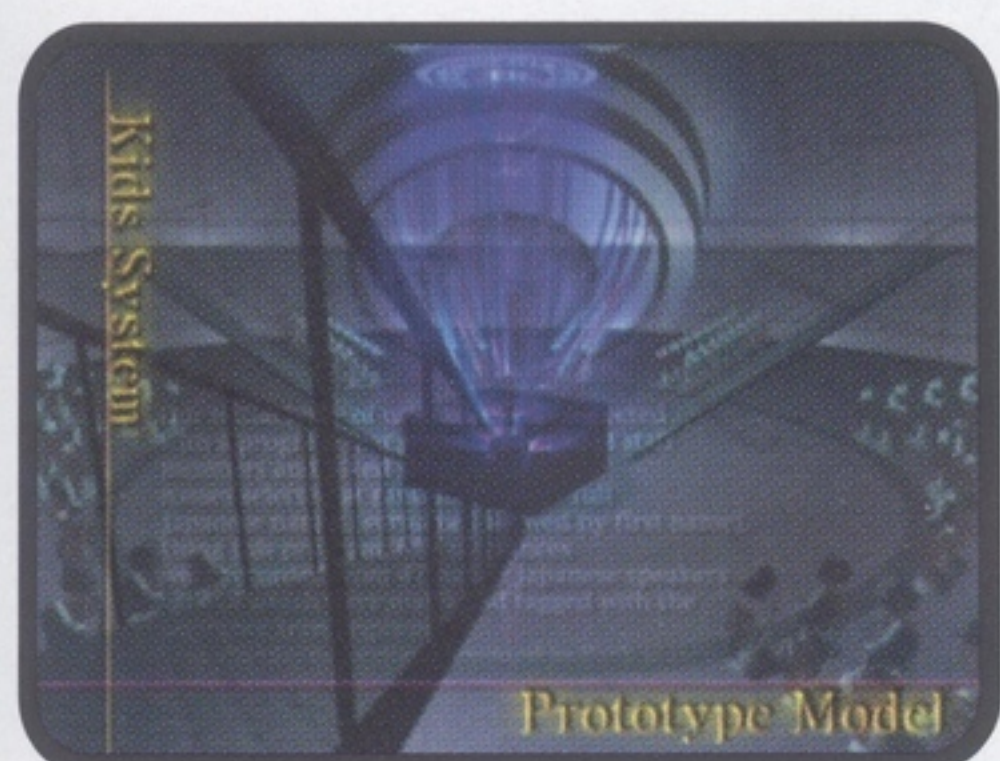
old experiments, which Phantoma is reproducing. He says he thought he had destroyed all the data, and that someone else is doing the work now. He goes on to explain that his work involved the creation of receptors capable of picking up children's latent psionic energy. The K.I.D.s system would harness this energy for constructive, transformative



purposes. Unfortunately, it did not work the way he intended. It created feedback loops, destroying the minds of the children involved and unleashing terrible destruction. Hodgson smashed



the equipment, but someone found his schematics and used them as the basis for Phantoma. The game taps into psi energy without the need for the K.I.D.s hardware.



She demands to know whether any of this troubles him. He is consumed by guilt but feels helpless; she rejects this as self-centred cowardice. He finally turns from reflective monologue to address her directly, saying, "If there is a God in the Wired, you are truly blessed," recognizing tremendous potential in her. After warning her that she faces unknown opponents, he fades out, at last finding the death for which he had hoped. The sunset realm dissolves, leaving her at a crossroads of the white path. She says to herself, "The Knights."



In her room, Lain slumps in front of her computer. She shouts angrily at someone in the Wired, demanding to know why they were manipulating people.

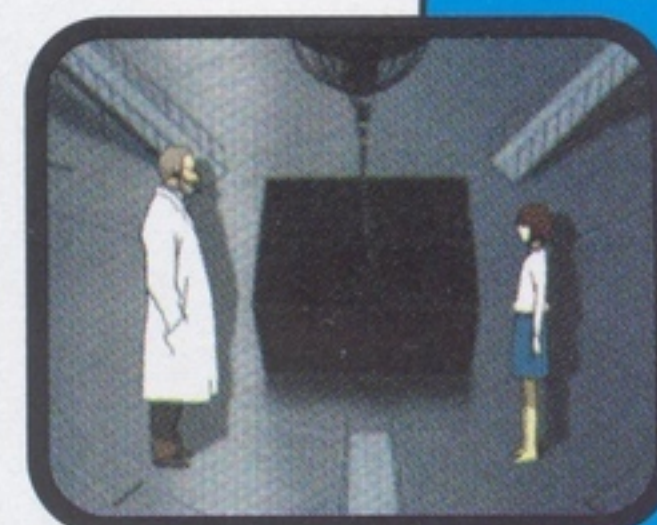


The liquid in the hardware's cooling systems bubble more vigorously; Lain accuses the Knights of using Phantoma's players for their own ends, adding, "You're nothing but a pathetic bunch of losers!" There is no answer to that, or to her mocking laughter that follows.



The men in black again scan her room from the street. She steps outside to confront them, demanding to know whether they are the Knights. They do not answer directly, saying only, "Please get down." An explosion rips through Lain's room. They say it was "only the cooling system" and that "they" must have planted a parasite bomb there. As the men in black enter their car to drive off, they answer Lain's question about her assailants with the simple declaration, "The Knights."

The episode ends with Lain standing baffled on the sidewalk, assimilating the idea that there are opponents to the Knights at work as well as the Knights themselves.







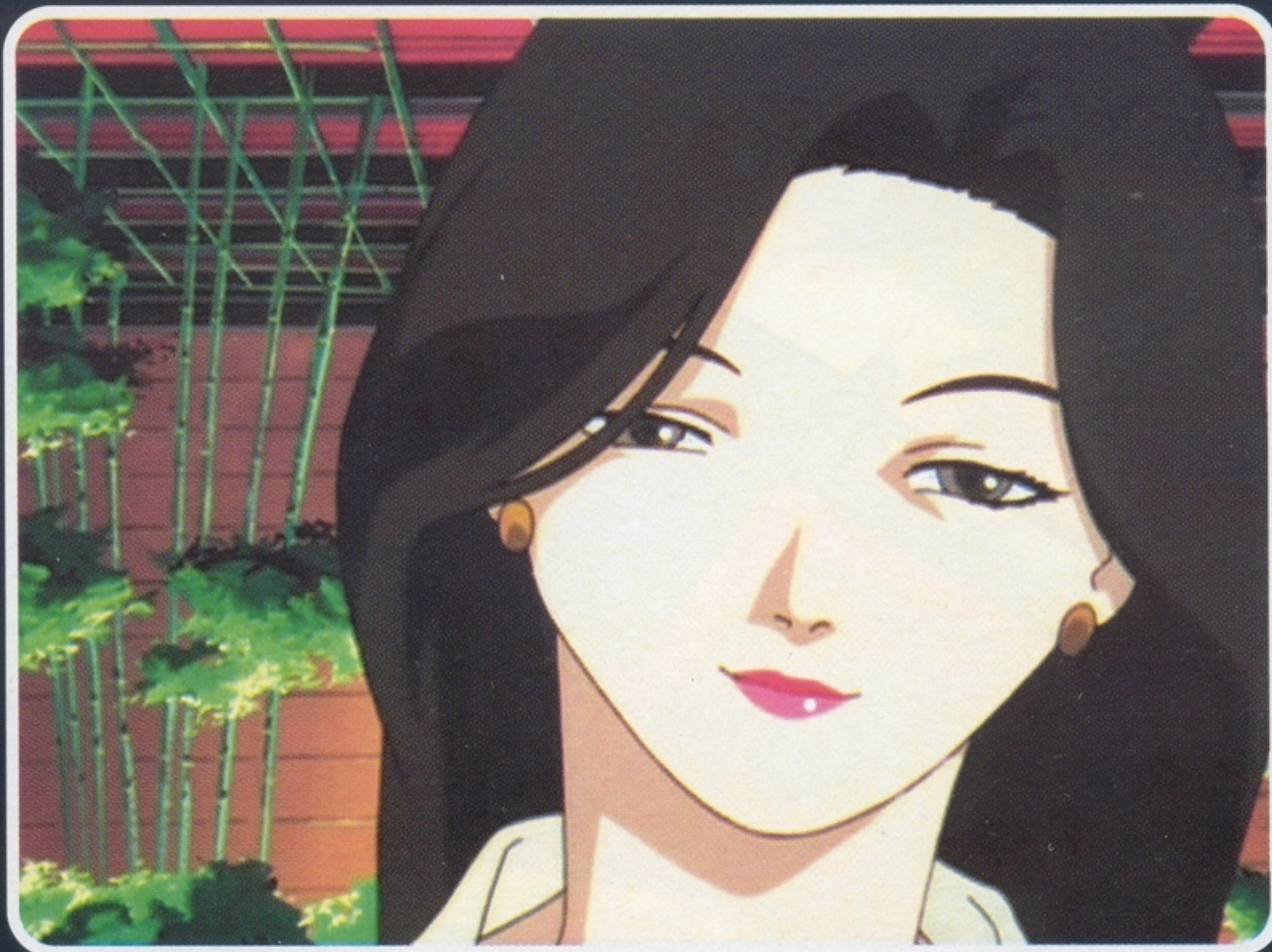
Layer 07: Society opens with the cityscape voice-over, with Lain saying, "Just between you and me, let me tell you what's happening, what's beginning to take place in our society without you ever even being vaguely conscious of it."



A huge mass of power cables now runs into Lain's room from the main lines, forming something vaguely tumorous. Lain, at her computer, speaks to an unknown colleague. She remarks that inside the Wired she is



becoming less like herself. The second Mika stands at the door, attracting Lain's attention, trying to say something. She only manages a stammer; she shuts the door and Lain resumes her Wired discussions.

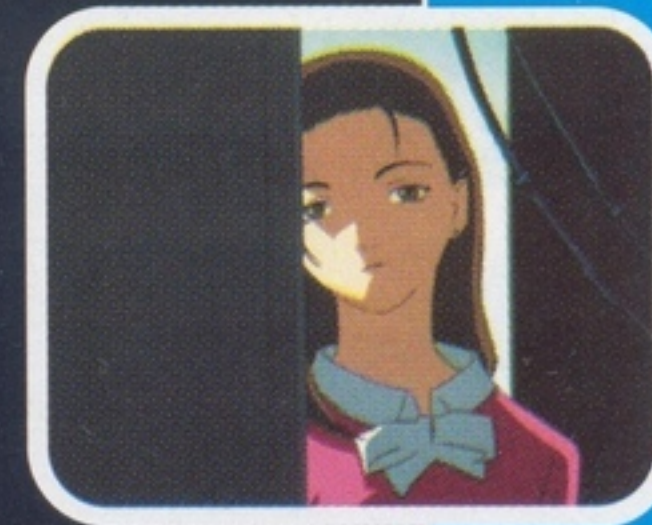


serial experiments lain

EPISODE SUMMARY LAYER: 07



On the streets, a man, Nezumi, sees the city through highly processed video footage, speaking of himself as a disembodied consciousness. In actuality he carries around a huge backpack worth of hardware and is clearly delusional. In an office overhead, a stereotypically voluptuous secretary informs her boss of a business function, the Imoda

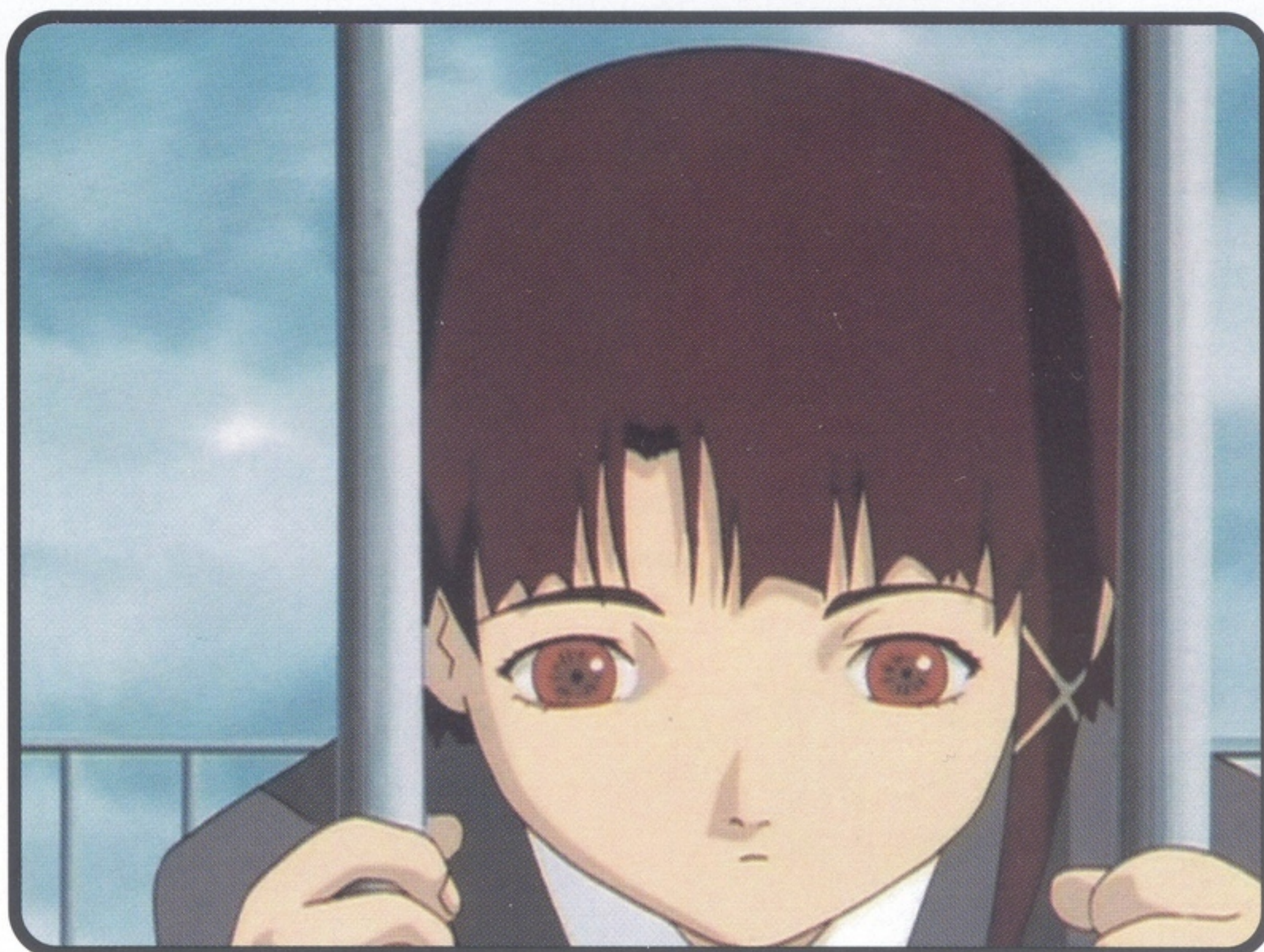




Consortium banquet. The interactions between the two are flirtatious and highly charged. He sends her out, then logs on to check his mail. The first message opens with animated graphics of callipers unfolding to measure a cut stone, ending in the configuration that overshadowed the original Mika. He chuckles to himself, saying, "So what game do you want to play this time?"



In class, Lain ignores the lecture in favour of extremely complex programming on her handheld computer while a worried Alice watches. The scene cuts to an overweight man peering at the same callipers-and-stone graphic as the businessman and cackling to himself about how he is better than all of them. Back at school, Alice expresses her concern about Lain's current



condition. She and the others wanted to make Lain happy and include her in their fun, and she offers Lain the chance to say that they were all just being a nuisance. Lain desperately and inarticulately tries to explain that Alice and the others were not a nuisance, but does not know how to describe what she is going through now.

someone's after lain

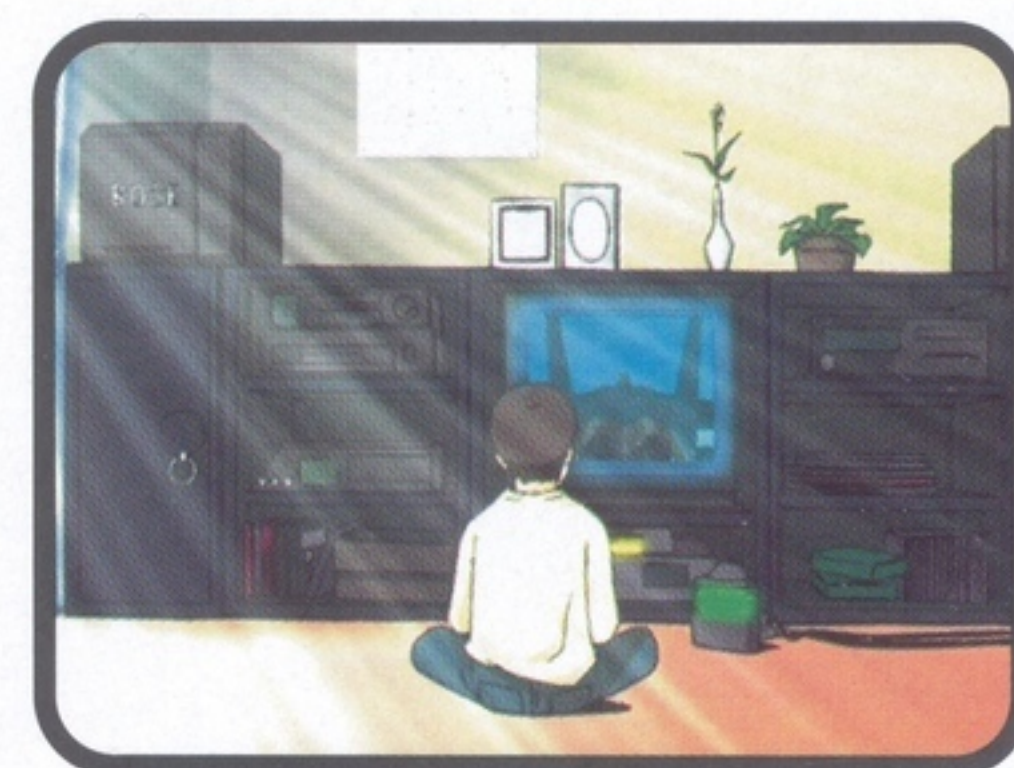
A news item says unknown parties hacked the Ministry of Information Control itself, leaving the Wired in disarray. The newsreader calmly announces, "Be advised that although it

is actually a live broadcast and is being sent out at this very moment, it is quite possible that it might arrive tomorrow, right now, or perhaps yesterday." Wired traffic includes a variety of speculations

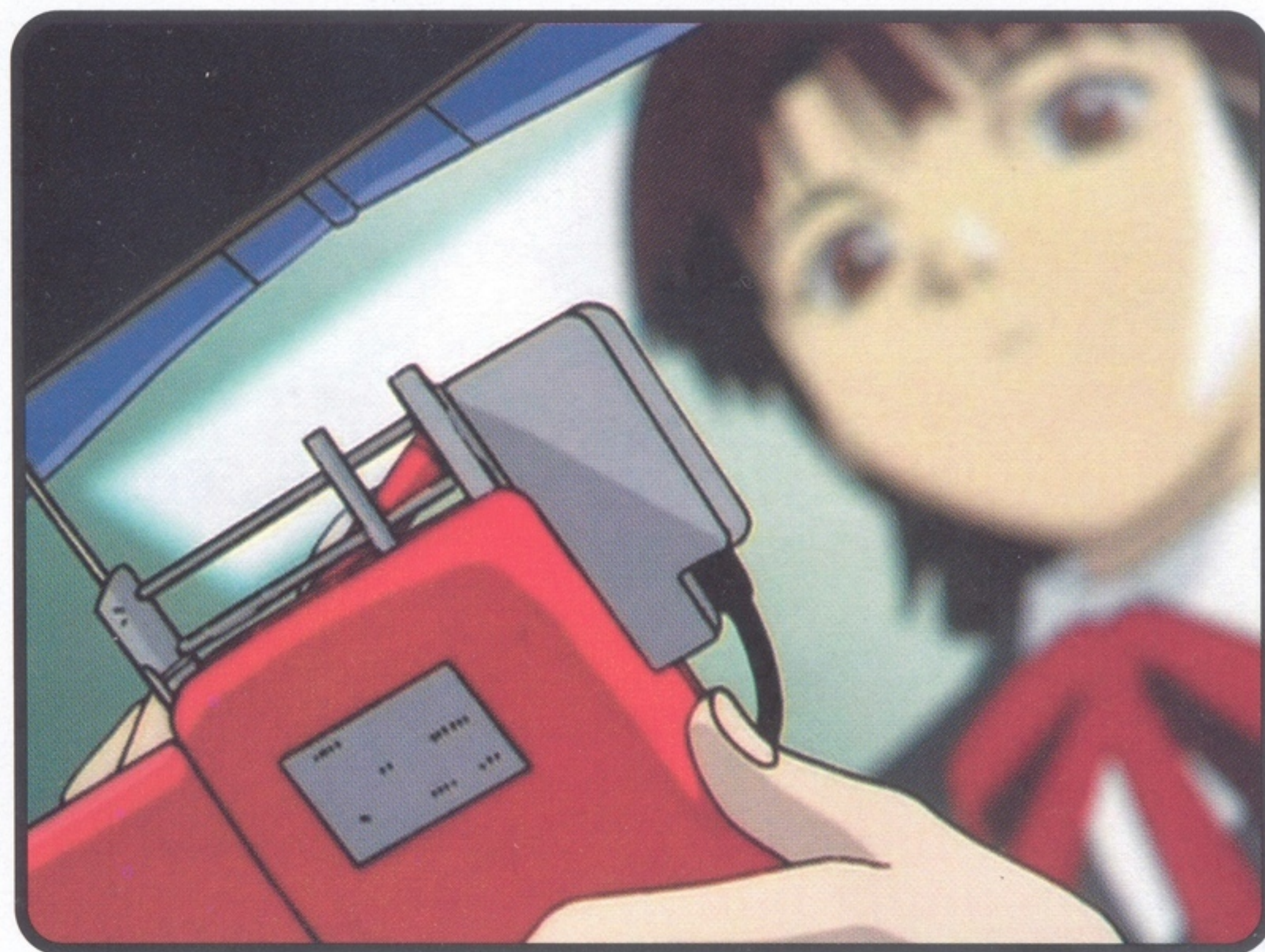


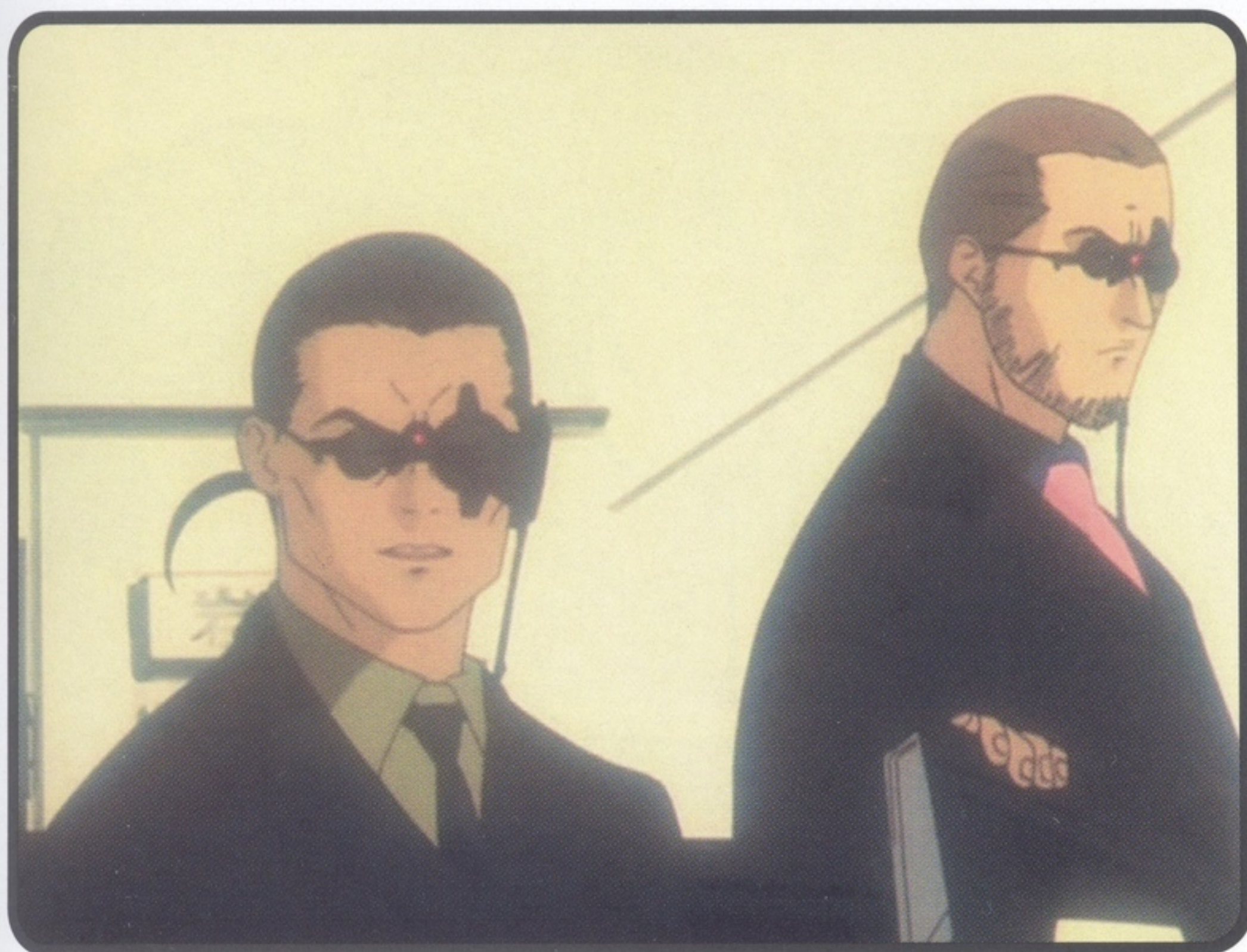
about the Knights, saying they are powerful secret hackers and hardware creators, and about Lain, with viewpoints ranging from "Who's Lain?" to "I hear someone's after Lain" and hymn-like praises of her power.

The deliveryman who brought Lain her new Navi delivers a package to a housewife working at home, and tries flirting with her unsuccessfully. He



leaves in failure when the woman's schoolboy son comes home. The son wants to go to a friend's house to learn a





new game; she quietly responds, "The Wired is really the same thing as the real world." The package contains a circuit board printed with the Knights' emblem, which she looks at knowingly.



Lain walks home to find the men in black waiting for her. They invite her into their car, emphasizing that they do not wish to force or harm her. Karl removes his goggles to look directly at her; he is the same man in Layer 2 who watched Lain walk by. He tells her that if she goes with them, they will reveal their identities. Meanwhile, Nezumi

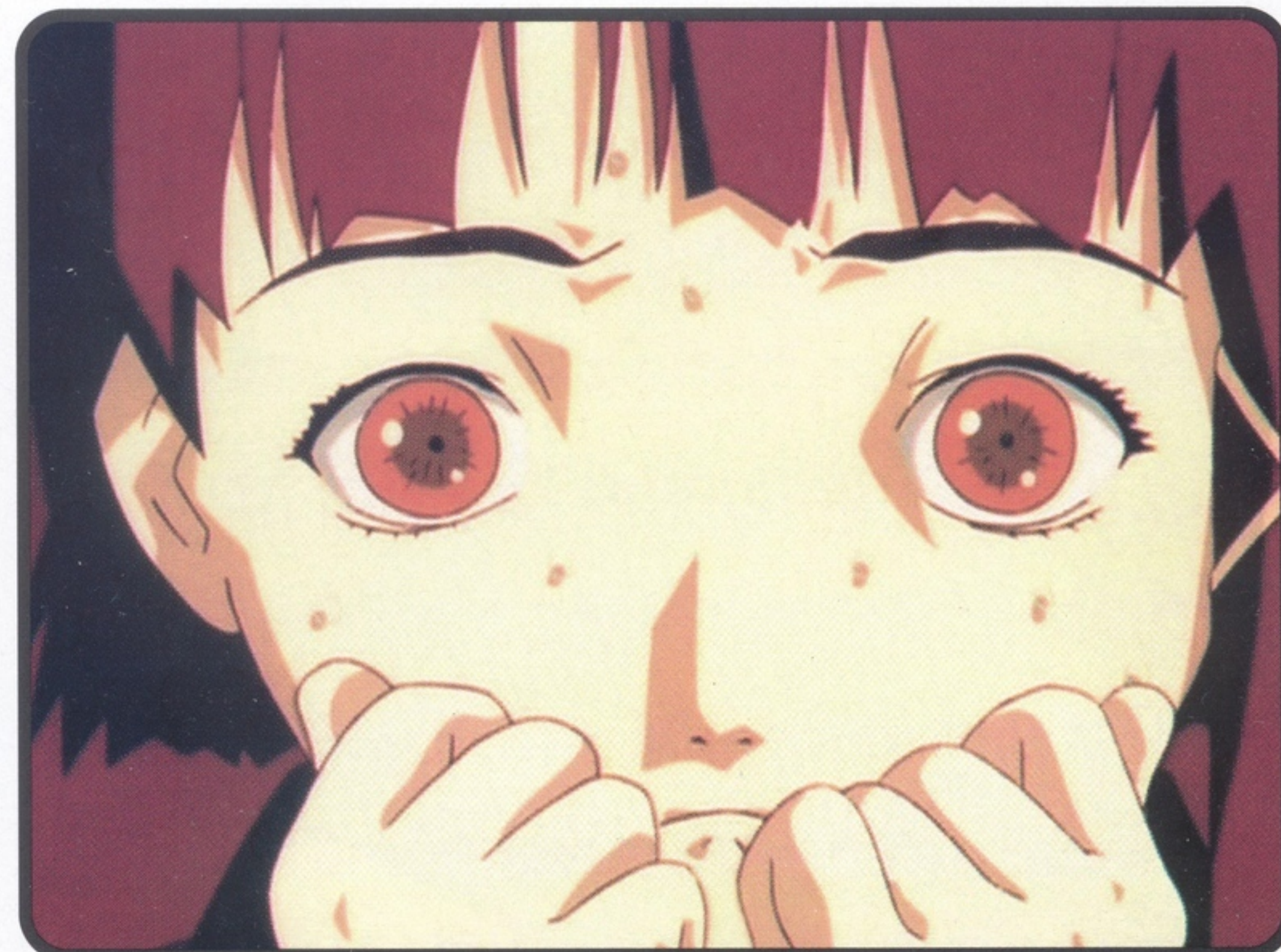


continues congratulating himself and petitioning the Knights for admission. Lain's glowing figure appears in his display, smiling enigmatically at him, while Lain in her physical form rides

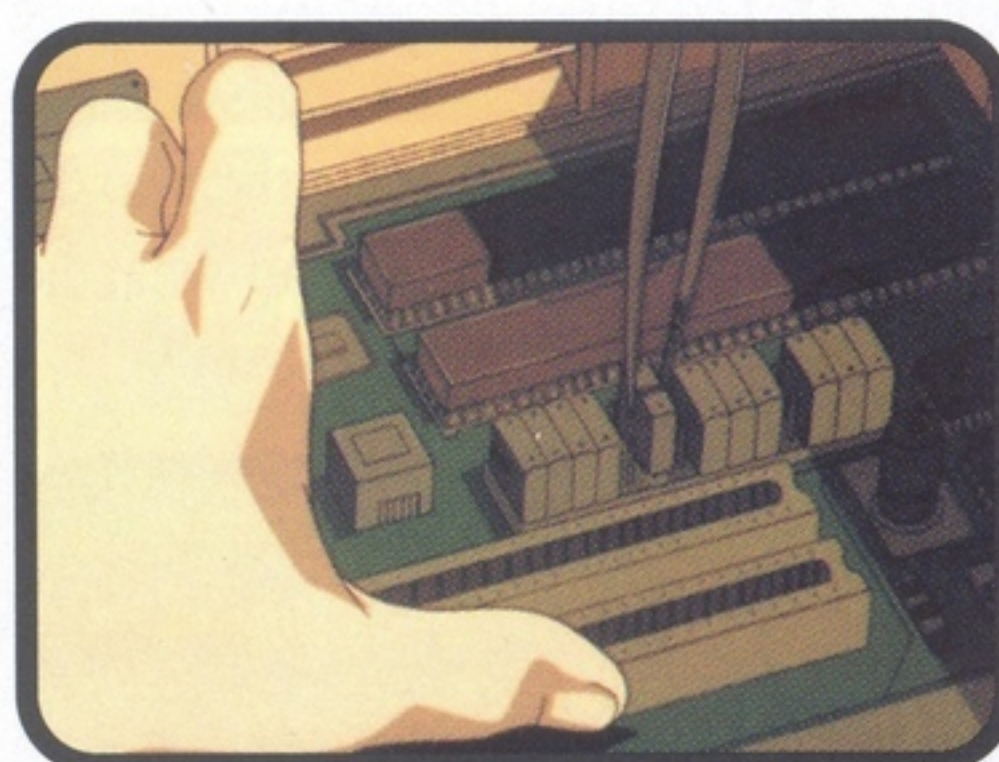
with the men in black. They pull up at a building identified as Tachibana General Laboratories, Shinbashi Office.



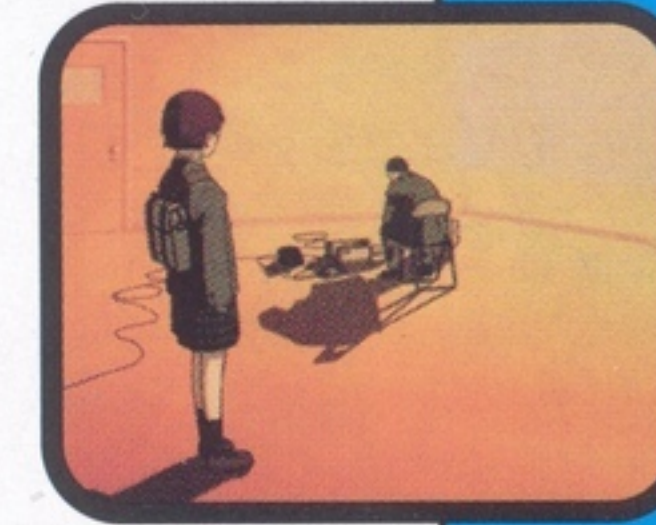
Inside are almost entirely unfurnished spaces. A man sitting on a folding chair speaks to Lain like he knows her, talking about problems configuring the company firewall and noting that he probably should upgrade to new hardware but that he is too old for it. She identifies the problem, but rather



than following her advice, the man asks her to make the changes for him. The computer boots up immediately. There is a burst of static and Nezumi's voice asks if Lain is one of the Knights. The glowing Lain denounces him as a moron, triggering a pathetic fit of begging and grovelling on his part. The physical Lain watches all this with the men in black's boss, stunned and confused.



The boss comments, "Some say the Wired doesn't have political borders like the real world. But with this freedom there is a price to pay. I'm talking about nonsense-spouting anarchists and idiots who think a lot of pranks add up to a revolution. The Knights are quite different. They don't seem to be anarchists or idiots at all." He adds that her presence in the Wired is destabilizing

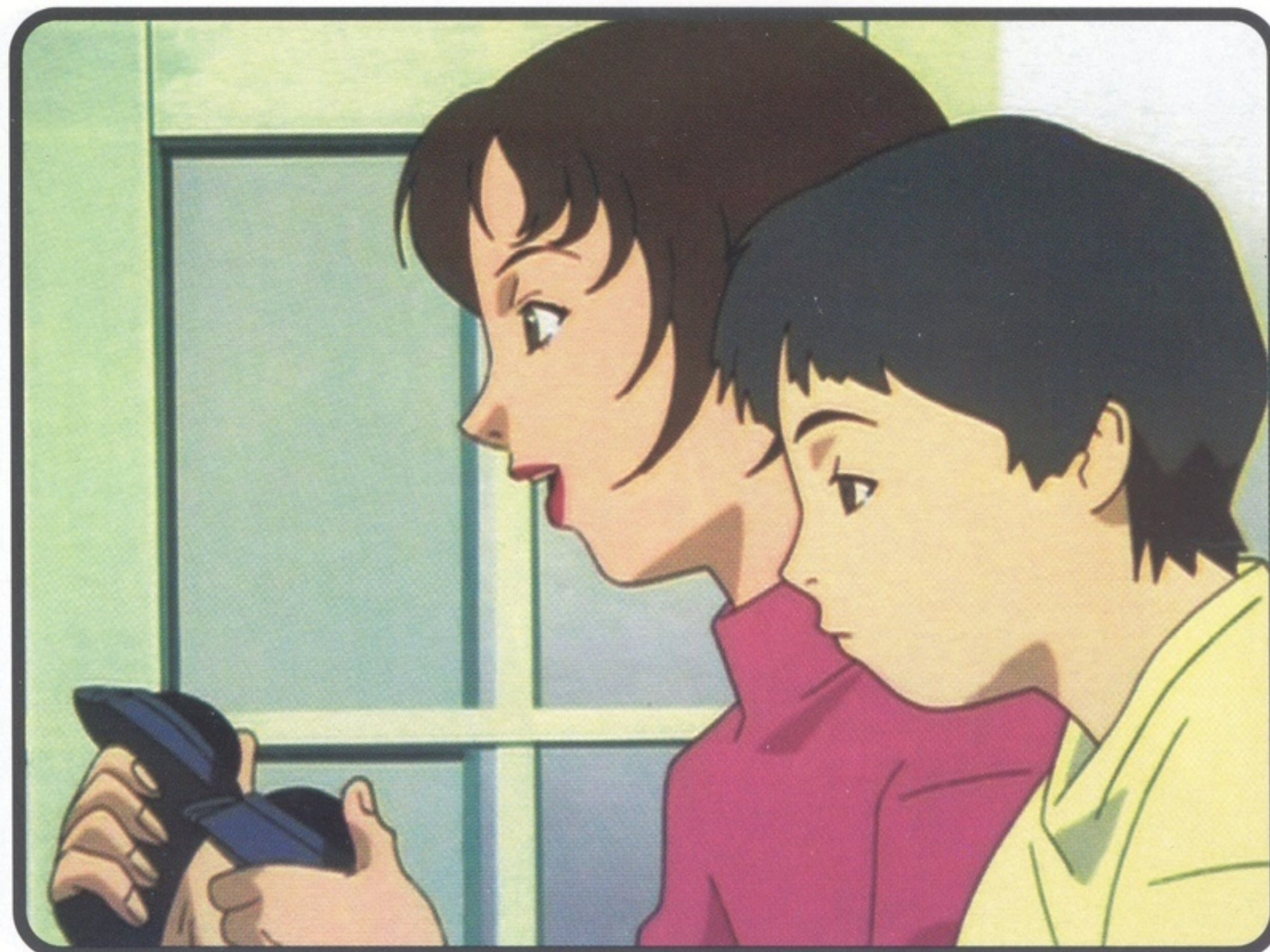
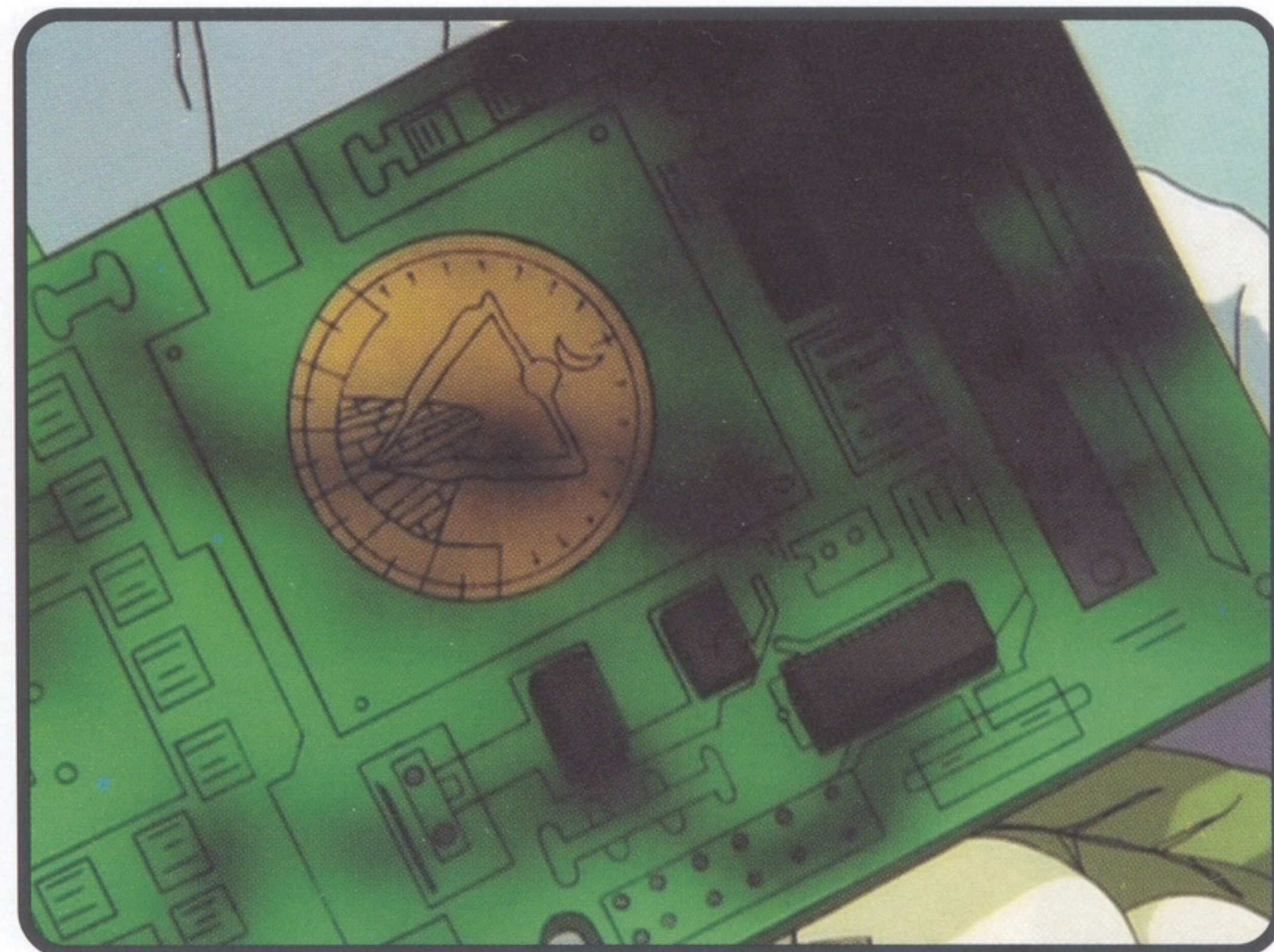




it, and that the Knights are interested in her for reasons he does not yet understand. He is out to stop the Knights from accomplishing their goals; when she asks who he is and what he wants, he merely offers a tight smile.



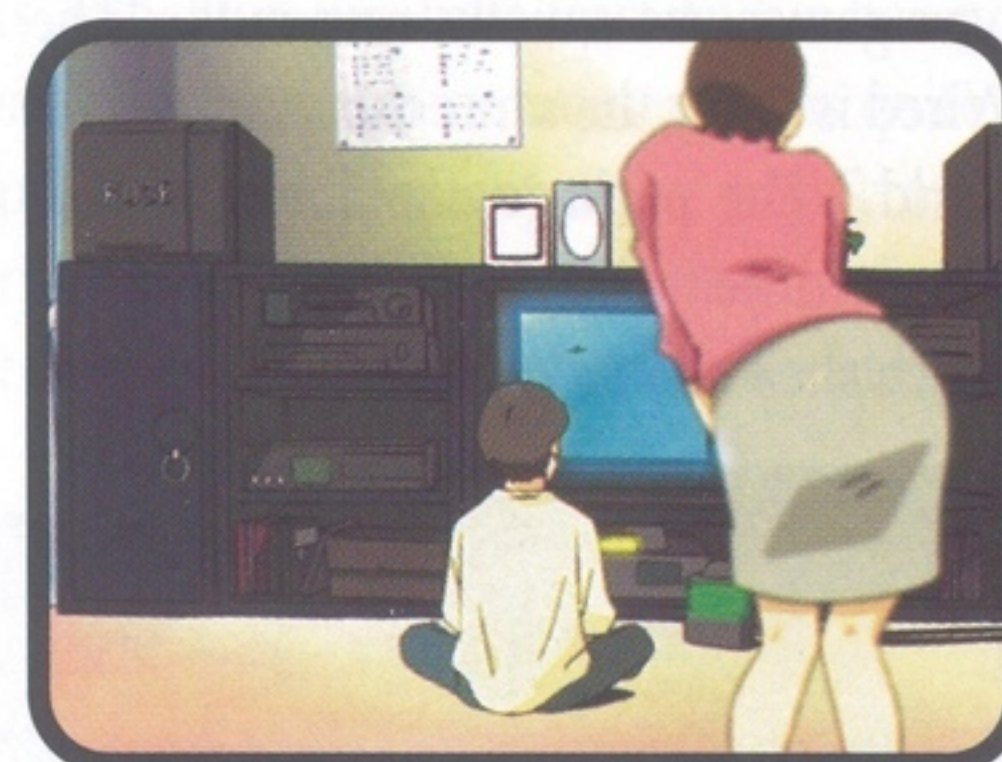
Nezumi babbles on about being unsure of any truth including the God in the Wired, but says that if the Knights accept him, he will believe in anything they want. Meanwhile, the boss says that his name and those of the men in black would mean nothing to her, and goes on to question her. Is she the Lain in the Wired? Does she know if her family is really her family, when their birthdays are, whether she actually celebrated a birthday with them? Lain realizes she does not know these basic facts, including when and where she was born.



Lain breaks into tears under questioning, but suddenly straightens up and snaps back. She is the Lain who shouted at the Accela user several layers before. The boss identifies her as the Lain of the Wired. He says he is aware of and alarmed by the barrier breakdown

the knights are quite different

between the Wired and the real world. Karl identifies her as the source of the problem, but the boss stops him from doing anything more. He wants the men in black to watch from the sidelines for now.



The housewife seen earlier settles down to play a videogame with her son. In her sink, we see the Knights' circuit board, badly burned. Elsewhere, in a field somewhere in the city, Nezumi lies face-down with a broken neck, apparently having fallen over an unseen precipice. His display shows the Knights logo.





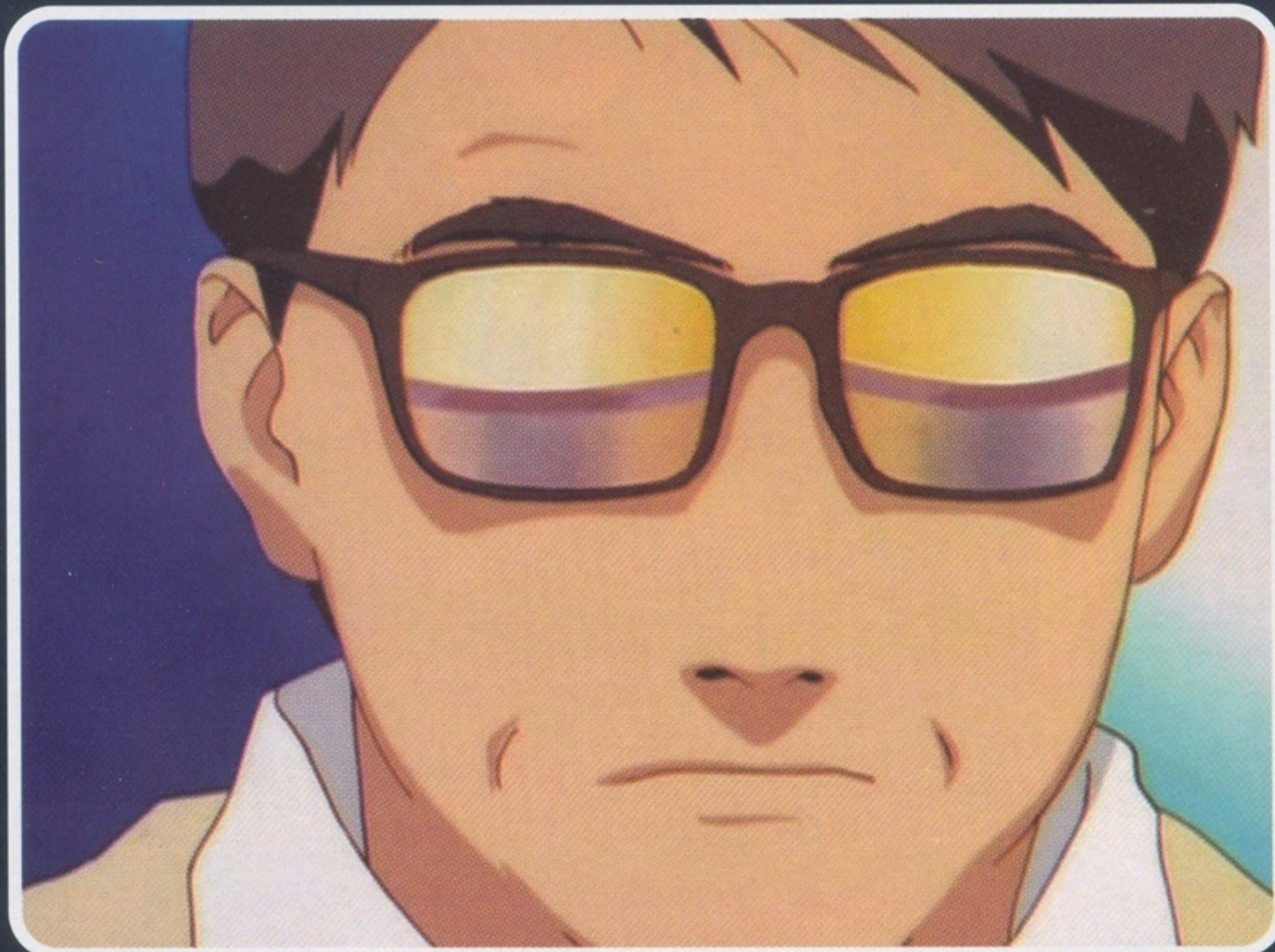
Layer 08: Rumors opens with Lain saying, in voice-over, "So you want to be hurt too, do you? ... If you do, don't look away, whatever you do."

Taro appears in an obviously digitized environment, chatting with Lain while playing a computer game, happily killing other players' characters. He offers a surprisingly sophisticated rationale for his self-indulgent behaviour, claiming that since others do not know what they want, they cannot understand ... just as they are in no position to know or care whether a God in the Wired exists.



In her room, Lain muses on the name "Tachibana General Laboratories;" in the Wired she leaves the game to speak to an unseen hacker working on girlie models. He says that a large corporation like Tachibana would not deliberately engage in illegal behaviour, but there are

rumours. Lain identifies the rumours as the "seventh-generation protocol," the new version of specifications for the Wired's operation (see page 42 for more information.) Her source explains that whoever defines the Wired's operations controls its behaviour without constantly interfering. Big corporations are the primary sponsors of such R&D (and



serial experiments lain

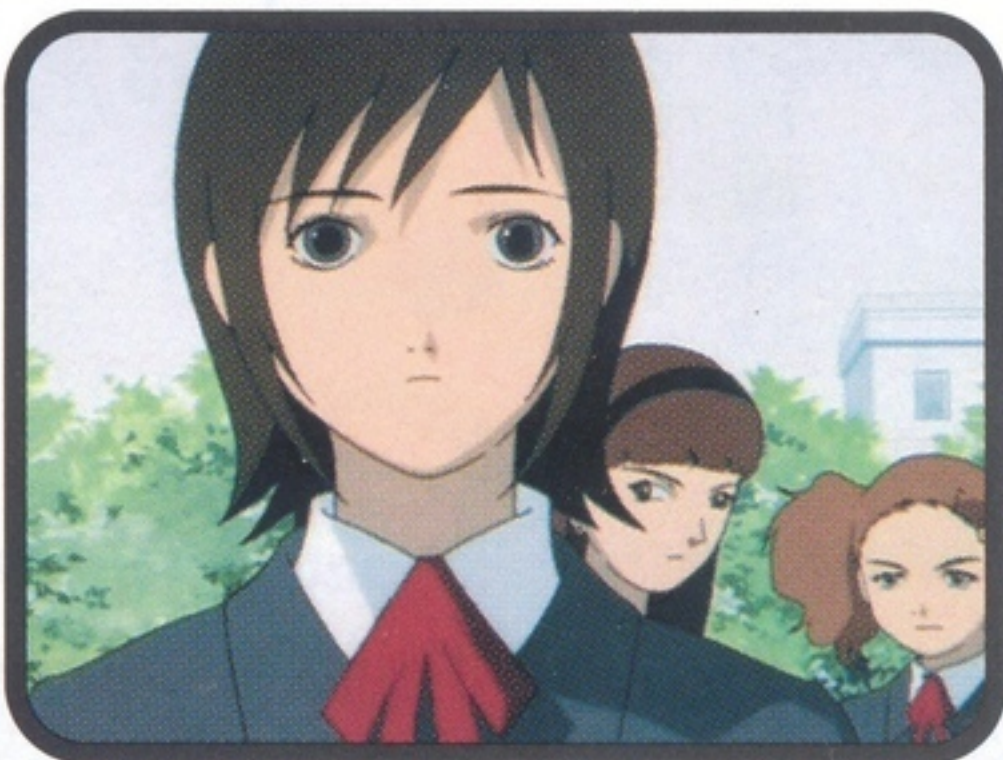
EPISODE SUMMARY LAYER: 08



sabotage efforts), with Tachibana General Labs a major participant.

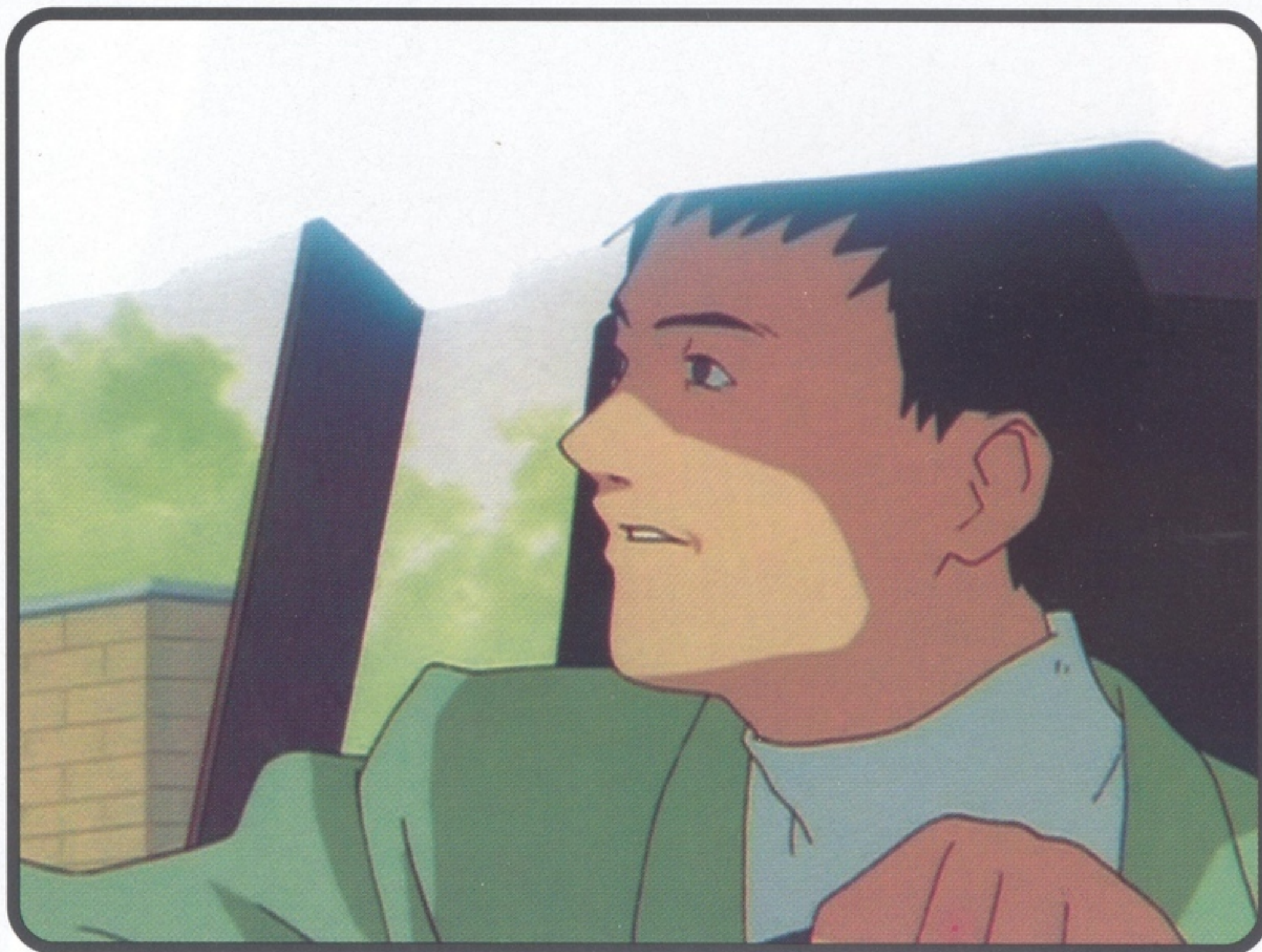
Outside her room, Lain finds the second Mika continuing to decay. Mika struggles to speak, but cannot form a complete word. Fear tinges her otherwise blank expression. Her parents sit at the dining table, as if waiting, their





faces drained of hope or fear. Lain quotes the Tachibana man's questions about her family, but they do not answer; they simply stare with passive unblinking gazes.

At school, Lain finds her friends alarmed, concerned, and hostile (on Reika's and Juri's part). They talk in riddles, with Alice trying to convince herself that Lain did nothing; Alice wants to believe Lain's innocence (whatever the allegation). The arrival of a handsome young teacher interrupts the conversation. Alice turns-away embarrassed, amusing her friends.

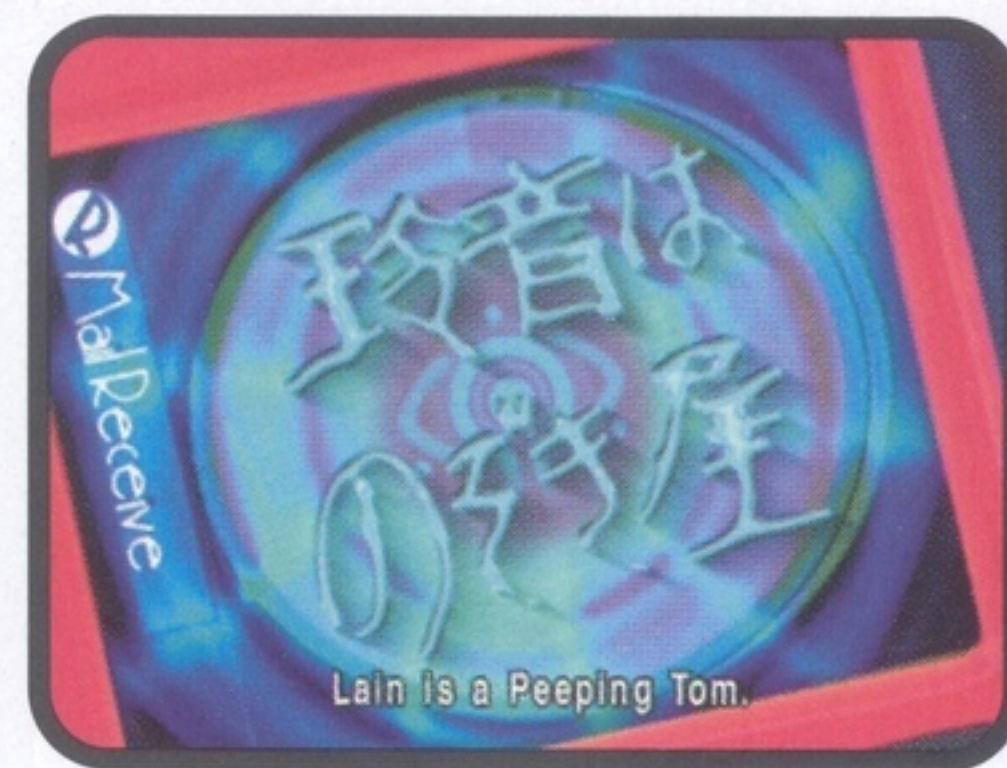


rather, lined by their clothes. Each suit of clothes rests in a kneeling position, filled out as if worn by invisible bodies. A mouth hangs in proper position over each suit, speaking the thoughts and emotions of the physical person associated with this manifestation in the Wired. The flow of comments is

lain is a
peeping tom

similar to earlier scenes where Lain drifts through message traffic, but now appears with tangible context to allow for more interactions. She is more deeply immersed in the Wired than before and makes it her own.

The comments around her range from the intimate to the trivial, and includes more sense of emotion and transitory thoughts. These are more than articulated messages; they are the impulses, half-formed concepts, and intuitive urges supporting communication. Lain again shows her aggressive, assertive side described as "the Lain of the Wired;" she shouts at them all to shut up. The man calling himself God speaks out of the emptiness, asking her if she finds any of it interesting. Having earned her attention, he asks her about the concept of God itself, explaining he is not the omniscient creator of all things, even though he has tremendous power over the Wired.



He goes on to say, "I'm you," explaining Lain has always had another self in the Wired; her physical form is merely a holographic manifestation of that truer self. She tearfully asserts, "I'm me," ending the connection. When she looks up from her computer, teacher and classmates stare at her, and the message on-screen says, "Lain is a peeping Tom." She runs away with schoolmates and teachers quietly staring at her. Lain finds herself behind the school, still weeping.



Lain again ignores the class lecture to probe the Wired with her handheld computer. A white digital road appears in the void again, this time lined with men and women. Or





Lain's handheld contains the message, apparently from Alice, saying not to worry about the rumours. A fiery burst of energy erupts around Lain, sweeping through everything in the area. Lain, exhausted and trance-like, scarcely notices while walking through the midst of it.



Against a black background, a single roving light illuminates the blinking word, "Searching...."



Alice is in her room, fantasizing about the teacher seen earlier. She suddenly discovers the wild/Wired Lain (possibly a third, more cruel, version of her personality) on her bed, watching her masturbate and snickering. Lain laughs cruelly; Alice becomes more miserable. Meanwhile, the other Lain lies terrified in her own bed. The cables

in her room swirl into a quick succession of Wired landscapes. Her "body" fills with the bloodstains occupying the shadows throughout the series, leaving a Lain-shaped pool of blotches punctuated only by eyes and a mouth.



In the midst of the void, the two Lains finally encounter each other directly. The cruel Lain mocks the other for her cowardice. The confident Lain rages, refusing to accept the other is



actually her, and lunges to strangle the other. Flashing lights fill the darkness; possibly external manifestations of Lain's rage, possibly the sense of Lain dying, or perhaps an acceptance that both Lains are one. The scene cuts to the parallel rows of empty clothes, set against generic floor matting. They all have the same head, however, a chattering doll version of Lain's own head, wobbling and making meaningless noises. "What the hell are they?" the physical Lain asks.



A floating mass of abstract metal-swirls appears behind Lain, speaking with "God's" voice. He says they are all her. She always existed in the Wired; these are all manifestations of her true self. "Wherever anyone is, wherever anyone goes, you've always been there."





She has always seen everything, and did nothing wrong by sharing it, including Alice's secret. She accuses him of lying; she was not in the Wired when others say they saw her. Lain accuses "God" of passing off dupes as her, and punctuates her accusations by pushing over some bodies. Her voice seemingly emerges from the mouth of a toppled doll head, her consciousness seamlessly shifting from one available channel, to the next, and back.



Lain decides that if what "God" says is true, then she can delete the memories of the suffering she created. "God" readily agrees. She concentrates, and against the blank background flashes the word, "Deleting."

In the real world, Lain enters the schoolyard staring at the swirling grey



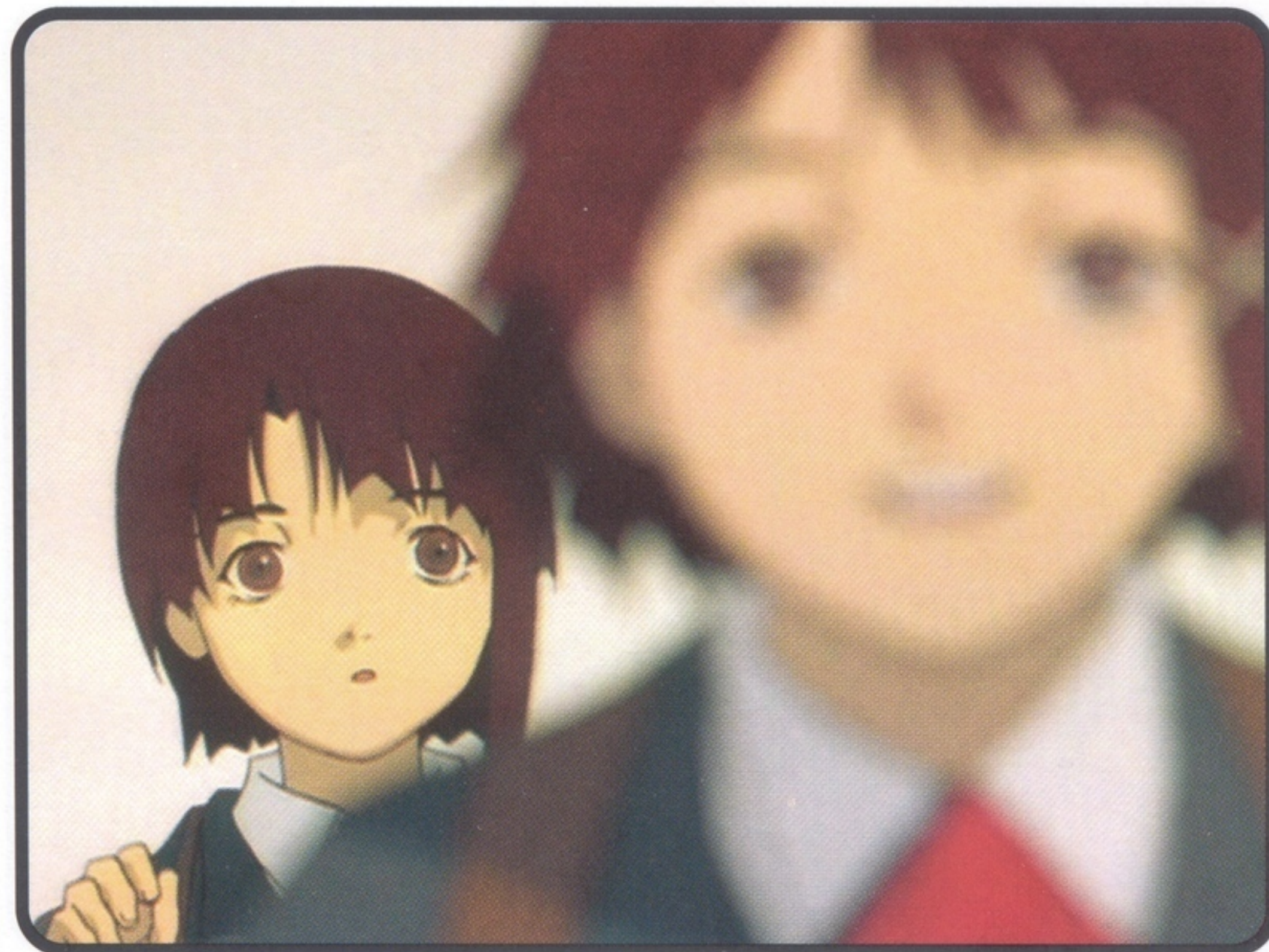
patterns in her shadow, like back in Layer 01. Her friends approach, all happy to see her including Alice. The traumas Lain fostered are truly gone, but as Lain steps forward, a second Lain emerges from her and exuberantly hooks arms with Alice. This other Lain is more vivacious. The physical Lain calls out,

*i am me,
right?*

"I'm over here," but her friends do not hear her and walk away. The cruel Lain appears and says, "It's just like you said. Lain is Lain, and I am me." Suddenly, Lain is alone. The school courtyard fades into a white void.



Back home, Lain speaks desperately to her computer. "I am me, right? ... And there isn't any other me, right?" She silently touches the screen for reassurance, in a room now filled with hardware. The only trace of her old life is the row of stuffed animals on the windowsill; everything else is gone.





Layer 09: Protocol opens with the customary cityscape. Lain says in voice-over, "You see, if you really want to rid yourself of all suffering, you should believe that there is a God. Whether or not you truly believe that He exists, you can be sure that God is always by your side."

The next scene is a documentary-style bit of historical background. On July 4, 1947, a peculiar aircraft crashed in the New Mexico desert, outside Roswell. Folklore says it was a crashed UFO, but the narrator notes that "conjecture has become fact, and rumor has become history."



Lain sits on her bed, wearing her bear sleep-suit, staring dejectedly as the massive computer around her bubbles away. The door opens, revealing a classic "gray" alien dressed in a bright red and

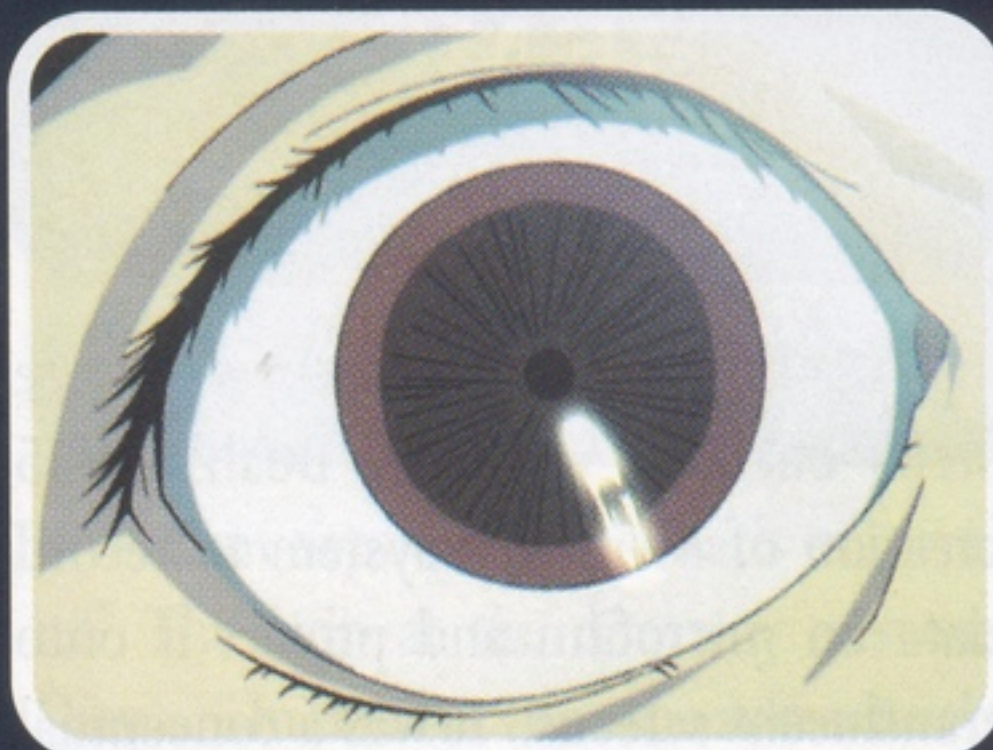
green sweater, as described by the anonymous woman's call for help in the Wired. The alien figure smiles before disappearing. A second documentary



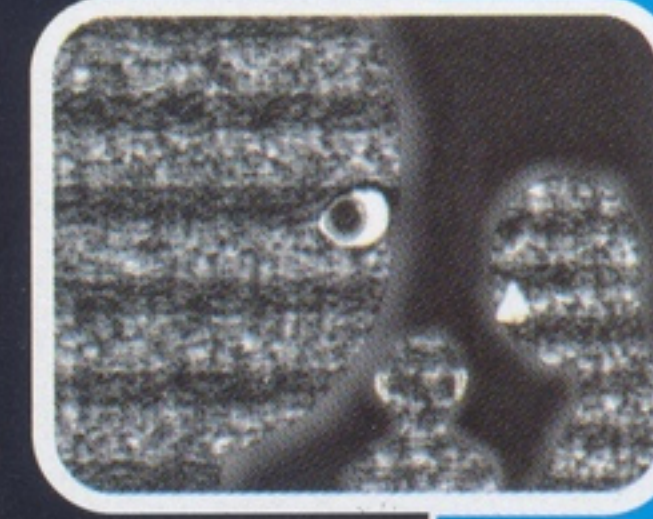
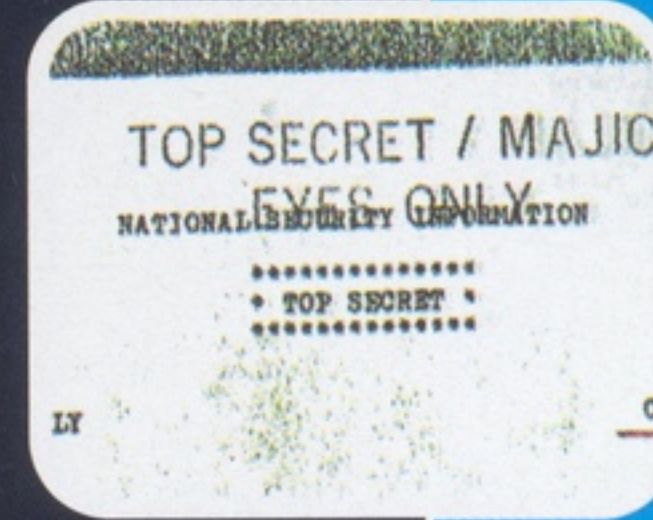
serial experiments lain

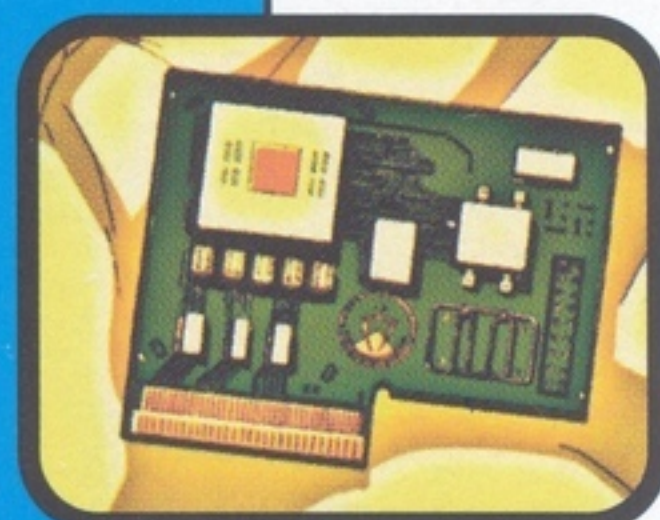
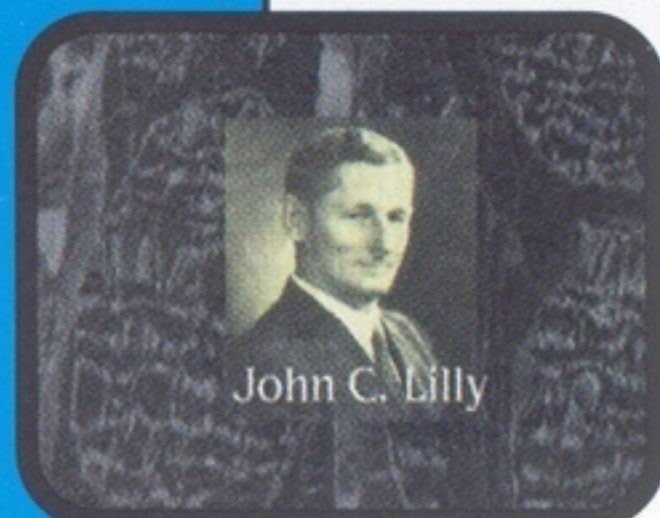
Episode Summary Layer: 09

sequence covers the 1984 publication of the "MJ-12 document," allegedly exposing a plot by the CIA and prominent officials to deal secretly with extraterrestrials. As the narrator says, it is now widely recognized as a forgery. Among those accused was MIT professor Vannevar Bush.

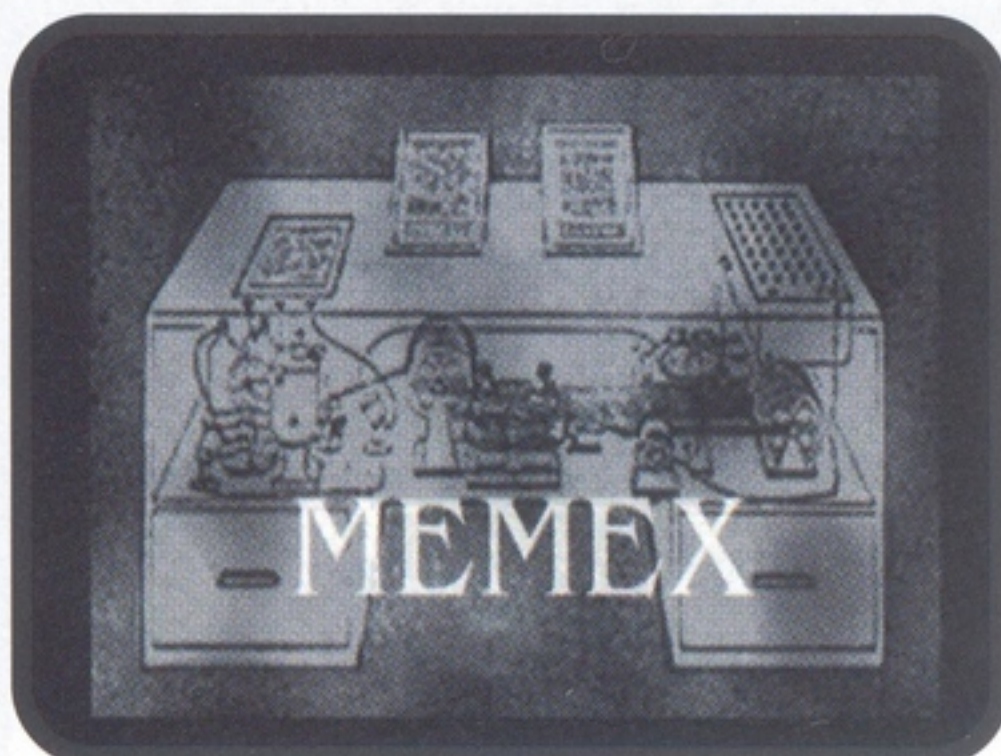


Lain connects to the Wired, and emerges in a landscape occupied by human-looking outlines, each filled with static except for a single sensory organ (like eyes, ears, noses, and hands). She asks how she could turn something that did happen into something that did not. The assembled respond Lain has been in the Wired from the moment the Wired was created; one asks "How long have

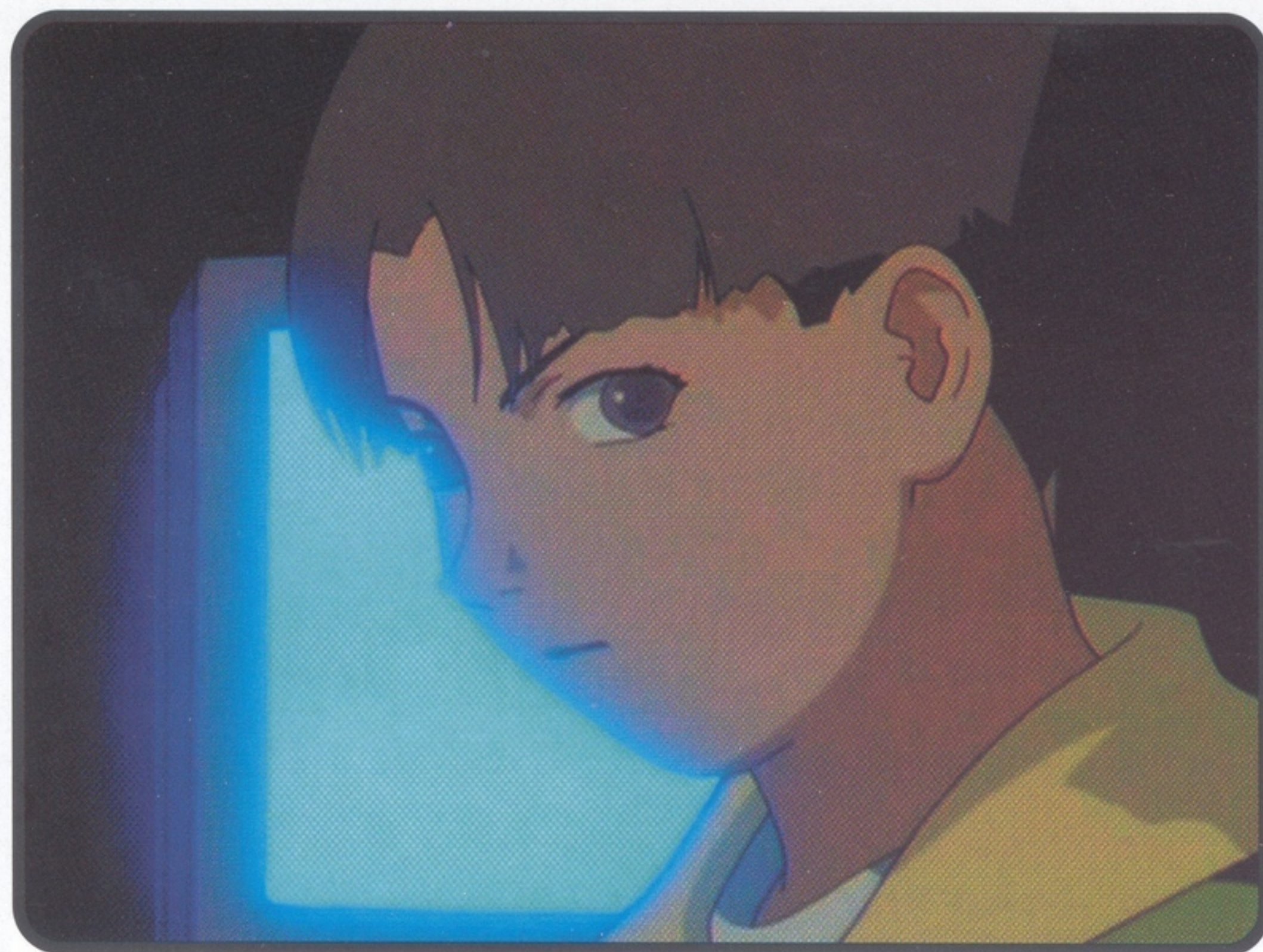




you been here...." when she objects.. It adds that being remembered proves something exists. Another objects, saying Lain is still a child. Then all the figures fade, leaving her alone.



A third documentary sequence steps back to Vannevar Bush's 1945 creation of Memex, a system to record data on microfilm and project it onto translucent screens. It was a conceptual ancestor to multimedia systems even before the advent of digital computing.



In Cyberia, Lain speaks with JJ, the DJ. He hands her an envelope she does not remember dropping. It includes a small circuit board stamped with the Knights' logo.

you must be
the real Lain

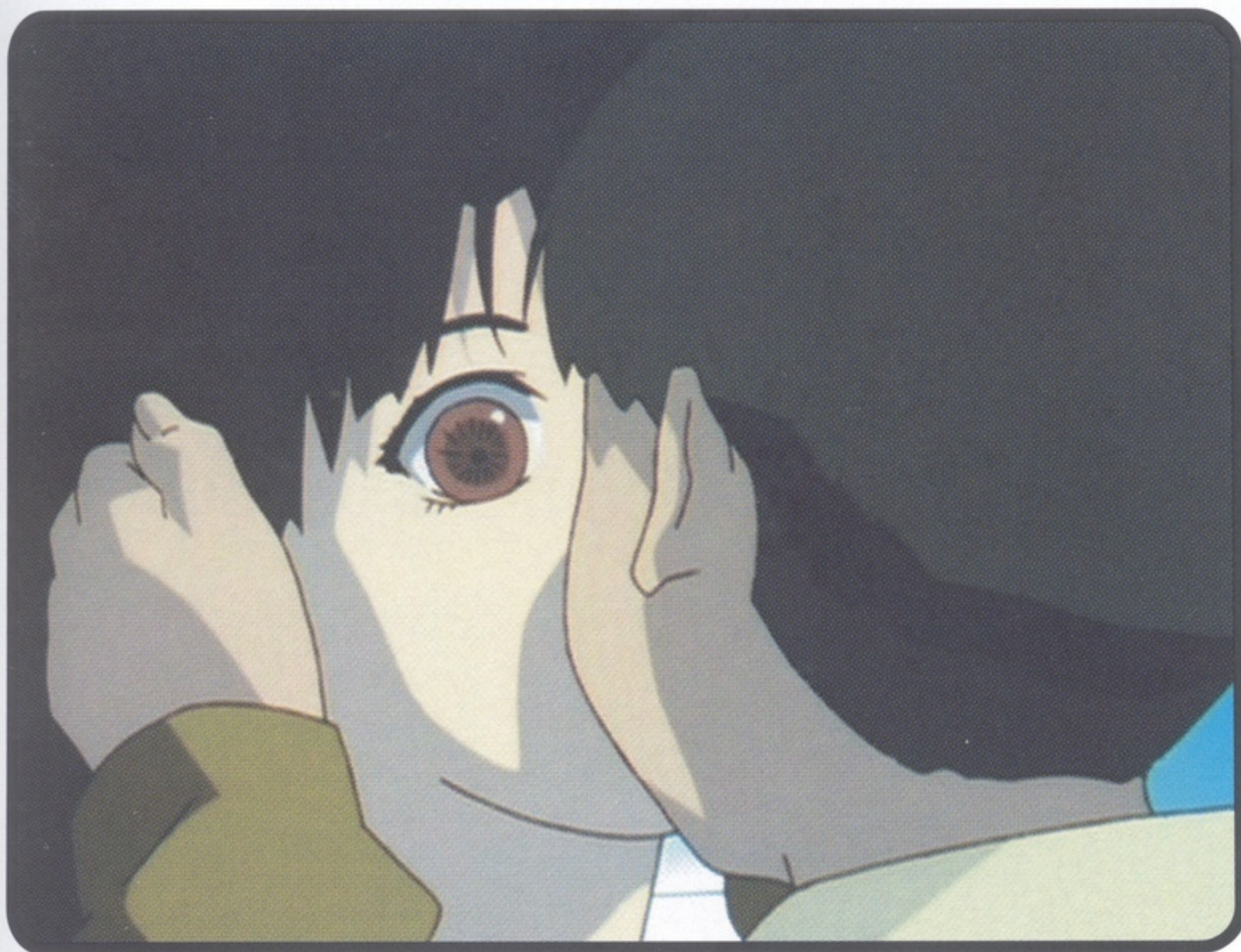
A fourth documentary sequence describes the work of John C. Lilly in sensory deprivation experiments. He believed he had connected to cosmic entities, the Earth Coincidence Control Office. Later he attempted communications with dolphins, whom he believed maintained a natural intelligence network through ultrasonics.

Still in Cyberia, Lain encounters Taro and brings him back to her room where he enthusiastically admires her roomful of gear. She then shows him the circuit. "You're with the Knights, aren't you?" After a speechless moment, he says, "You must be the real Lain," to which she says she does not know much about the other Lain except it has a body only inside Cyberia. She accuses him of manipulating the memories of people in Cyberia.

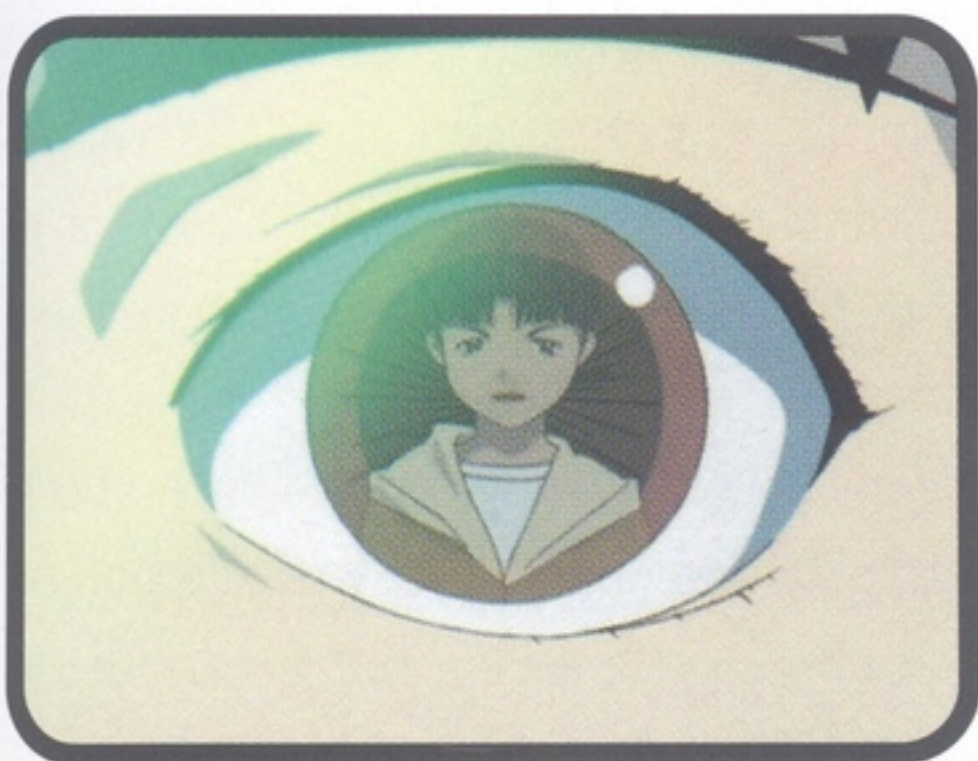


Taro protests, but Lain bombards him with specially constructed music. Downstairs, her parents look up worriedly. "It's almost over, it is, isn't it? Thank God," says Mr. Iwakura. Mrs. Iwakura answers only, "While we still can," and kisses him. The second Mika slumps in the hallway, still inarticulately struggling to say something. She talks into an imaginary telephone, like she is connecting to an unidentified host system. Upstairs, Taro says he knew memory manipulation was happening in Cyberia but not the details; he did not know what the circuit would do.

When Lain starts to shove the chip down his throat, he gasps out that it contains non-volatile memories intended

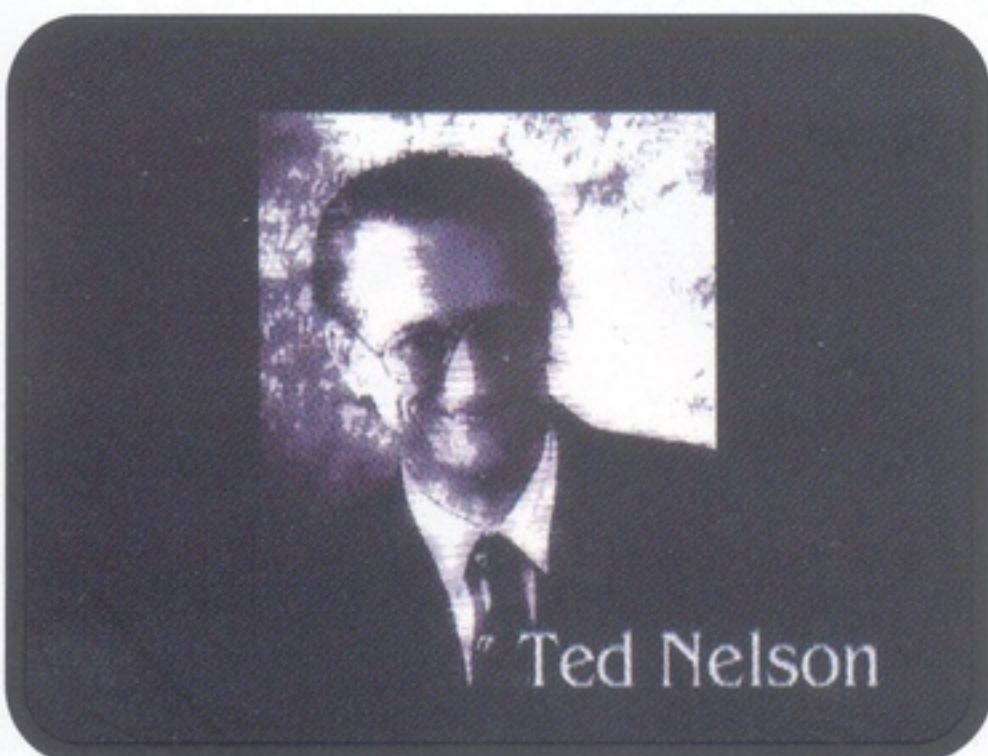


to overwrite others, but he does not know what memories. He reveals that the Knights are not regular hackers. They are trying to make a single truth, a single view of the world, the only reality. They are committed to an ordered vision that does not exist yet but which would displace all others if it did. He is just a kid trying to win their favour.



Taro kisses Lain just as he leaves. "Hey, it's a date, right?" The completely unexpected moment of humanity leaves Lain flabbergasted until after he leaves.

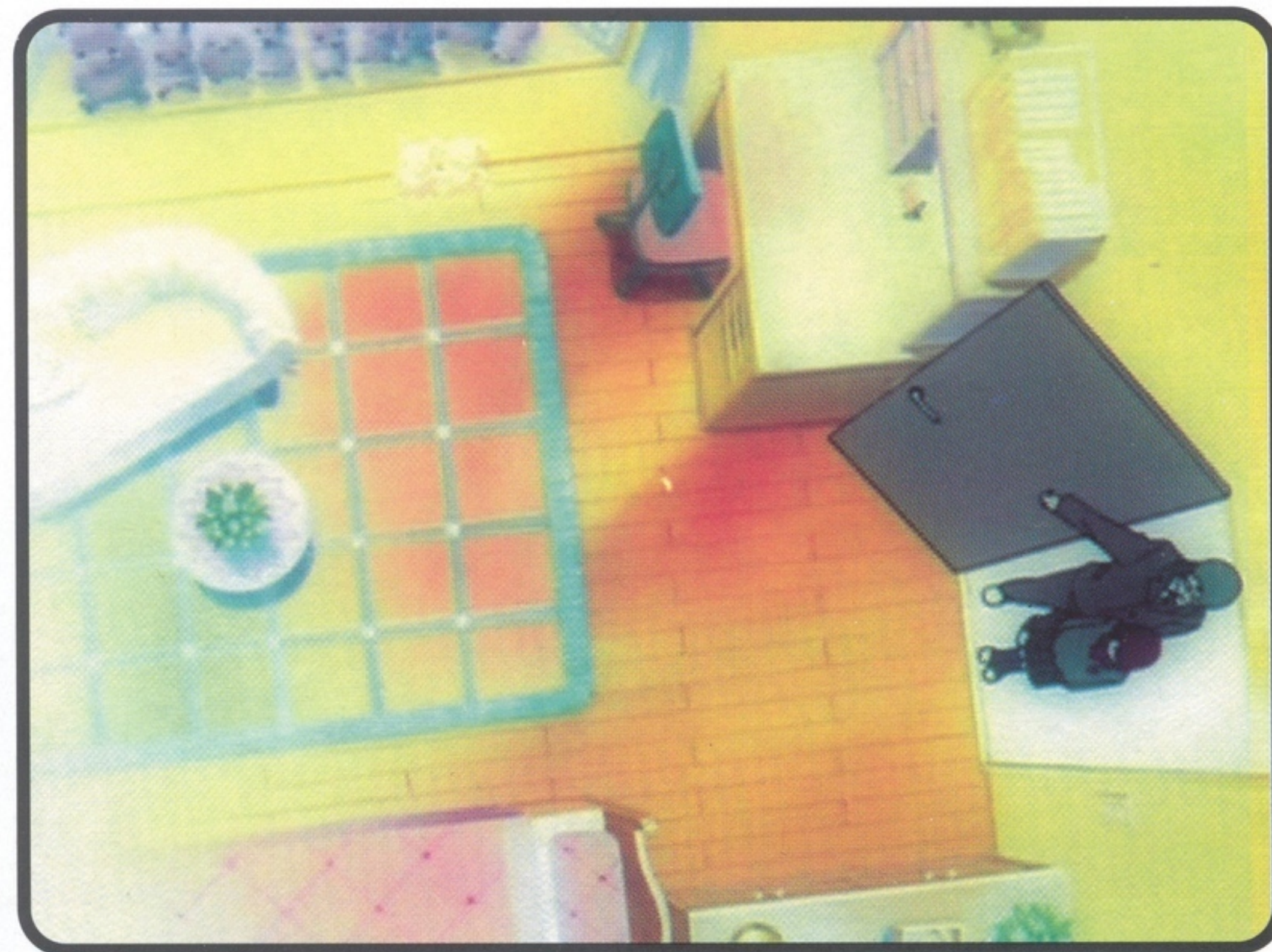
A fifth documentary sequence introduces Ted Nelson, who studied under Bush and Lilly. He proposed a network of satellite libraries, Xanadu, which people could access anywhere on Earth. This global system foreshadowed the Internet but went far beyond existing



networks; Nelson envisioned tools for linking texts, or the sum of human knowledge, together as hypertext — constantly growing, available wherever there was a terminal or telephone.



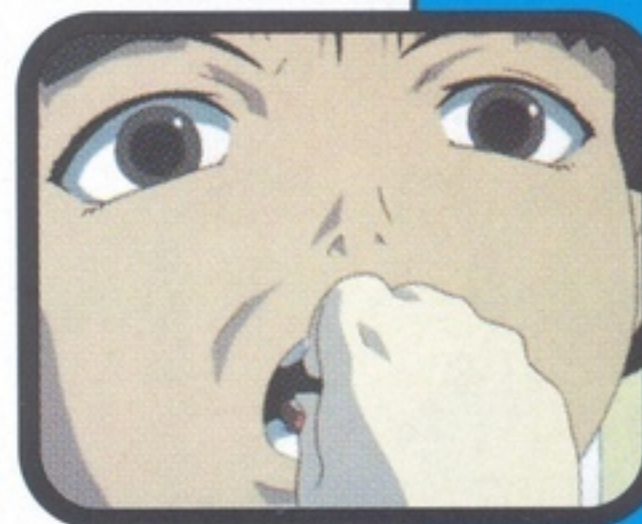
Lain drifts into neglected memories. She stands in a white hallway, being thrust at the Iwakuras by anonymous escorts. Mr. Iwakura drags her upstairs. This Lain is not much younger than her current-day

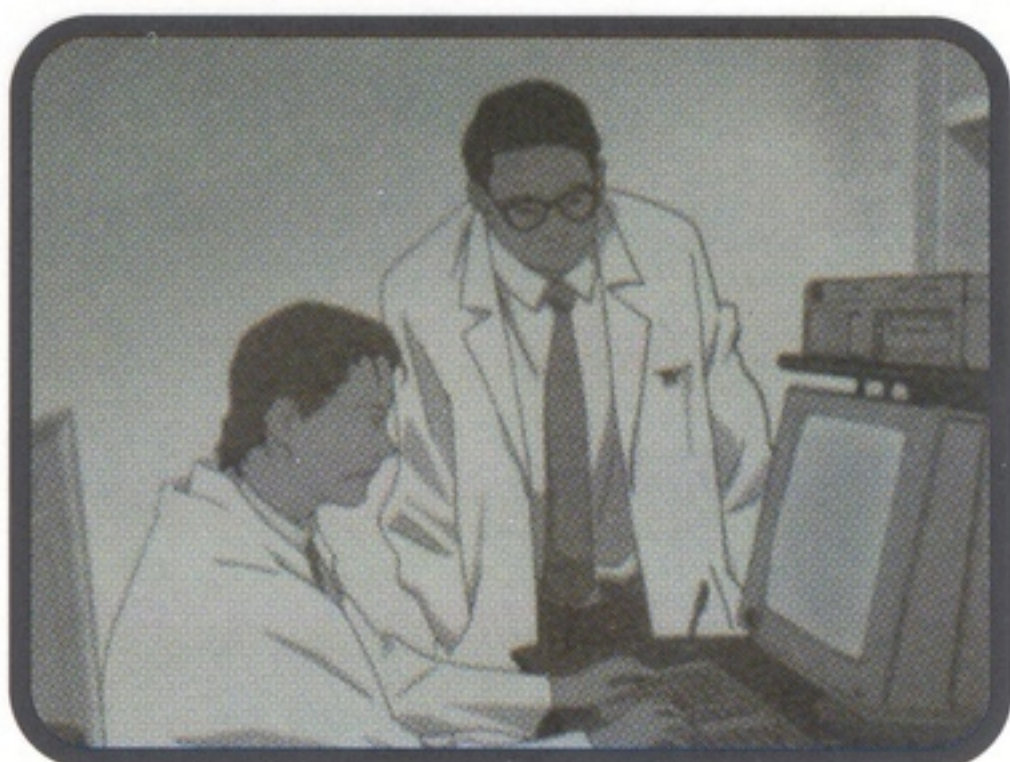
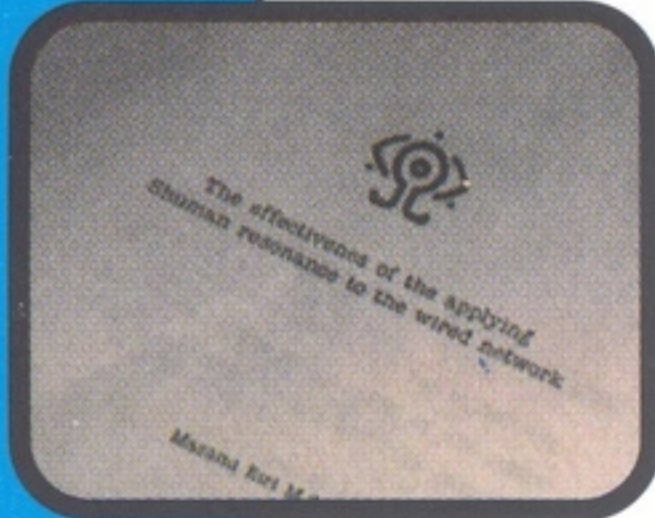
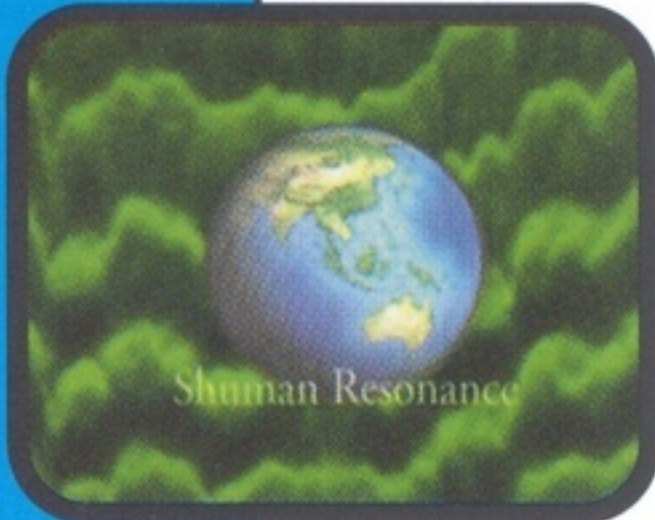


incarnation; as the Tachibana man said, she has never celebrated a birthday with her alleged family. In her doorway, there is a juxtaposition of memory; she sees her younger self looking into her room for the first time, a solemn Mr. Iwakura standing behind her.



Lain says quietly, "That's me, isn't it?" The Lain at the doorway answers, "Yes....." In present time she asks who the others are; the memory responds, "There's no way for me to know that. I'm you." Present Lain refutes this image and finds herself alone again. A sixth documentary sequence explains how the Earth contains a natural electromagnetic resonance of 8 Hertz, or eight cycles per second. This is the Shuman resonance whose effect on human brains remains a mystery. The narrator adds that the



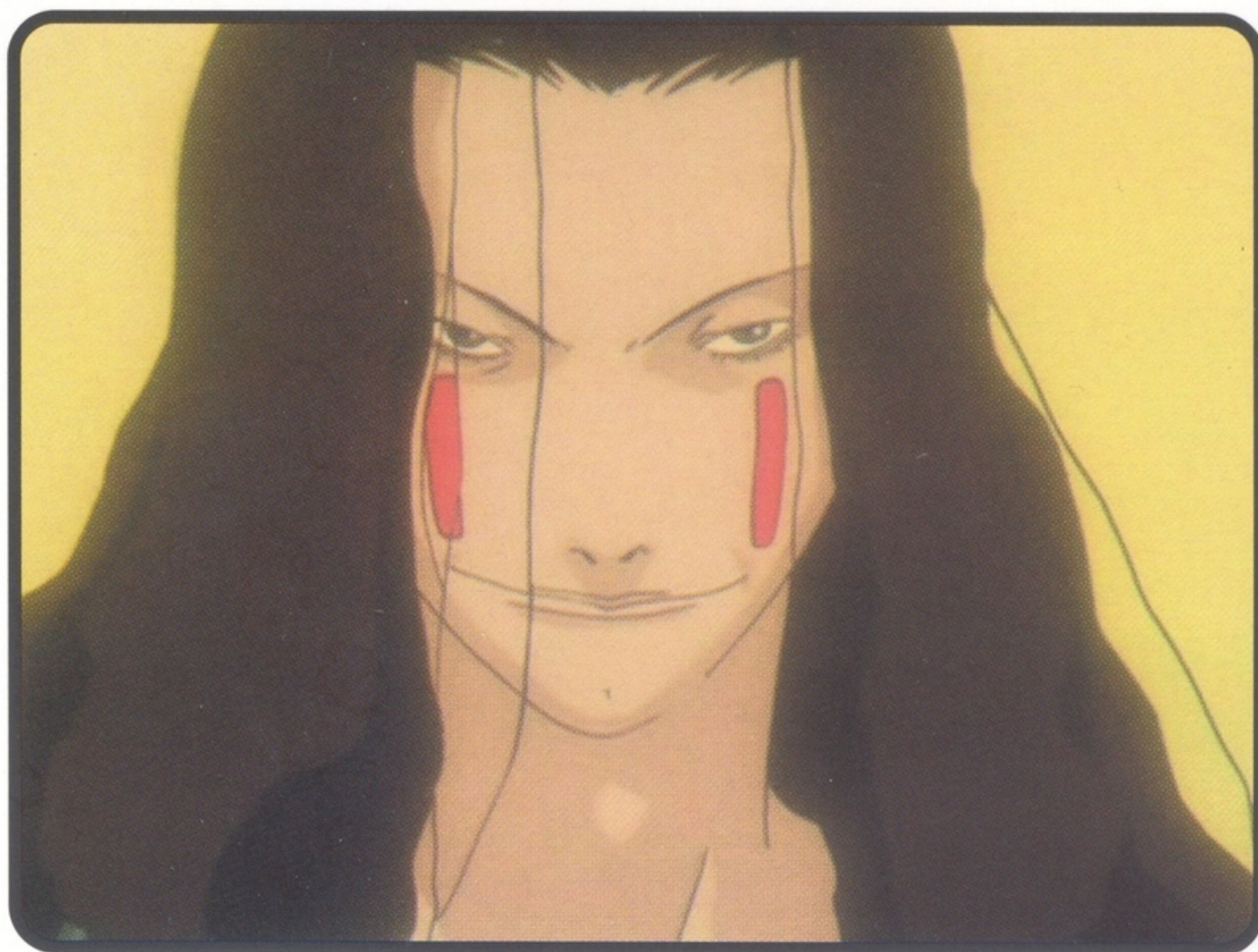


population is approaching the number of neurons in a human brain, and quotes Douglas Rushkoff who speculates that when all brains resonate together, a global consciousness will develop. The humanity as a whole will form a single neural network, growing and developing as an organism.



Lain stands in her bedroom and says, "There is only one real truth, and only one God." The God of the Wired answers, "Yes. Me."

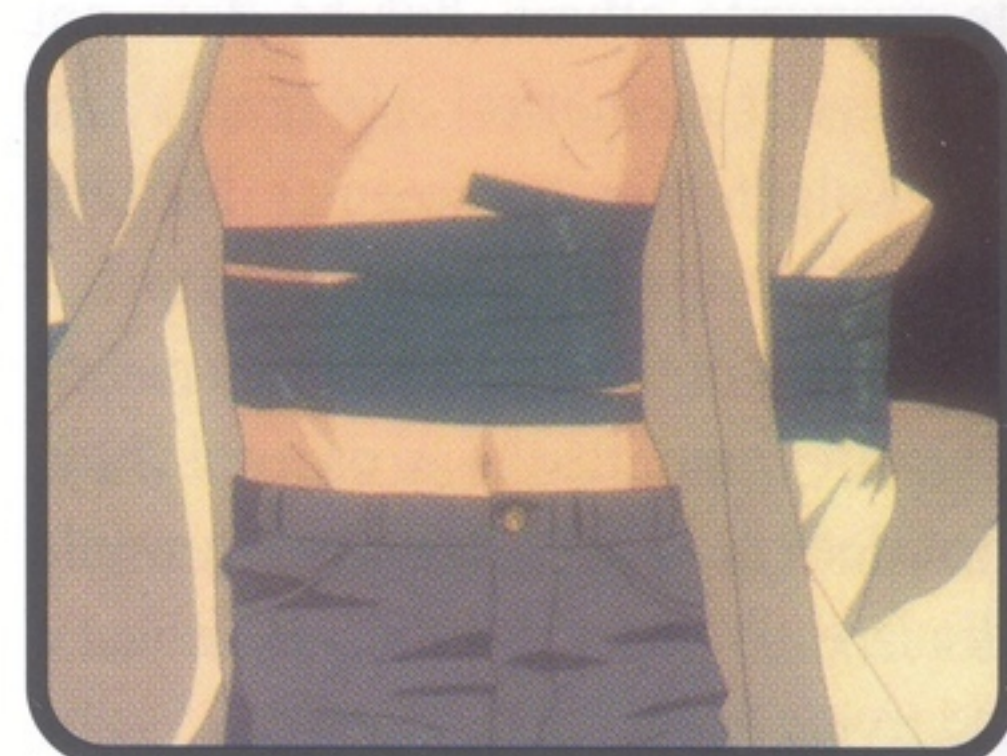
A seventh documentary sequence opens with the title page of "The effectiveness of applying the Shuman resonance to the wired network," by Masami Eiri. At Tachibana, Eiri developed the hypothesis that the Wired could act as a gateway to Rushkoff's effect, allowing for interactions without



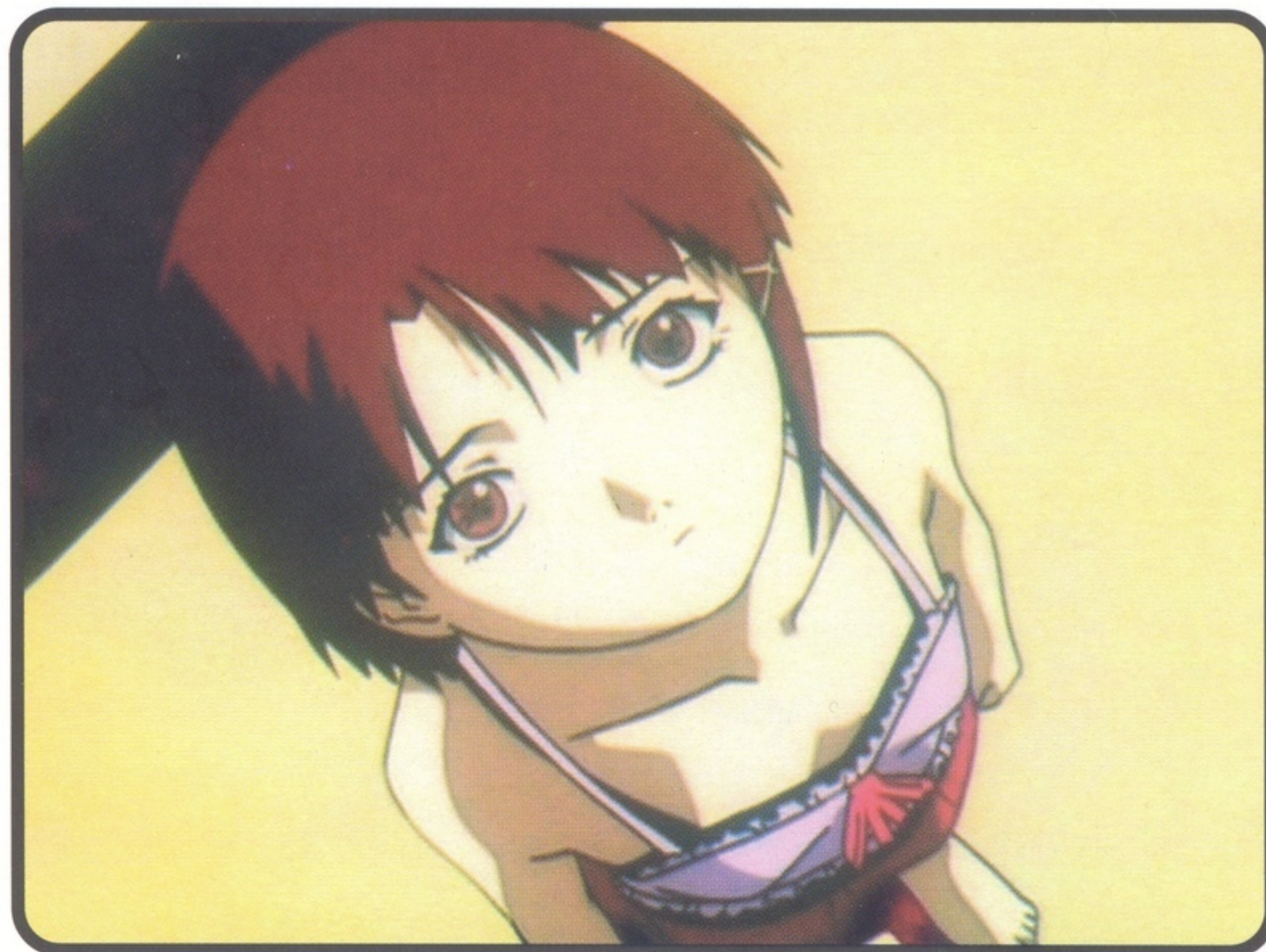
supporting hardware or direct connections. Additionally, he encoded the Shuman resonance and means of exploiting it into the "seventh-generation protocol" mentioned earlier: IPv7 (see page 42 for more information.) When Tachibana supervisors discovered what Eiri done, they fired him; a week later he committed suicide in circumstances similar to what Lain saw in her vision in Layer 01.

there is only
one real truth

The episode ends with Lain standing on the street outside her home. Across from her, a barefoot man



seemingly hovers inches from the ground. His chest and arms are crudely bandaged with duct tape. His face is cruel. It is Eiri, seen in the last documentary sequence, but his hair hangs down in long locks. Each cheek carries a red stripe like that of a doll or Kabuki actor, as seen lurking beneath the surface of people with rapidly changing features. Lain stands knowingly face-to-face with the God of the Wired for the first time.



serial experiments

1313



The Seventh-General Protocol

In the real world, as in Lain's world, the Internet Protocol (IP) plays a crucial role in allowing big networks to operate. IP and the accompanying Transmission Control Protocol (TCP) let any computer using them to successfully send a message to any other computer that abides by the same standards.

Before the development of the TCP/IP suite, every computer network had its own system for identifying machines and the software running on them; the different approaches were often wildly incompatible. In the 1970s, DARPA, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency of the United States government, took an interest in systems that would allow mixed networks at separated institutions to communicate together. The first version of the TCP/IP suite came together in the late 1970s and gradually spread when people found it useful for their immediate needs. It was also a good way to allow for unexpected needs of the future.

Revisions to IP and other standards affecting the Internet (the emerging network of networks all using TCP/IP) are published in a format known as Requests For Comments (RFCs). RFCs reflect an important fact of the net: there is no single governing power with the authority to say "this is how it is." Anyone can write an RFC. Lots of people do. Most of them sink without a trace when, under widespread examination, they somehow prove defective. The successful ones, like TCP/IP, become de facto standards.

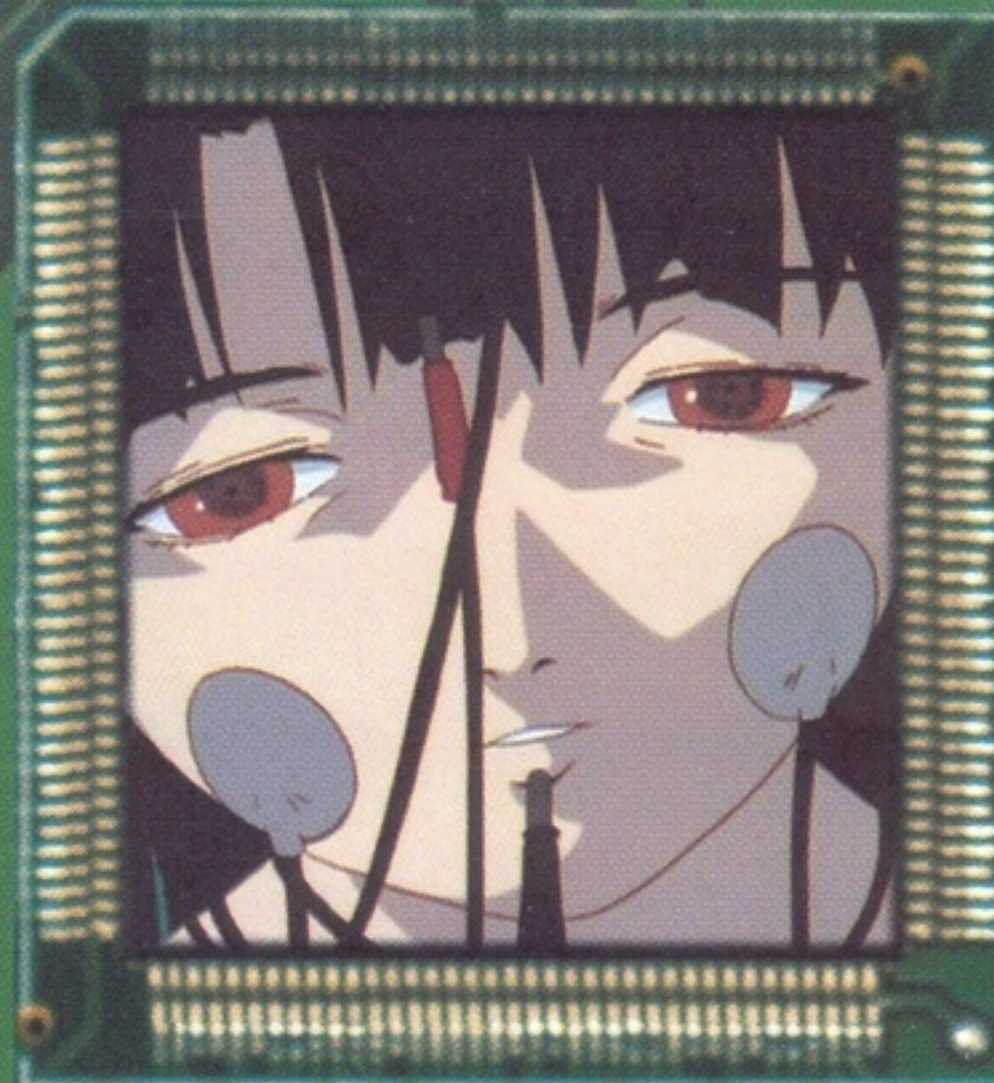
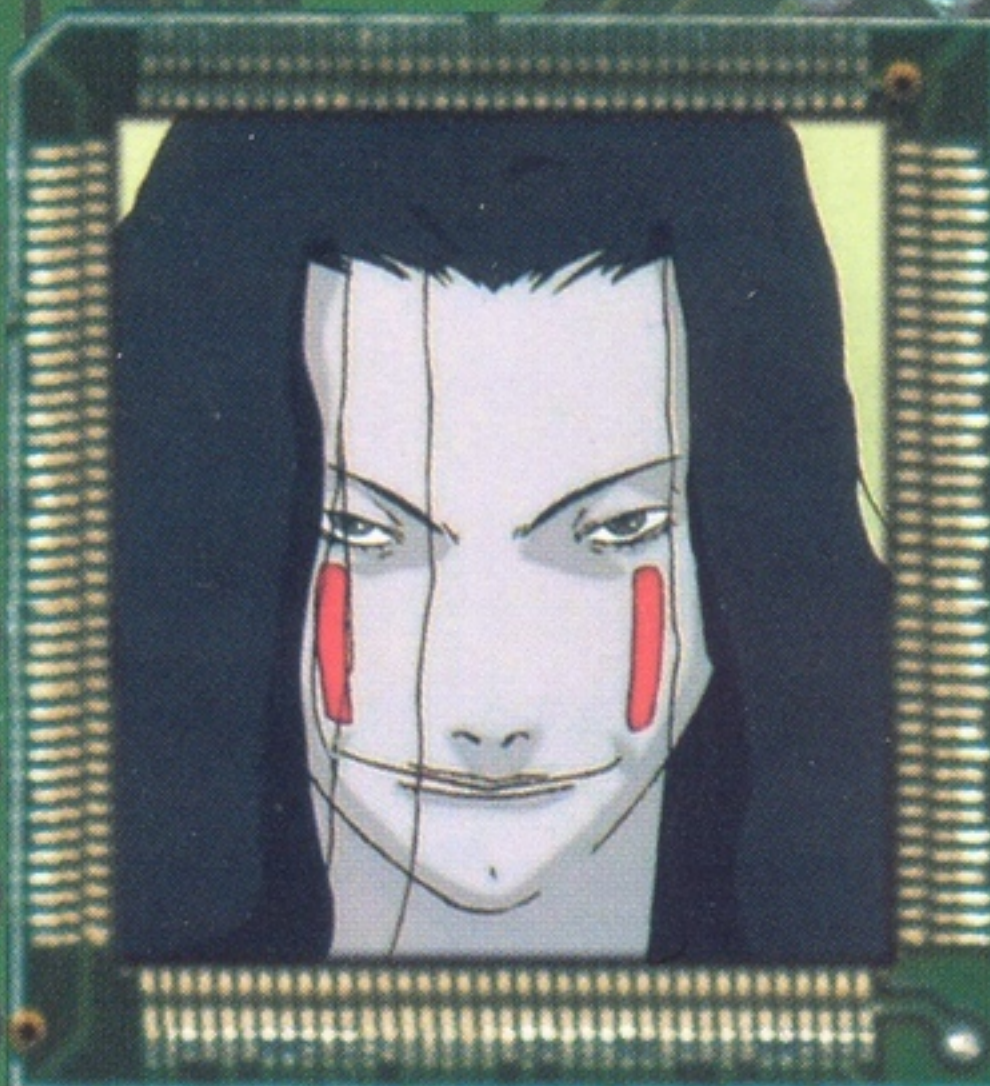
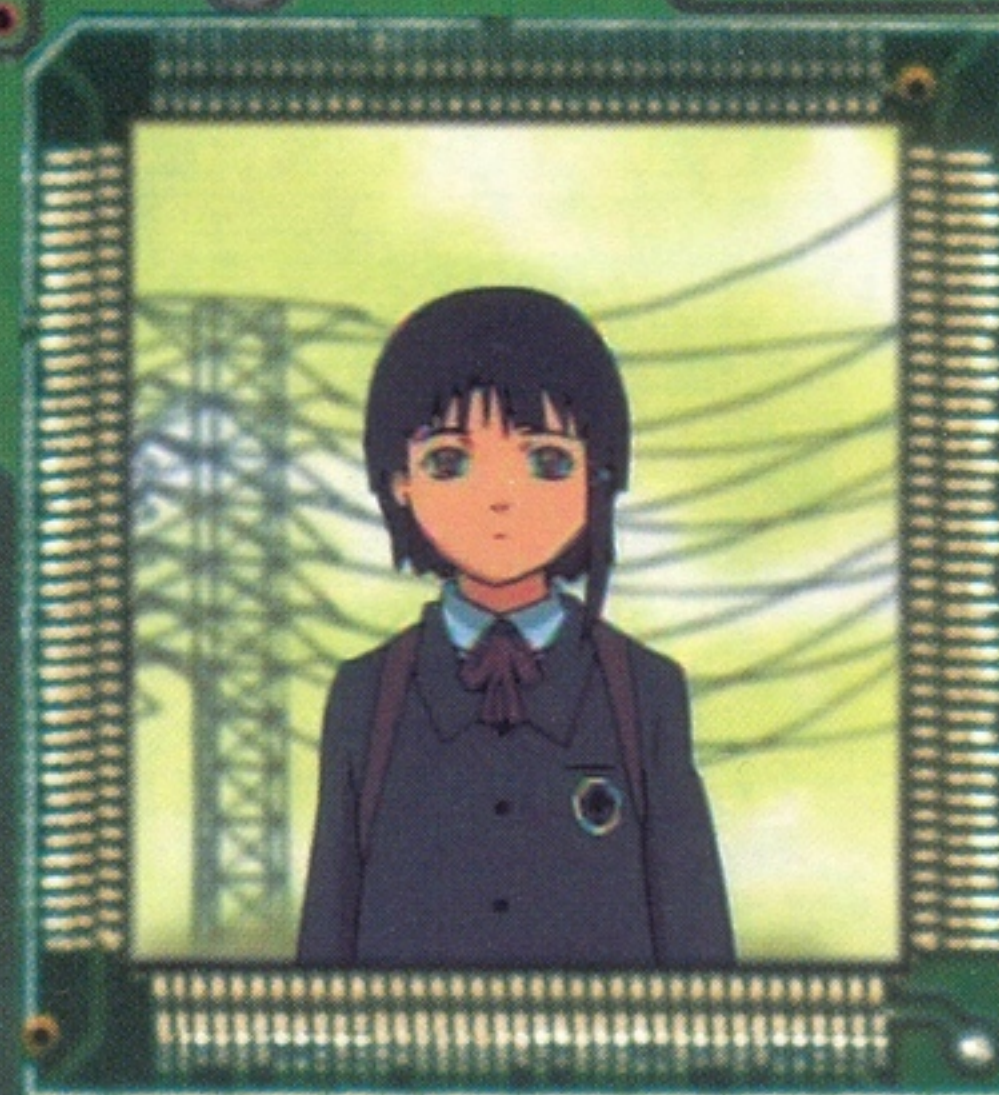
The RFCs covering IP lay out the pattern of information that a packet of data must follow. Certain bits identify the system that created it, while others specify its destination, much like the return address and recipient's address on physical mail. Other bits cover features like whether and when the packet should expire and go away if it cannot reach its destination and whether it should take priority over other kinds of traffic. Finally, there is the actual piece of information that all of the above is supposed to help carry. Machines throughout the net read the parts of this packet that affect them and act if appropriate, either sending it on in the right direction or recognizing it as intended for them. In this case they gather up the information, reassembling it piece by piece as the packets come in. In the end, when everything works, the completed transmission arrives for the recipient just as the sender intended it.

In the real world, version 4 of the IP protocol, or IPv4, is the general standard. It can support a maximum number of distinctly identified machines that seemed like plenty, back before multiple home computers, pagers with net access, and other such hardware became commonplace. Some operating systems and internal networks use IPv6, since it has a much larger pool of available addresses. Complex schemes translate one version's addresses into the other's behind the scenes. In Lain's world, IPv6 is the standard, as it would have to be to accommodate the great many computers and electronic devices seen in the show. IPv7, the "seventh-generation protocol" so important to events in the series, is pure invention, but well founded on the realities of computing and networking history.

Several characters refer to "holes" in the protocol. This is also taken from reality.

The protocols specify how systems should interpret different kinds of data, but sometimes there are gaps. One processing system, for example, might recognize the right bit patterns as garbage and pass it along to another routine where it becomes a key, allowing outsiders to manipulate the system in ways they should not.

Security work on network protocols includes significantly tedious examination of routines to see how they respond to different sorts of badly arranged bit sequences and rewriting routines, all to stop them from destructive input or output of a particular kind. The Phantoma hack to allow free-ranging play throughout the network is very much like other exploits that real-world security network analysts try to catch and fix.





Layer 10: Love begins with the customary cityscape, played silently save for the hum of machinery. Lain and Eiri speak, but Lain's "voice" comes out of Eiri's mouth, and vice versa. Lain, through Eiri, asks how he can exist since he died; Eiri says death is merely abandoning the body.

Lain remembers Chisa saying "I don't need to stay here." Eiri boasts of incorporating the necessary software into IPv7, but when Lain states a protocol is merely an agreed-upon standard, he explains that he hid a code within it operating at a much higher level. It includes the contents of Eiri's own compressed mind into the very foundations of the Wired, so that he literally is everywhere the Wired operates.

Lain objects that this isn't really godhood; Eiri agrees, saying that he



needs worshippers as well. She says, "But you have them, or made them," and then her voice returns to her own body before she says, "Knights." Eiri fades out,



serial experiments lain

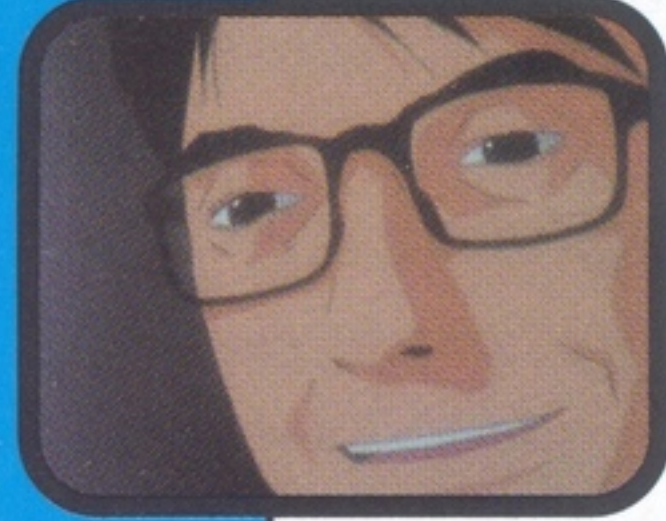
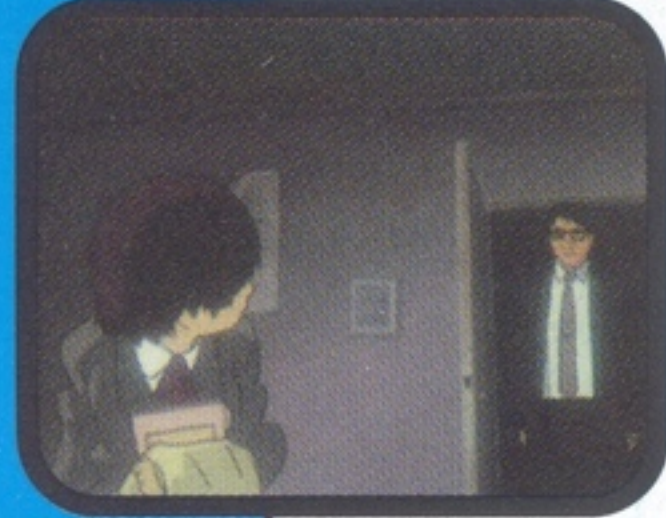
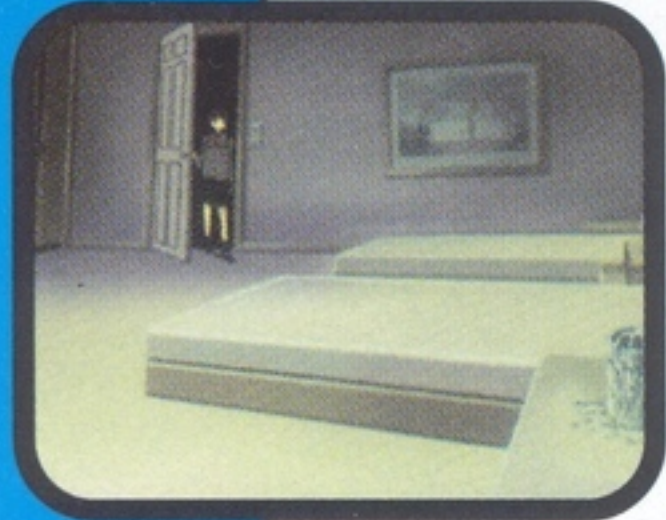
EPISODE SUMMARY LAYER: 10

telling her, "Just remember, you no longer need a body." She angrily replies, "That's a lie, and you know it," but nobody's there to acknowledge.

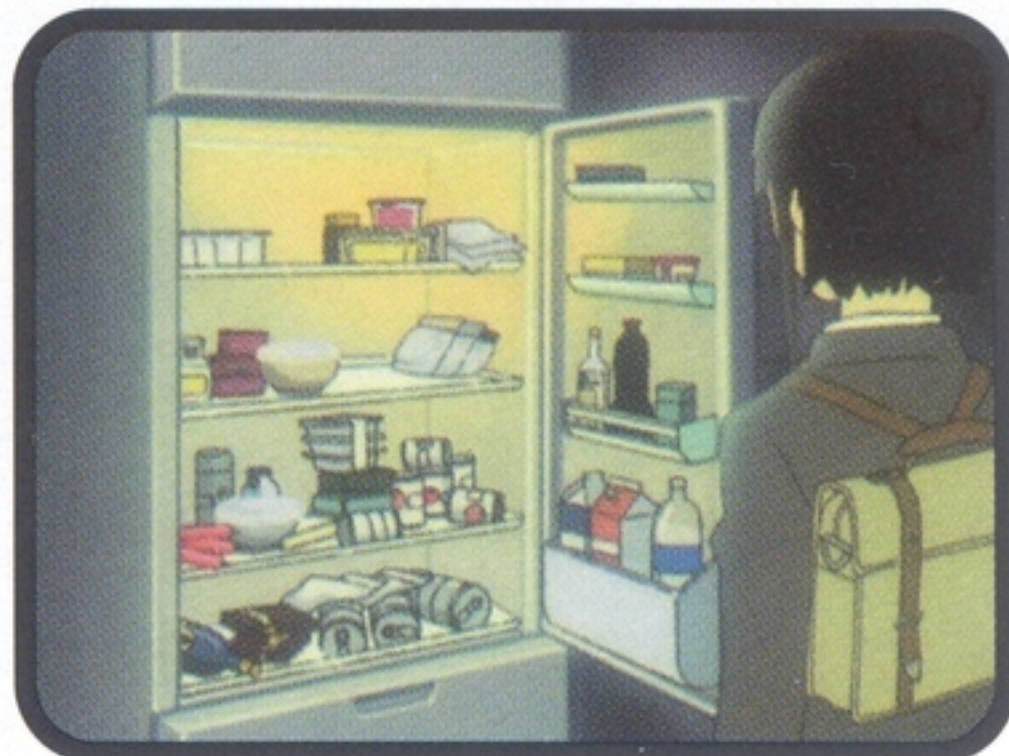


Lain goes to class and finds her friends free of prior traumas. Her own desk is gone. There is no place for her, and nobody sees or acknowledges her. Lain frantically asserts her existence, despite the mounting evidence to the contrary. She touches on the underlying truth of the situation when she admits trying to avoid doing anything "weird" or rousing any "suspicion" in others, though she does not reflect on the implications of that. She simply wonders out loud if she was not meant to have a body.

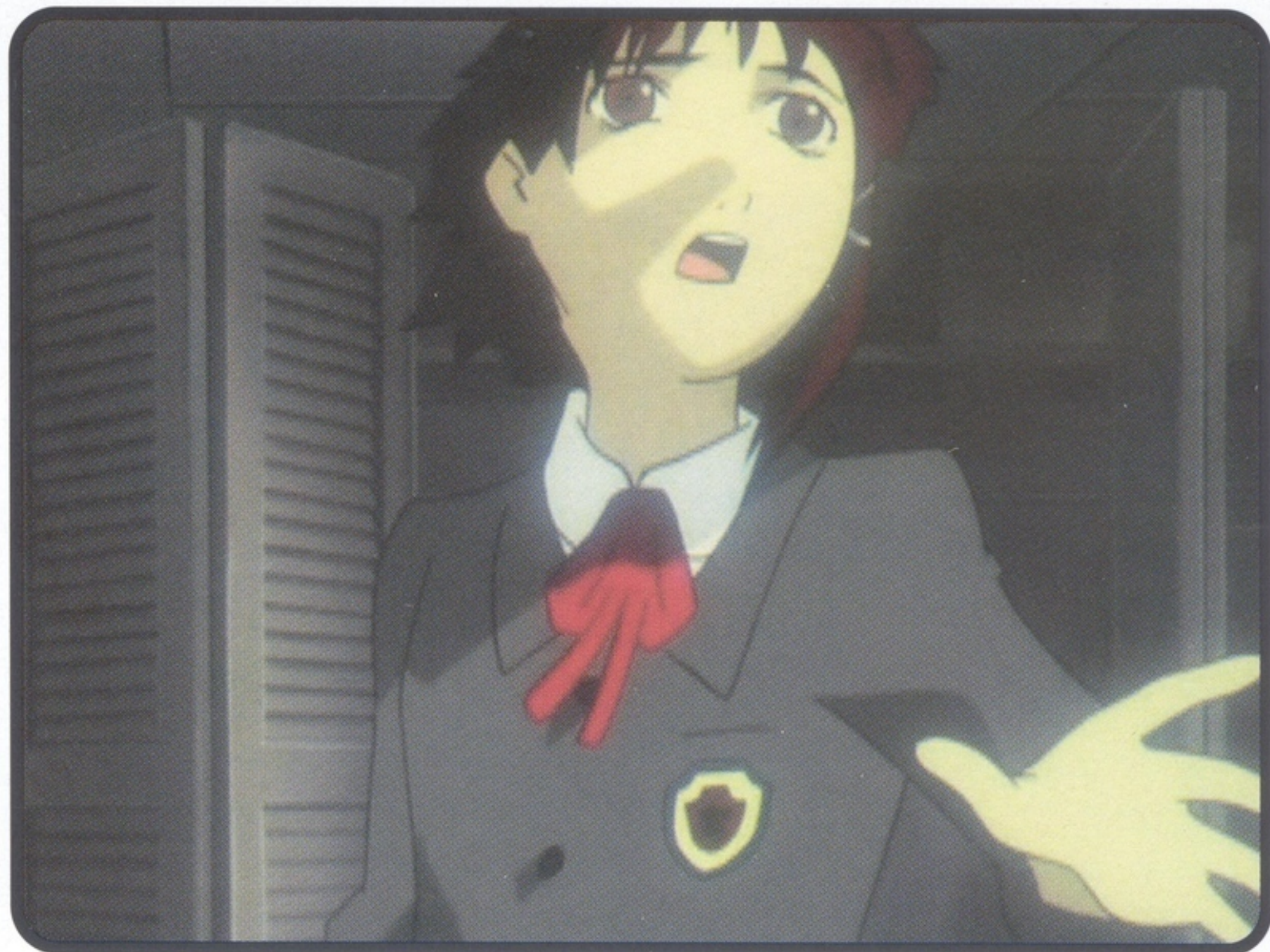
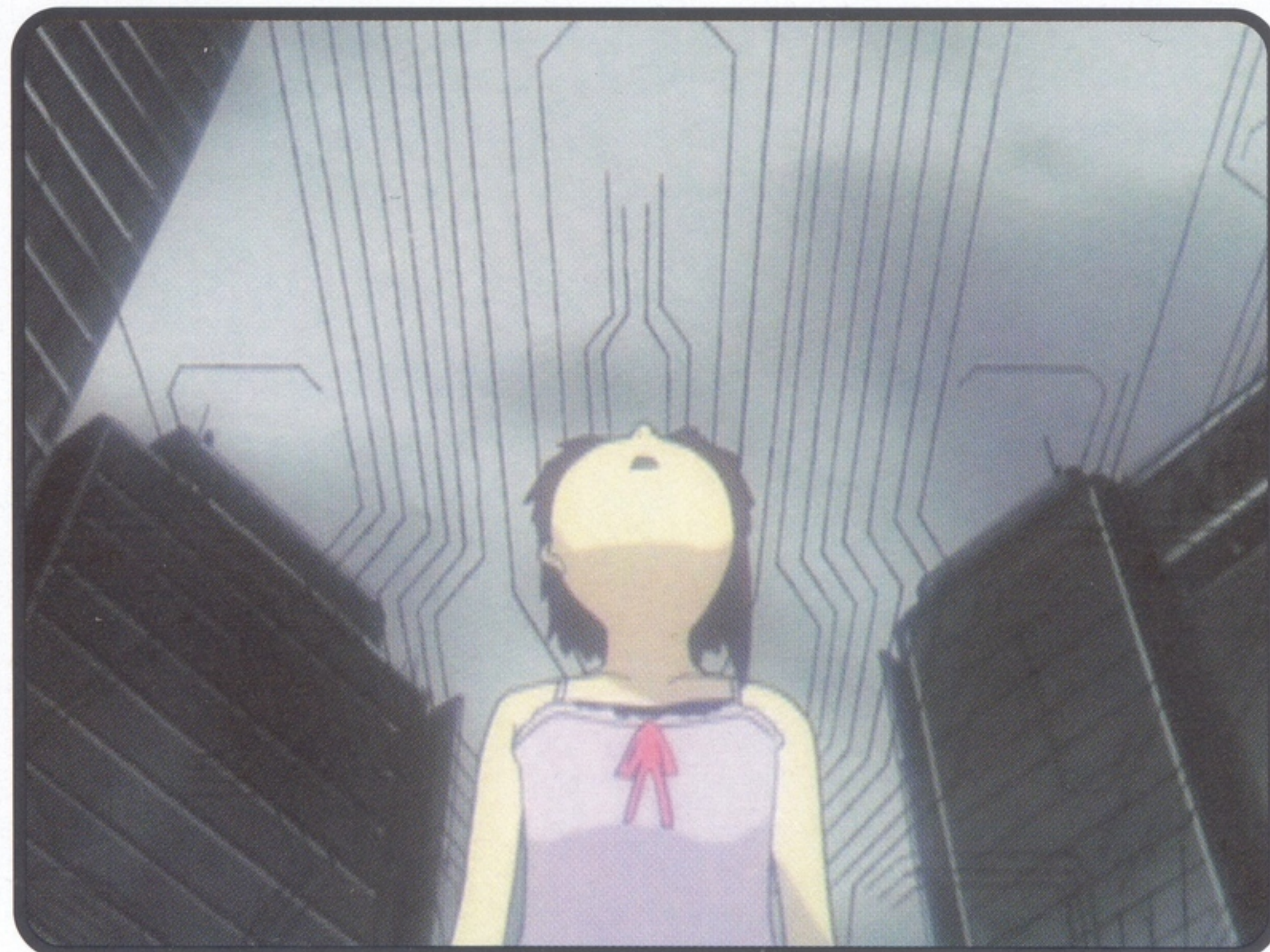
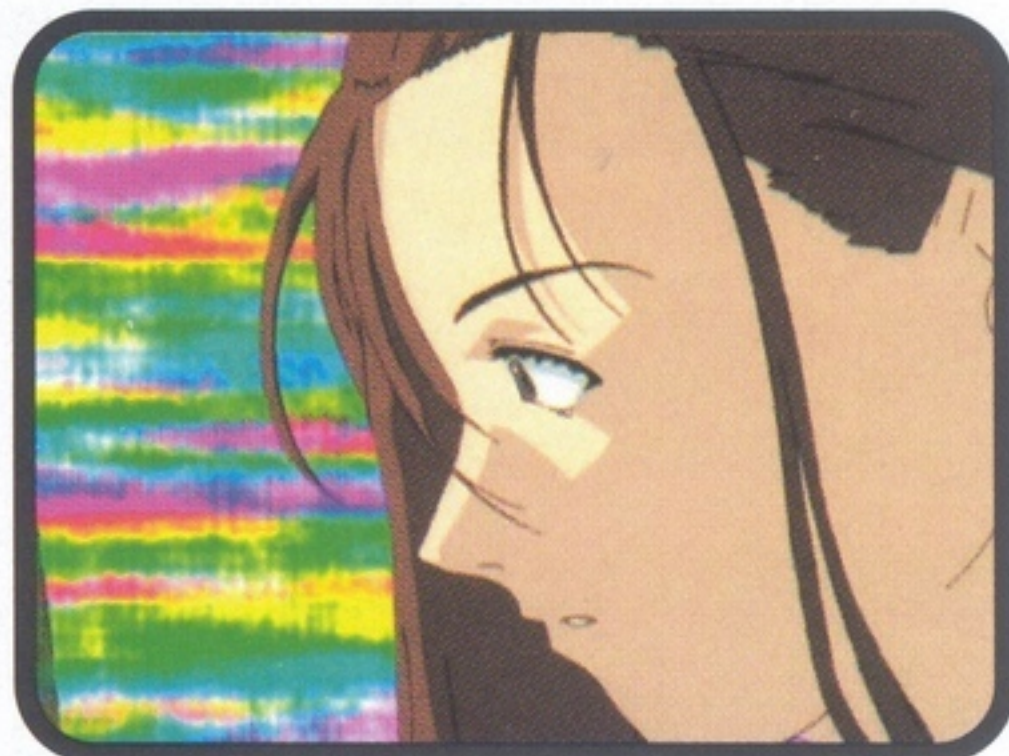




Alice, or something using Alice's appearance, agrees before returning to the frozen tableau of the scene, leaving Lain ostracised. Lain returns home slowly, past the shadows pulsing with bloody activity and the streets blank and



white. Her home is quiet, and not as tidily abandoned as the evening of the Cyberia shooting. There are displaced cushions, scattered magazines, and food in the refrigerator to show that people

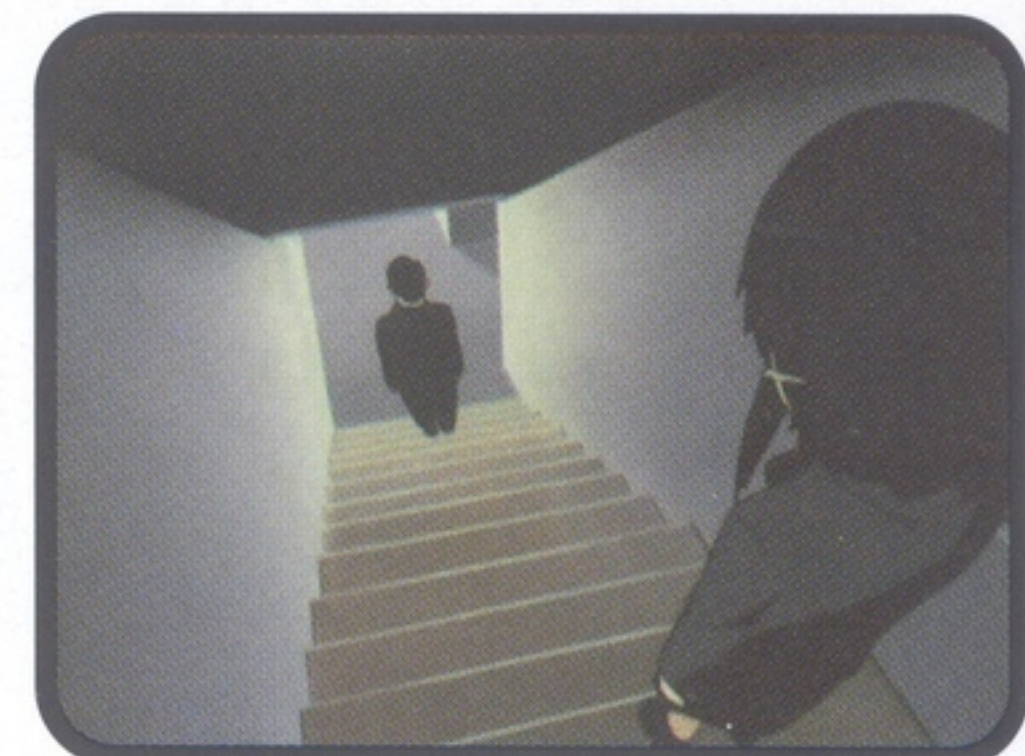


were there. The plants in her parents' bedroom are dead, but their beds are made and pristine. There is a flash of the second Mika, sitting in the back seat of a car moving past pastel blurs, repeating, "Beep beep daaah," like a telephone off the hook.

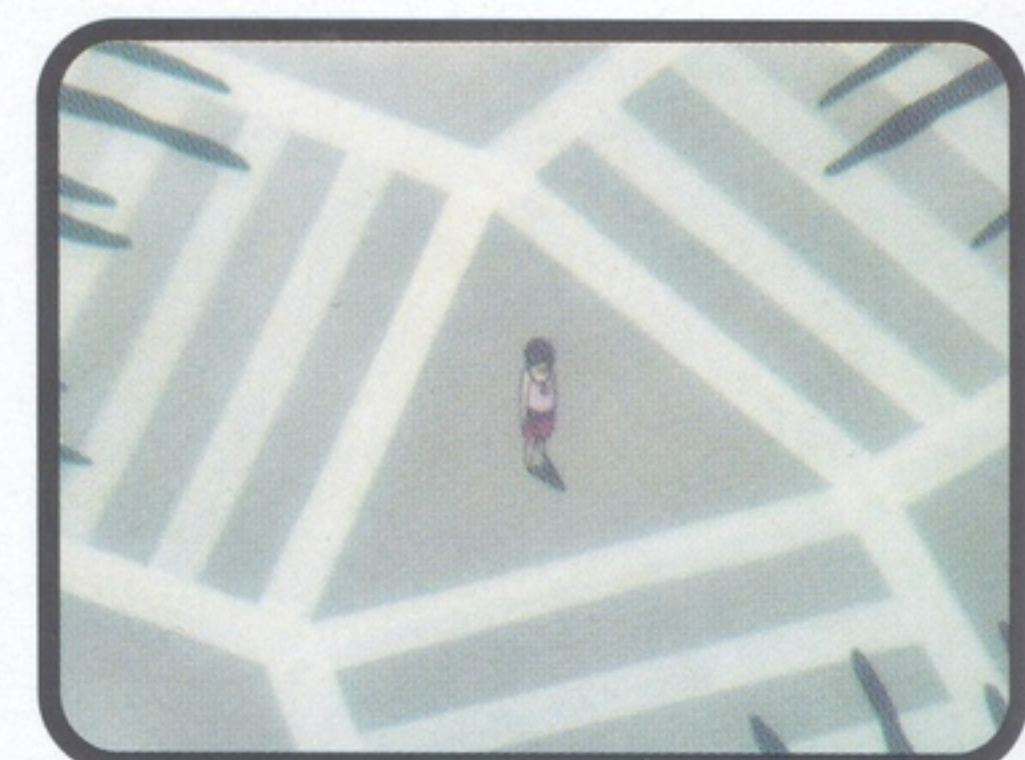
i must remember

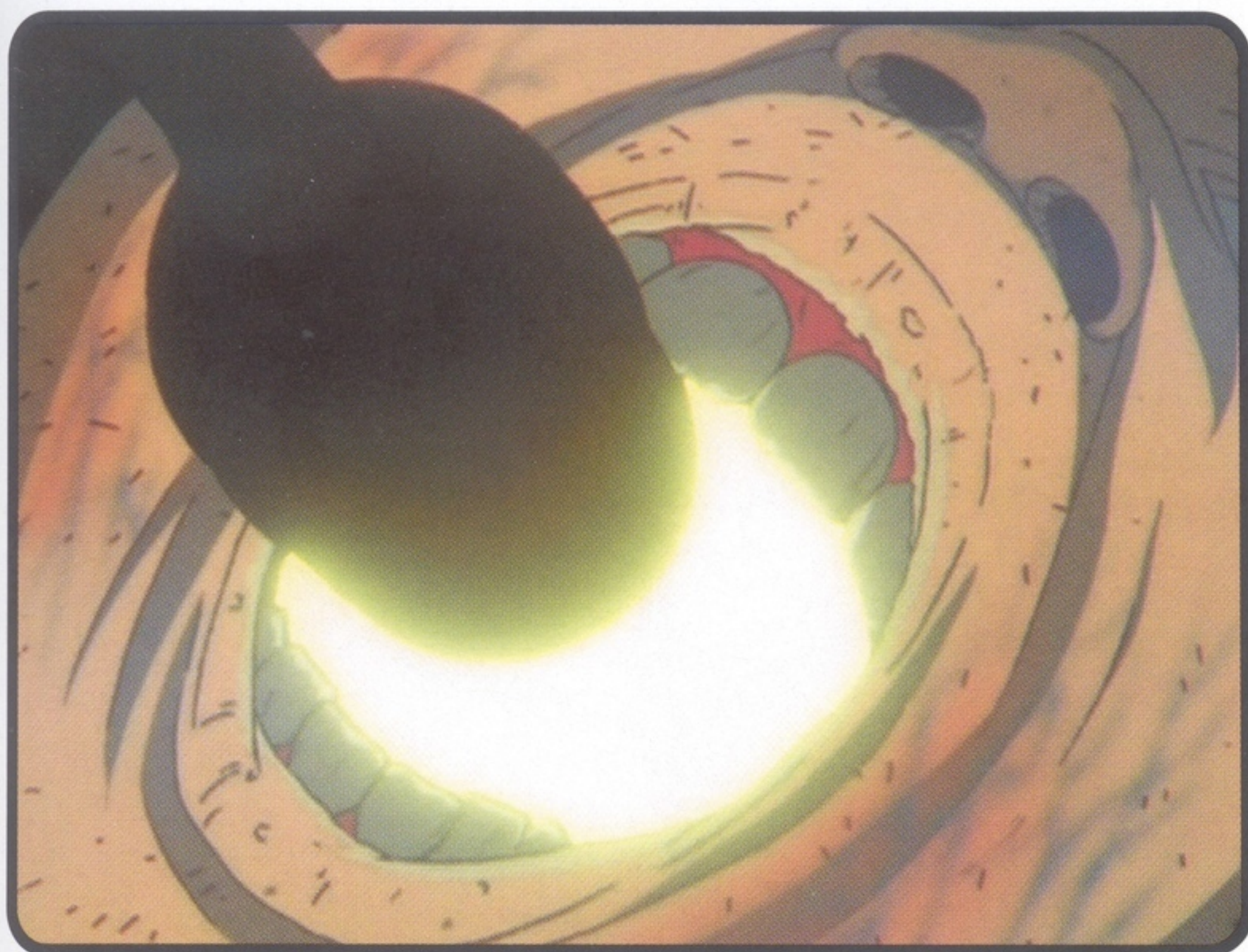
Lain, hearing footsteps behind her, turns to see her father. He wishes her farewell, saying, "Our work here with you is finally completed." She knows now what she needs to know. He adds that he truly loved her, and envies her for being something beyond his ability. He walks

away. Lain runs out into the hallway after him, begging him not to leave her alone. "Alone?" he replies. "Rest assured that you're not alone. Not ever. Remember, if you connect to the Wired, everyone will always be there to welcome you. That's the sort of being you are. Always welcome." He leaves without looking back again.



Without transition, Lain stands in the fog downtown. We hear the footsteps of others and see their shadows; Lain repeats, "I must remember, I'm not alone," but in fact she is isolated from others. Beyond the power lines, circuitry fills the sky and the more fundamental reality of the Wired grows clearer to her. Voices ask her what she wants to do, since it is her world. She asks the identity of the Knights, since they made the fake version of her. The





voices say the Knights run in a conceptual lineage through the Knights of the Eastern Calculus to the medieval order of the Knights Templar. They used the Shuman resonance in the human collective unconscious as a network long before the Wired.



Lain's features furl in concentration, and she races through the Wired in search of information about her adversaries. The scene then cuts to Taro and his friends in Cyberia; the lights are out and the club deserted. Taro watches the news on his handheld computer. A list of the Knights unfolds for public presentation.

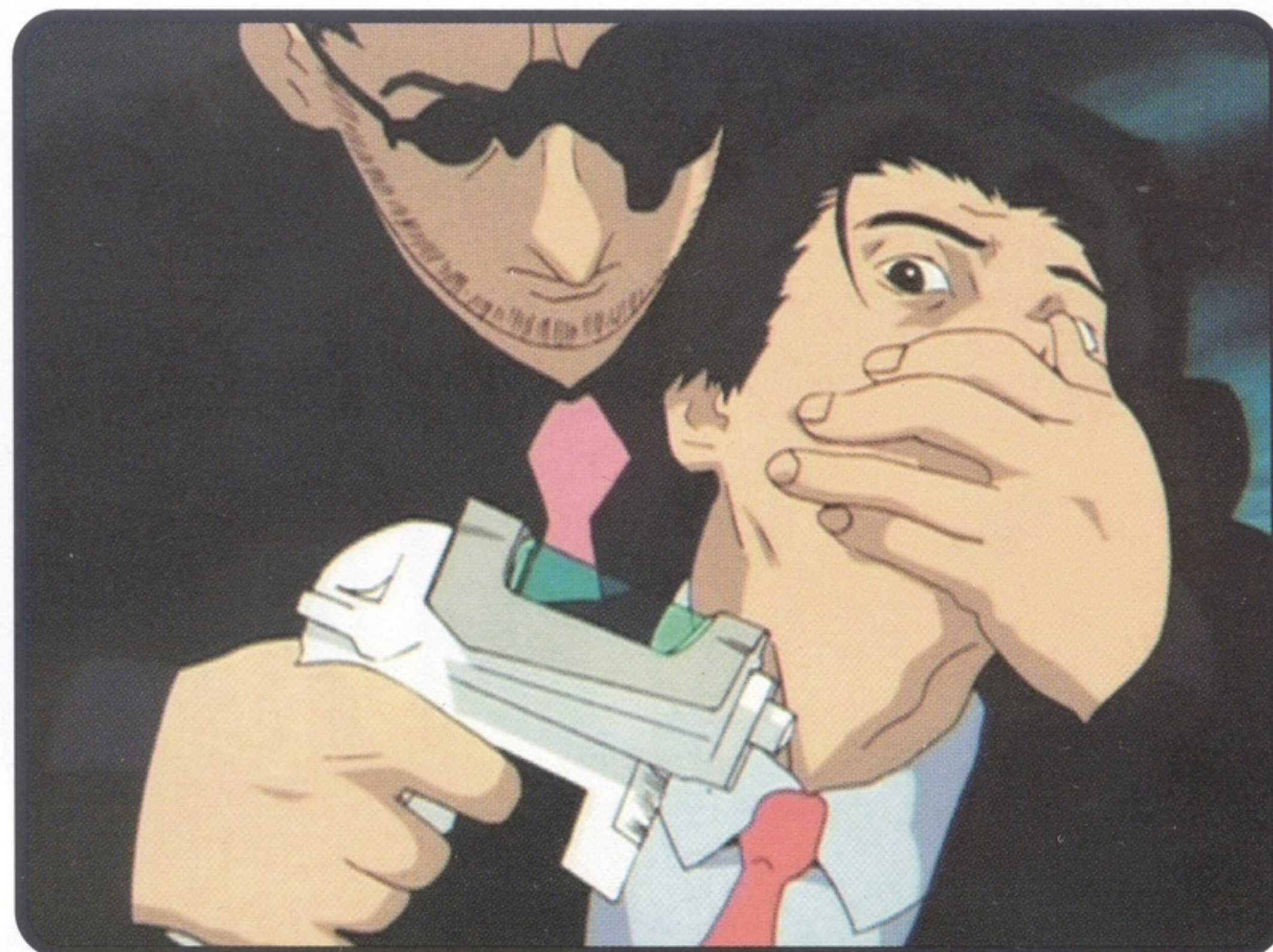


The businessman seen earlier, who is on the list, hastily gathers up papers and attempts to flee, only to confront the two men in black entering his office.

They inject him with a lethal chemical. The fat hacker is on his bed, dead, with something shoved down his throat. The



housewife slumps dead at her laptop, her son ignorantly playing his game. A news announcer reports on an international wave of "suicides," with each country's information control ministry and police noting the victims were all involved in advanced computing activities. The Knights' logo



appears clearly in direct view for the first time while the reporter says the victims apparently all belonged to "the fraternal order known as the Knights."

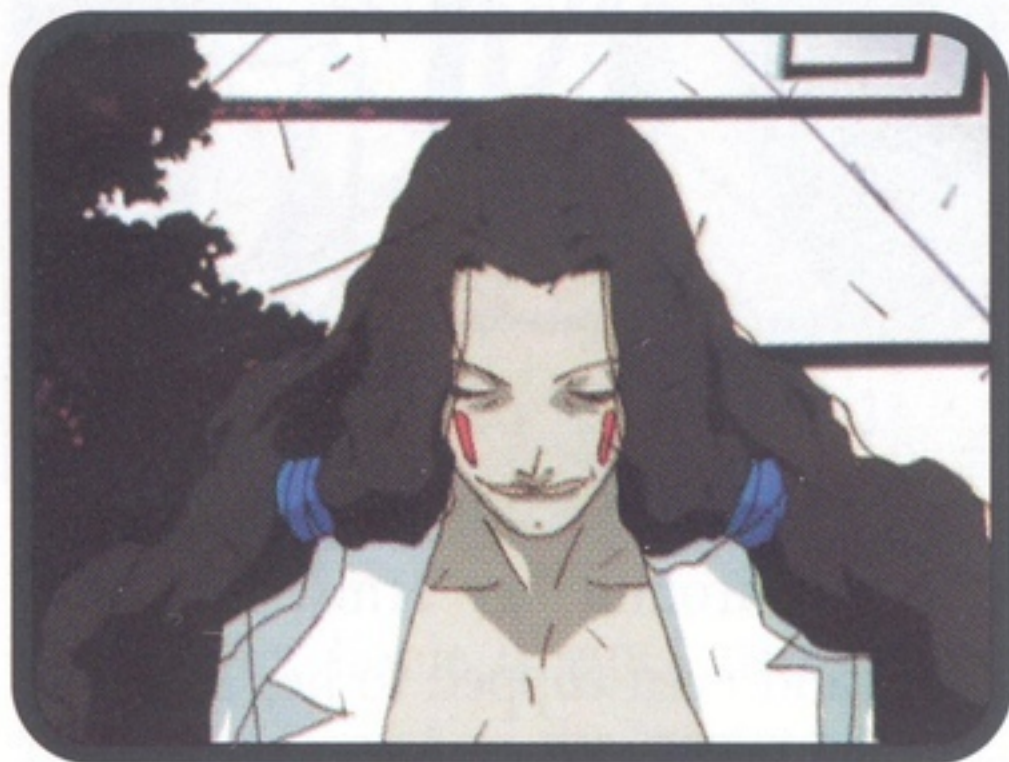


Lain is in her room again, literally plugged into her computer, with wires wrapped around her arms, legs, and torso, and even clipped to her lip. The men in black enter. She asks, "Why did you do it?" Karl answers, "Essentially, it was a personal request from our client."

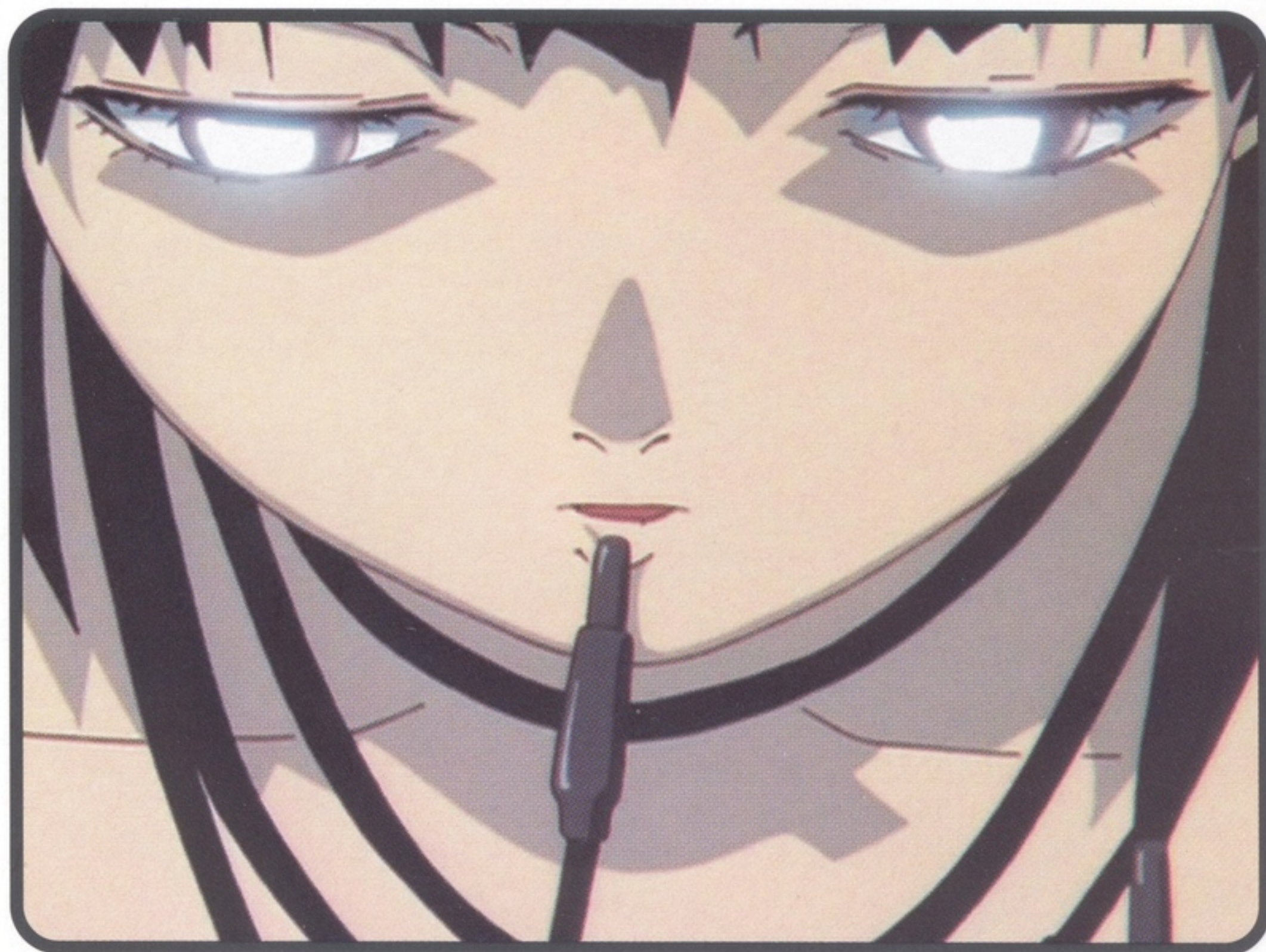
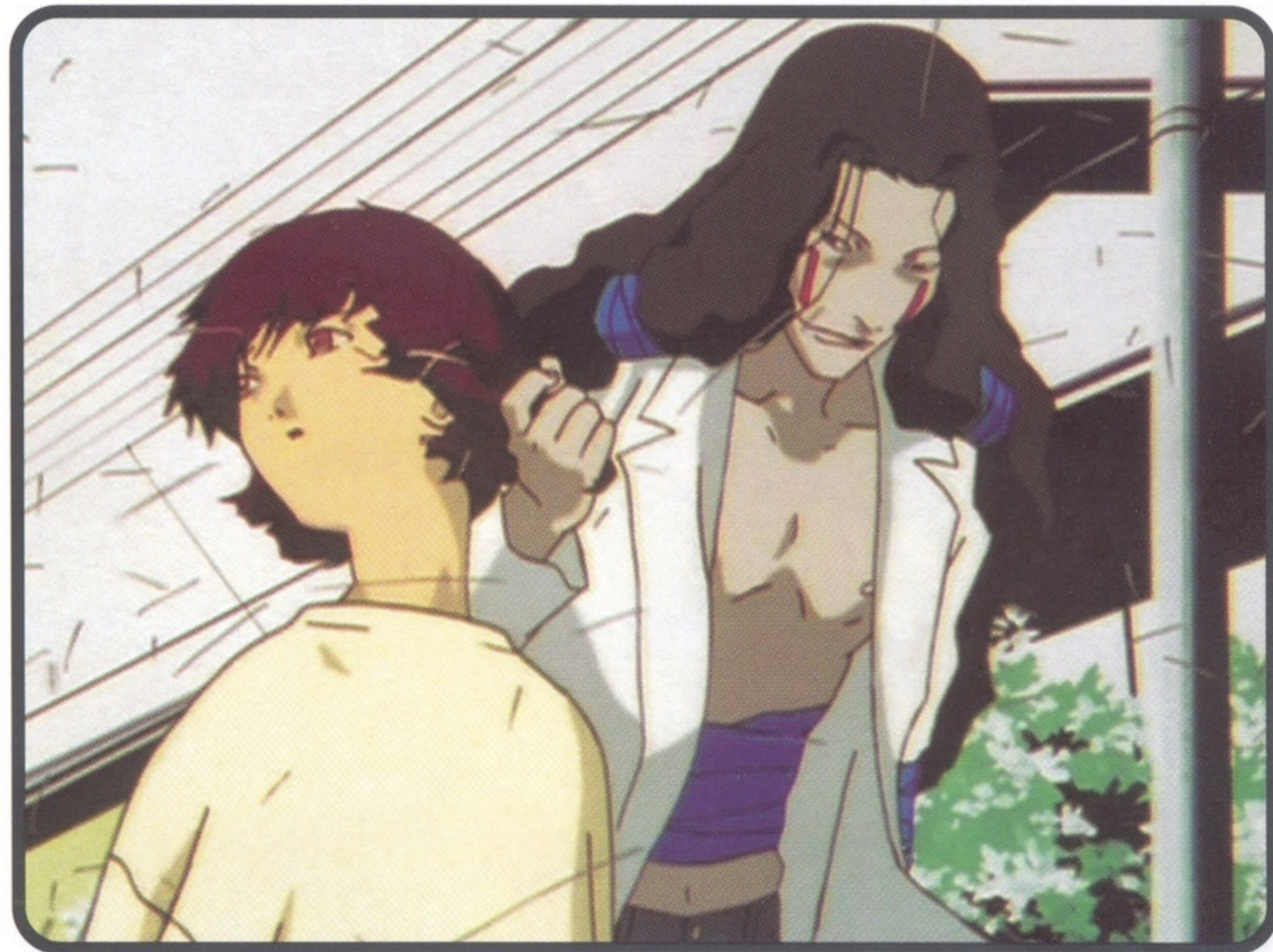




He says that the Wired cannot be a world on its own. It only supports the real world. The shorter man adds that Lain herself cannot be allowed to exist in the Wired, though she is safe where she is. Eiri's modifications to IPv7 will be removed, and there is no need or want for a God in either the Wired or the physical world.



The shorter man leaves. The other lingers for a moment to say, "We still

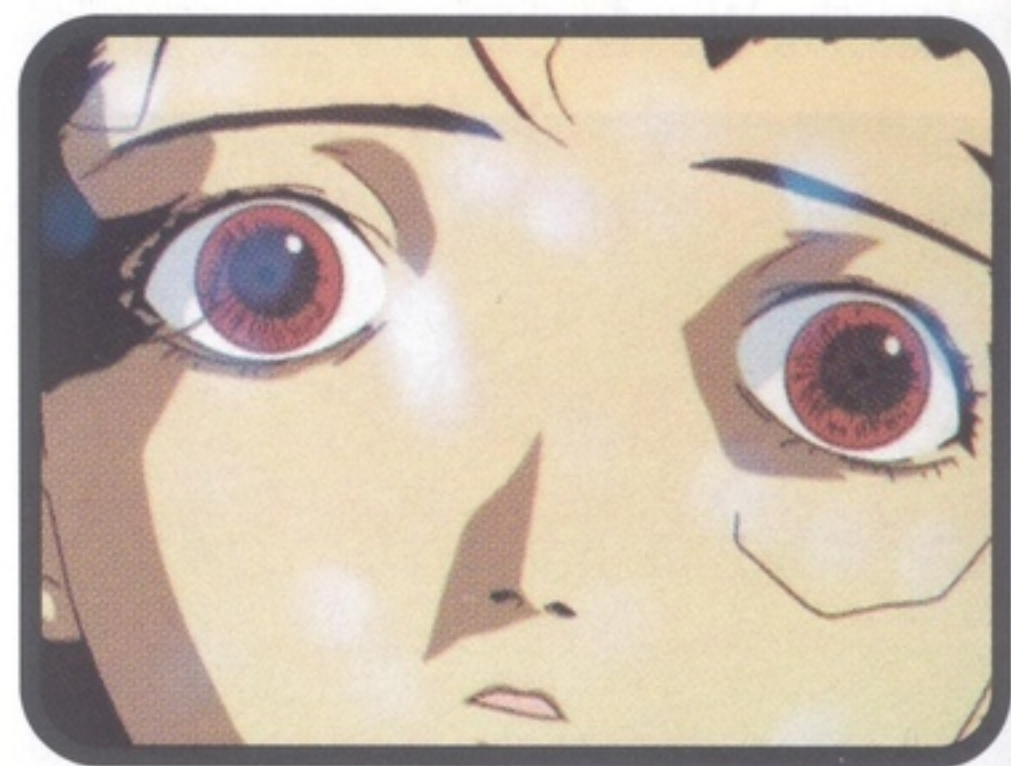


haven't figure out just exactly what you are. We'll probably never know for certain. But still, I know that I love you, Lain. Love certainly is a strange emotion, now, isn't it?" The two men depart.

love me. there
is no one else

Later, Lain stands in the street, with Eiri floating behind her. She asks what he will do now that he has no worshippers. He points out that he still has one: her. He gave her life in the Wired and made her the heroine of its folklore. The physical Lain is merely a homunculus arranged to give her mind a home. "That's a lie!" she says, and he

readily agrees in that her family and friends were fake. He, the man who loves her and sent her into the world, is still there. "Love me. There is no one else." There is not "another Lain," only "the real Lain."



Shifting into her angry personality, she shouts, "Like it even matters what's real anymore!" Eiri laughs while power lines break to whip around her. He disappears, leaving her alone with deep scorch marks where the lines struck the ground.



The Knights

In 1118, nine knights taking part in the Crusades petitioned the King of Jerusalem for formal recognition as an organization of warrior monks. They took oaths of poverty, chastity, and obedience like monks, but instead of praying, farming, and pursuing the typical duties of monks, they committed themselves to defending pilgrims on holy routes. They would fight infidels, brigands, and other enemies as dedicated soldiers for Christ. The Knights of the Temple of Jerusalem, or Knights Templar, were among the bravest soldiers on the Christian side of the Crusades, and among the last to face increasingly successful Muslim counter-offensives.

Despite vows of personal poverty, the order gradually became rich. Affluent nobles with guilty consciences made donations to the order as a show of good works, and because the order maintained branches throughout the routes followed by pilgrims, it could and did offer reliable letters of credit in an era before banking was generally trustworthy. The interest in this venture, the gains from estate management, and wealth from many directions accumulated in the Templars' vaults. The later generations of Templars lived very comfortably indeed, and came increasingly into conflicts with the governments of the time. As a chartered religious order, the Templars were officially accountable only to church justice, not to secular law.

The Templars developed a reputation for their unorthodox behaviour, which was certainly true in many cases, and for occult investigations and magical rituals, which was probably true only for a handful of knights. Philip the Fair, then King of France, strung together enough accusations of Satanic conduct to warrant the intervention of secular power despite the Templars' ecclesiastical position. He ordered mass arrests, which took place in 1307. The kings of other countries soon followed suit. Naturally, it was necessary to confiscate Templar wealth as part of the process. Trials, generally involving forced confessions and trumped-evidence, ensued, and in 1314 the last grand master of the order, Jacques de Molay, died by burning at the stake. The proven history of the order ends with him and his colleagues perishing in the flames.

Inevitably, there were survivors, of course. No mass arrest is ever entirely successful. From the fact that some individual Templars escaped and the possibility that they took some treasure with them grew the legend of well-planned flight. This notion holds that designated loyal servants carried the most valuable parts of the Templar hoard with them to Scotland, or Canada, or (depending on the theorist) Atlantis, or Mars, or somewhere out of the way of the medieval French government.

The Templars became mythic figures. Conspiracy theories ever since have cast the heroes or villains of the unseen world as descendants of the Templars. Occultists attribute the fallen order as early atheists and scientists, as magicians, and true believers against the heresies of Roman Catholicism, and much more. Whole shelves of books present competing theories, almost all supported with specious logic applied to flimsy evidence.

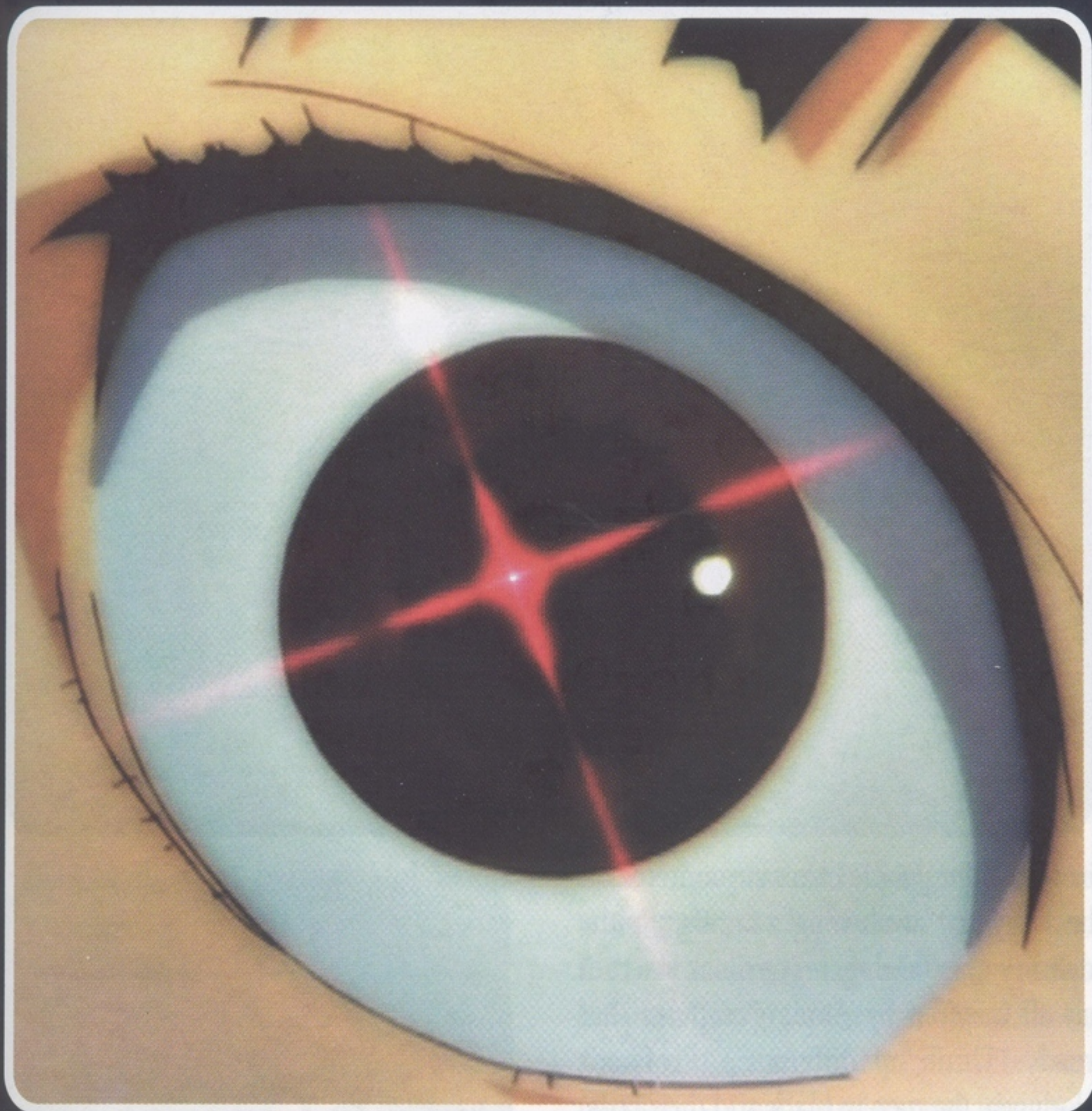
The Knights of the Eastern Calculus (KEC) are one of many groups, loosely linked by the principles of Freemasonry, who claim descent from the Templars. Some groups, like the KEC, are much more interested in philosophical and scientific speculation than others. In Lain's world, clearly speculation proved insufficient.

The Templars do not always appear as scheming masterminds out to rule the world. Sometimes their schemes are more morally ambiguous. The implications of their plan in *lain* — that truth can be defined (and therefore must be defined) to remove uncertainty — could point toward a better world, if it did not depend so much on the enlightened cabal forcing one way on everyone else. In other cases, the Templars appear as outright liberators, bringing together the wisdom of many cultures, just as in the Middle Ages they learned to understand Europe and the Middle East alike, helping overthrowing the forces of stagnation. Revolution itself always inflicts damage, but perhaps the right idealists could keep it to a minimum while maximizing the good. In at least one brilliant fictional use, the novel *Foucault's Pendulum* by Umberto Eco, the conspirators take their purpose in part from the observations and guesses of those around them.

In essence, the Templar myth is a mirror. Look in and you will see whoever you hope or fear runs the world looking back out ... if you stare deeply enough and hunt hard enough for the unseen.







Layer 11: Infornography opens with the usual cityscape alternating with shots of Lain hooking herself very, very thoroughly into her computer. She wraps cables around (and into) herself while information cascades rapidly across display terminals. We see the rest of the house now definitively empty; the only signs of life are the bright lights shining out of her windows onto the dark street.



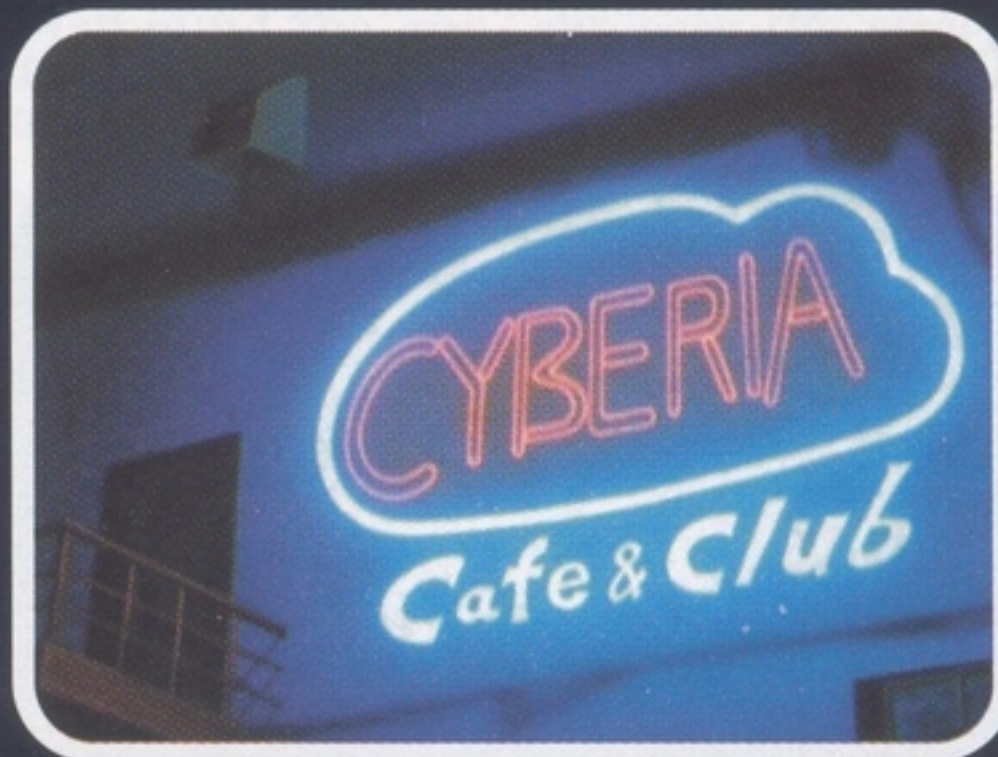
Flashbacks of Lain's mental hunt for the Knights alternate with unfolding characters against a variety of backgrounds. On pure white: "No, it's nothing as ambiguous as 'memory.'" On layers of blue and black text: "But *you're* still there, too, aren't you, you poor dupe?" and, in vivid red, "inconvenient



serial experiments Lain

Episode Summary Layer: 11

body." Against gray static yielding to the video image of Lain, which helped shatter the original Mika: "Lain is Lain."

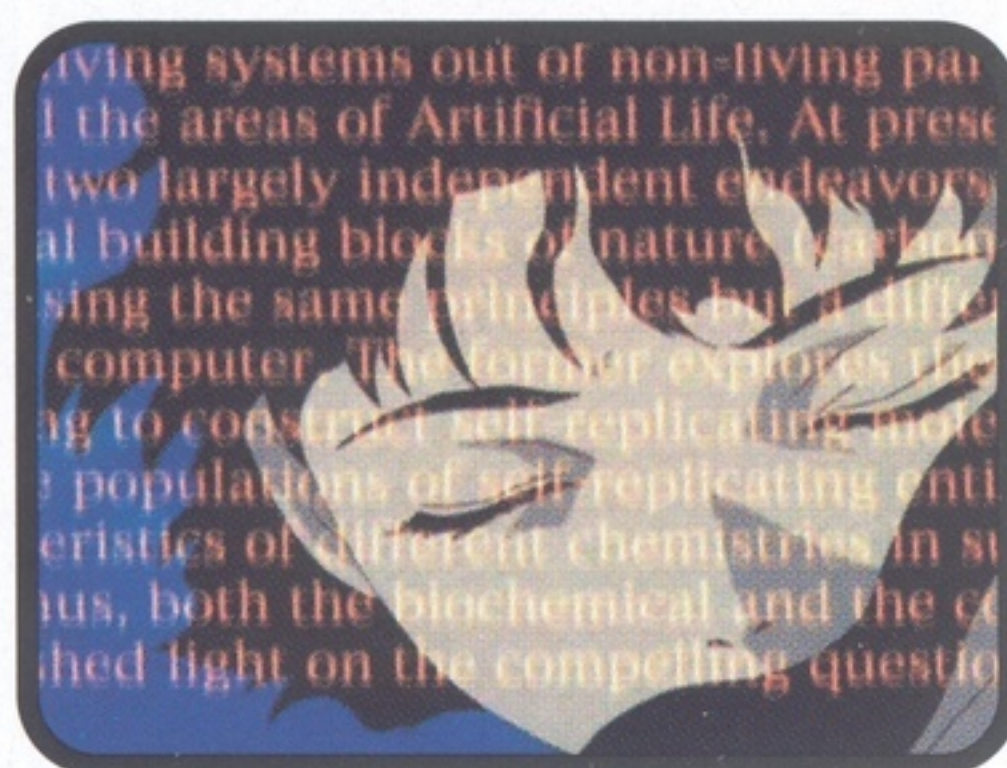


Lain recalls the Cyberia shooting, the colors unnaturally intensified and the action slowed. The cityscape unfolds at faster than usual pace, people and cars alike dissolving into sketchy forms. Chisa says, "I wish you'd come here," while





hanging onto the railing, Lain now watching as an observer of the moment. As Chisa lets go, a textbook-like dissertation on artificial life and its potential philosophical consequences dashes past the screen, disappearing as Lain walks home with Chisa (as Chisa



recalled in her original post-mortem e-mail). Chisa's "I don't need to stay here" comment writhes on the pastel background. Then there is a cascade of



images of the people Lain's encountered on her way to "awakening": family, JJ, the delivery man (and there is a quick insert of an ad inspired by Apple Computer that reads "Think up different"), Professor Hodgson, the men in black and their boss, the boy who shot the kindergartener, and Nezumi the deluded street wanderer. An image, the second version of her sister saying, "It's nothing, nothing at all," repeats several times from different angles.

ticker interspersed with shots of the second Mika.



Lain recalls the train accident early on, when she used her powers unwittingly, and being kissed by Taro, and the K.I.D.s explosion, and other instances of her true nature manifesting. Everyone who played a part in forcing her understanding appear again, including her other, cruel self.

alice love
needs you

A news segment reports that Tachibana General Labs has announced mapping the human genome, the news



All of Alice's expressions of concern, doubt, trust, friendship, and fear unfold next; Lain expresses her own changing self-awareness through Alice. The usual Navi displays are replaced by hand-written texts: "Alice LOVE needs you...." and "A loving heart is searching for you." The blues guitar piece that accompanied all these scenes now stops, as does the flashback.



nothing easy about dying." The boy hands Lain the gun and tells her how to use it, mocking her desire to stay in the real world



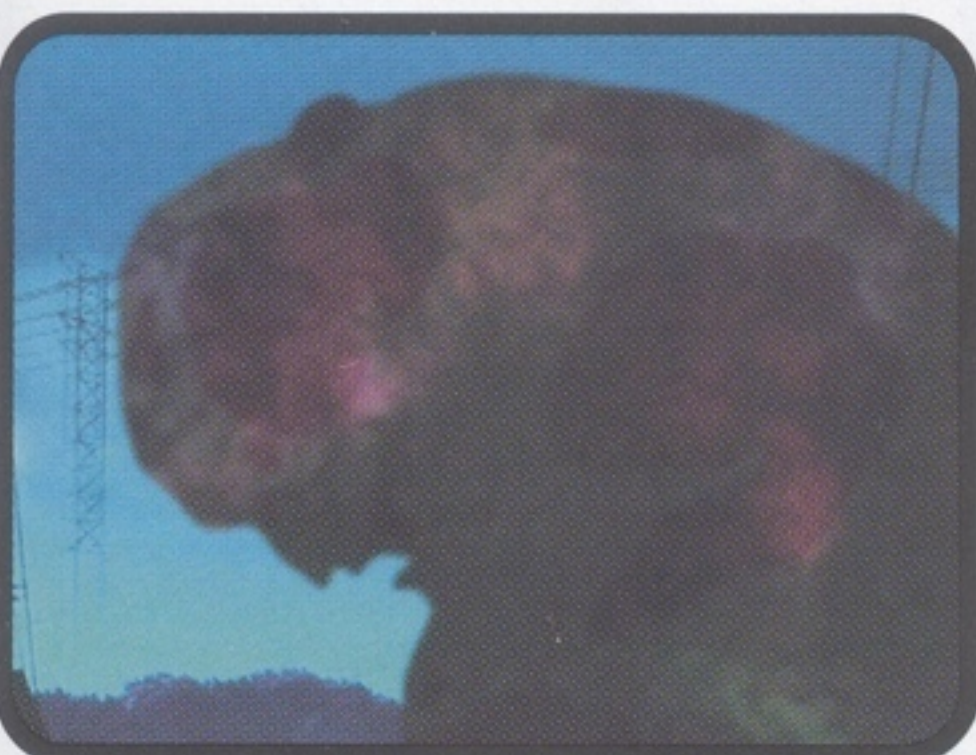
When Lain looks up from examining the gun, she sees the street and everything around her replaced by the surface of a gigantic (presumably planet-sized) brain. Pulses of electricity flash between the organic towers occupying the spaces where power-line poles stood.



The scene switches to Alice's apartment. Alice listens to a video-conferencing message from her friend Julie who wants to set her up on a date. Julie is sure all those rumours about Alice and a teacher are just that, and figures the date will help settle them. Alice's bedroom door opens to reveal

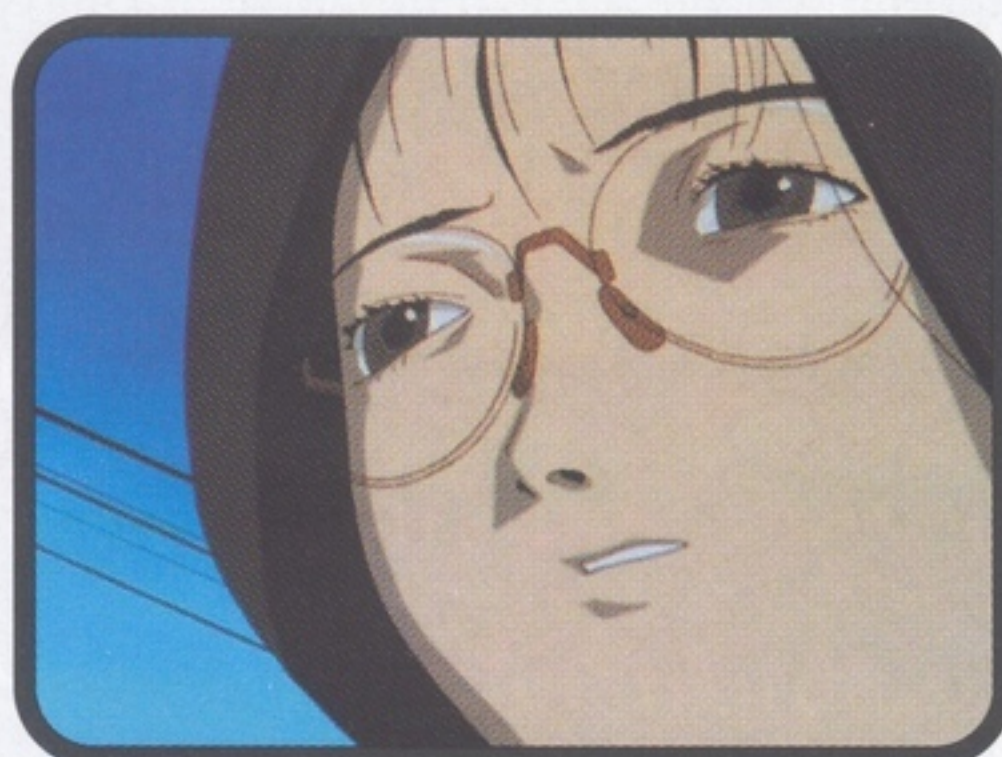


Covered in electrodes and cables, Lain lays down on her floor. Eiri appears, floating in mid-air. He is impressed, commenting that she has created an emulator of her Navi inside her own mind, but he is apparently concerned that she might overload her capacity. She tells him not to speak of her as a machine. He explains she is not hardware, but software, and that it is a problem of proper support for the commands she is trying to execute. The body has its limits, which are far narrower than those of the software ... her true self.



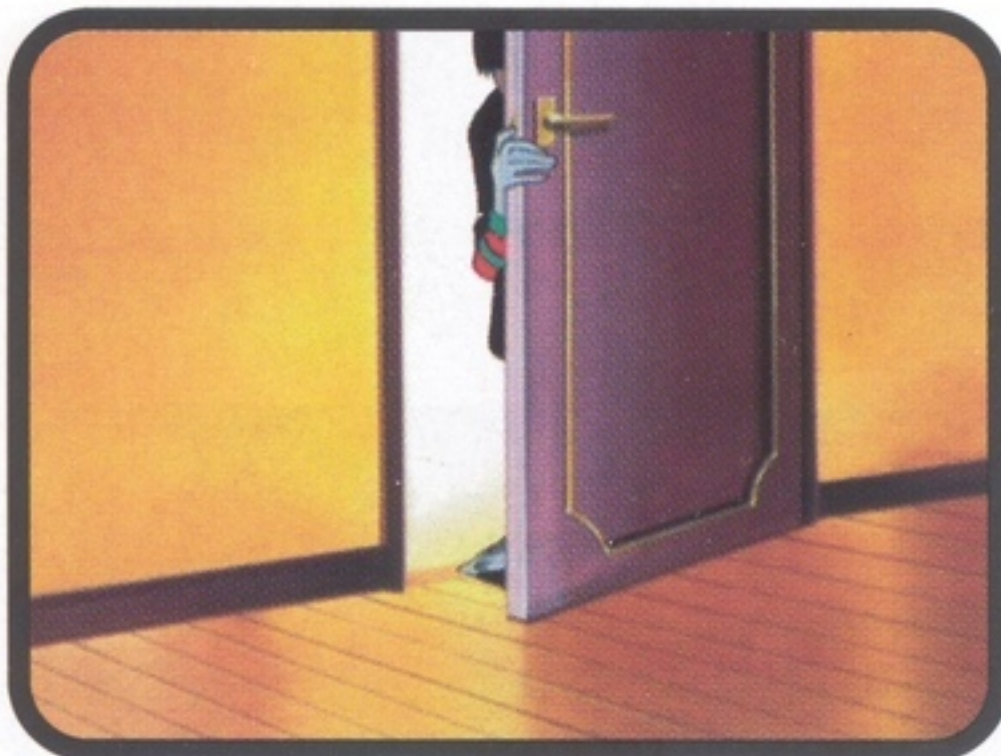
On the street, Lain is apparently distracted by the hum of power lines. After she yells at them to keep quiet, an outline figure rises from its crouch behind a pole and skulks across the

street. Its posture indicates great fear and fatigue. As it passes in front of her, the fully realized image of Chisa remains behind. Lain greets her with good cheer, showing more vigour and pleasure than normal. "I finally understand what you



told me." Chisa replies sorrowfully, "Listen, Lain...." The boy who committed suicide in the nightclub appears behind Lain, saying, "Remember, it's easy to die." Chisa disagrees quietly, "There's

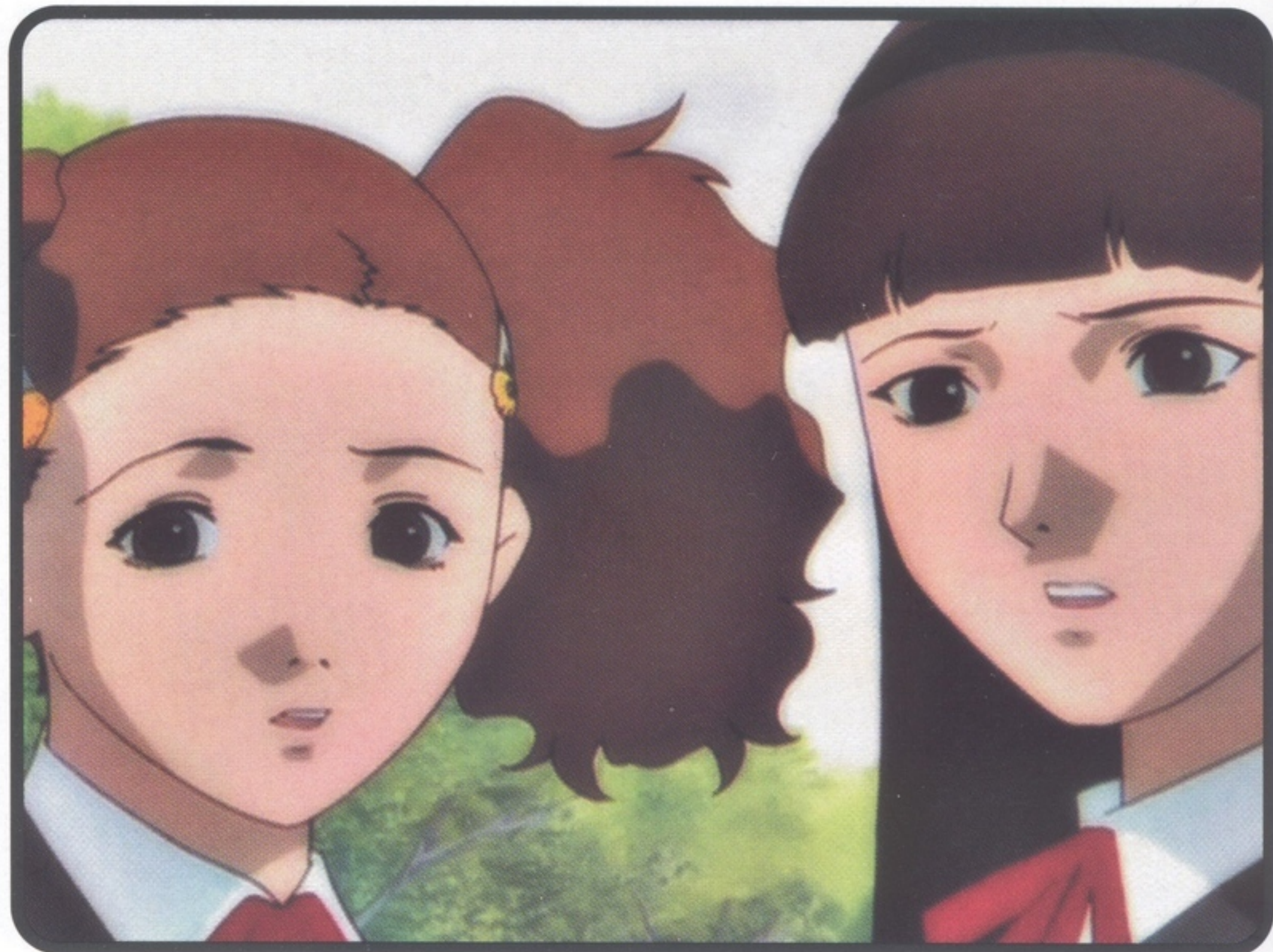




the distorted limbs and red-and-green sweater worn by the alien who appeared in Lain's room, but this time the face is Lain's.



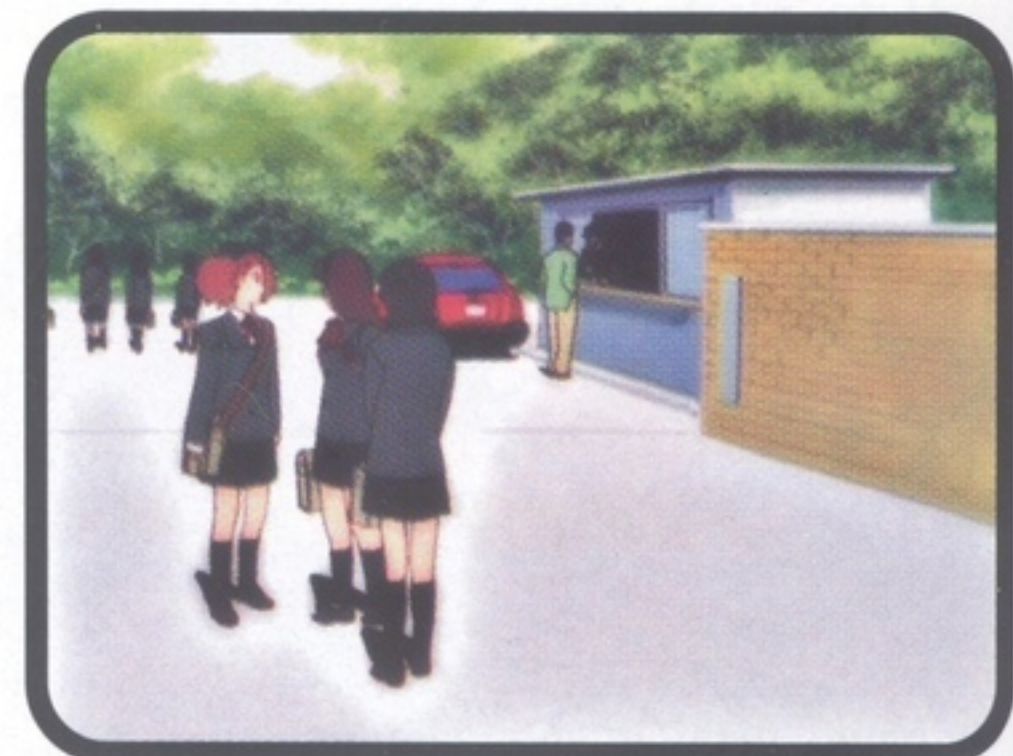
Lain tries reassuring Alice, saying she was not the rumour-monger. Alice objects that she saw the spy, and it was Lain. Lain says it was not actually her, but "some other me." Lain adds, "You might not be the only Alice out there, either." Since Alice is still sceptical,



Lain says, she will have to do something else. She has been working day and night, learning how to use her powers. She has broken down the barrier between the Wired and the real world, and she can undo things that should never have happened. Then Lain is gone, leaving behind Alice sobbing in fear and confusion.

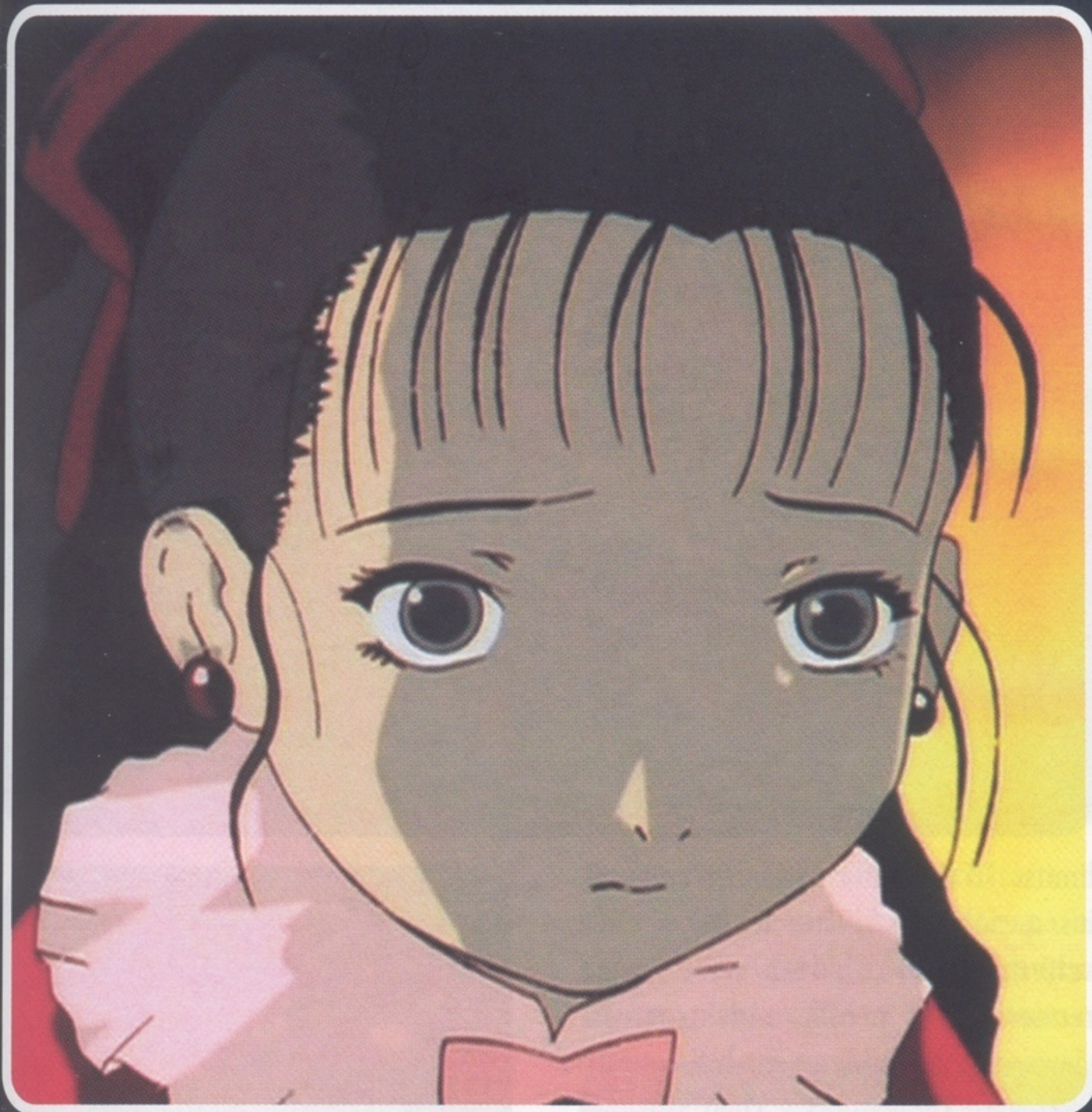
*you might not
be the only alicia*

Alice walks to school in a pure white light, the schoolground and her friends gradually coalescing within the void. Alice starts addressing the rumours spread by the Wired Lain, only



to find that the others know nothing about them. Everything fades to white again around Alice, and she trembles while turning to face Lain. The school scene resumes with Julie and Reika greeting Lain. Lain and Alice speak without sound, seemingly into each other's thoughts. Alice says inwardly, "You smiled," and the episode ends with the two of them again apparently alone in the school's courtyard.





Layer 12: Landscape opens in standard fashion. Lain talks about the simplicity of the world and how she was “over-thinking” the issues. The world is not as frightening as she believed. It was all so easy. An older woman’s voice says, “See, I told you it would be.”

Alice sits glumly in class, watching Lain, Julie, and Reika gossip a few desks away. Lain smiles at Alice, and Alice’s handheld receives a message: “You should just rewrite bad memories.”



There is a burst of the blue static, and Lain appears within it, explaining, people only exist within the memories of others, hence all the rumours about her. She says there weren’t multiple versions of her; rather she was active inside many people. Now she is integrated.



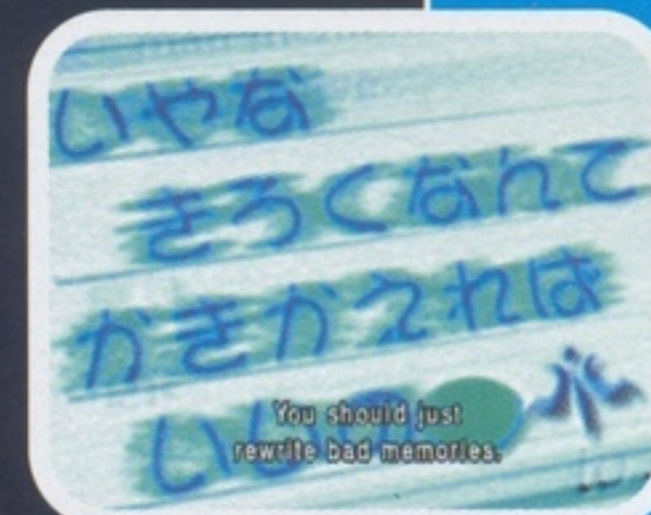
serial experiments lain

EPISODE SUMMARY LAYER: 12

could well be the prior scene with Lain’s explanation; Taro tells his friends, “I just kissed an angel.”



Crowds walk along the city streets almost aimlessly. Between the skyscrapers now stand peculiar organic-looking towers seemingly grown rather than built. Multitudes of voices murmur Lain’s name. The blue static flares again





with a matured, saddened Lain staring out. A highly distorted newscast replaces the static. The news anchor's face drifts against a shifting background; he says, "Protocol 7 is expected to allow the seamless sharing of information, information that will be shared between the Wired and the real world. And now, the following information." He adopts a maniacal grin and repeats, "Let's all love Lain! Let's all love Lain!" The blue static and Lain's face ends his outburst.



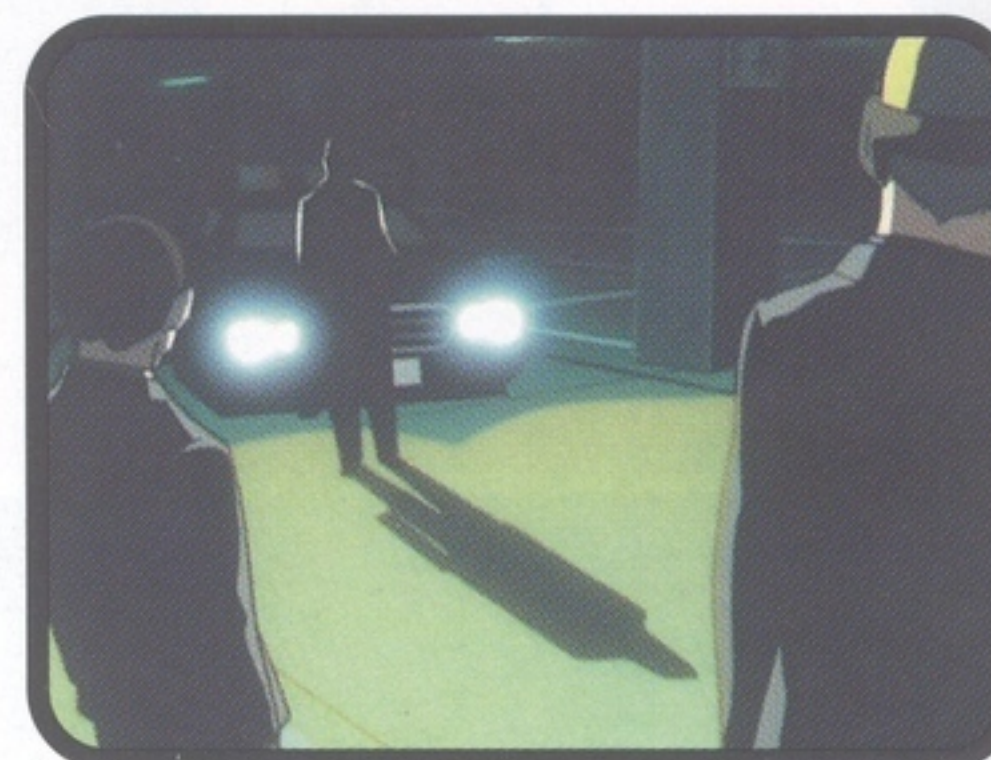
Against the backdrop of his suicide scene and a succession of urbanscapes, Eiri explains that each function of the human body is purely mechanical, capable of duplication by appropriate machinery. Evolution depends on overcoming them and allowing new information to express itself without



limits. "If that information isn't shared, it's meaningless." The city takes on a schematic look, with wire-frame renderings of people and structural views of the buildings visible beneath their exterior features. Then shadows give way to circuitry, along building walls

let's all
love lain!

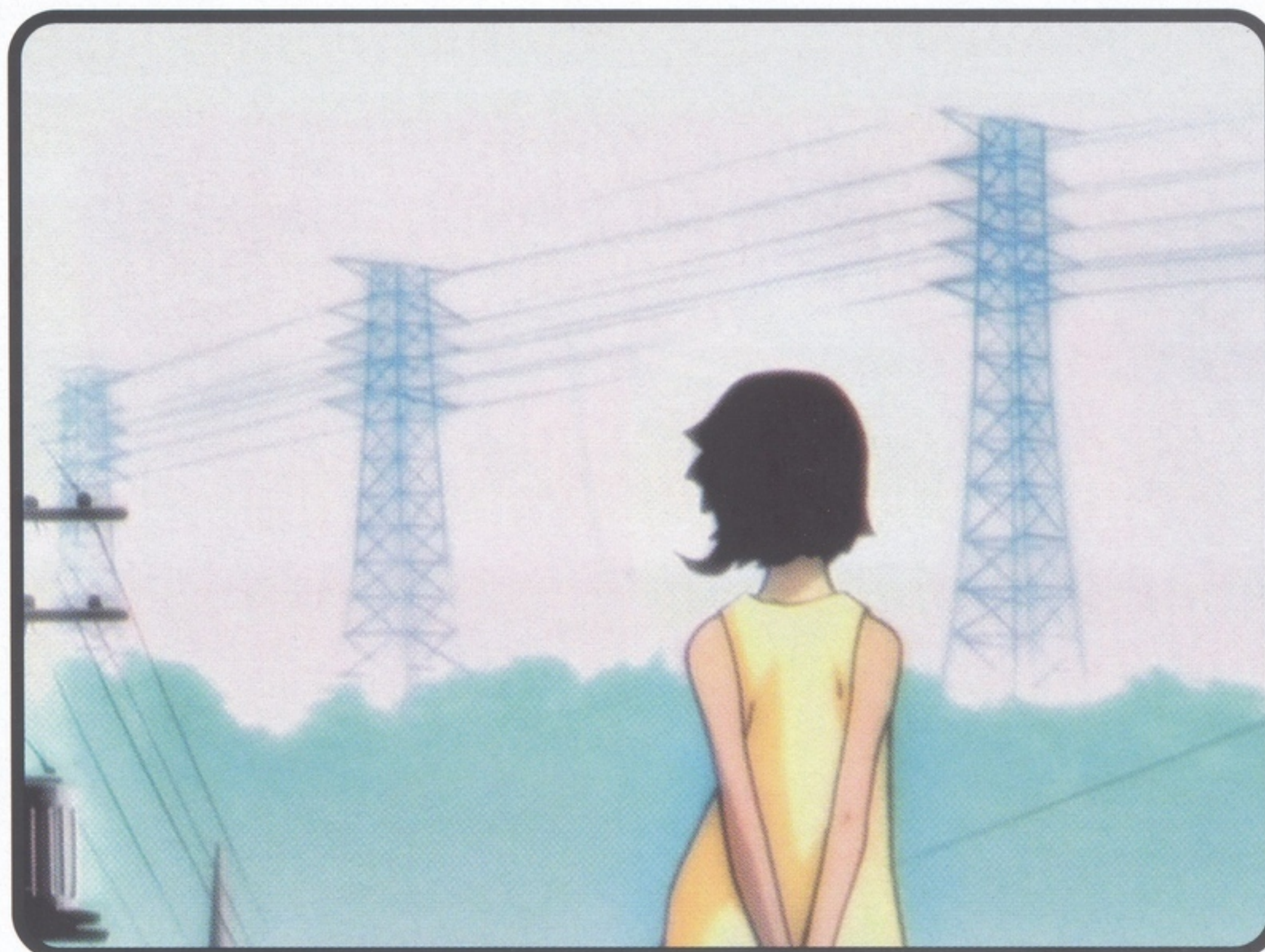
as well as in the sky. "Originally, people were connected to each other. All I've done is return things to the way they once were. That's in essence what you have done, Lain, haven't you? You can do anything you want to?"



A contented Lain stands on her sidewalk, looking out at the city. The scene shifts to an underground parking garage. The men in black sit in their car, trying to make sense of recent events. Karl believes their client has been dealing with Eiri, or may even be Eiri. The other objects that Eiri is dead, to which Karl says whether he had a body scarcely matters at this point. The Tachibana man drives up and delivers a suitcase full of money. The short man in black says, "You've been using us all along!" The Tachibana exec smiles cynically and replies, "You can interpret it any way you like."



Karl asks where can they go. Their boss answers, "... a place that has no power lines or any satellite coverage." When his partner objects that no such

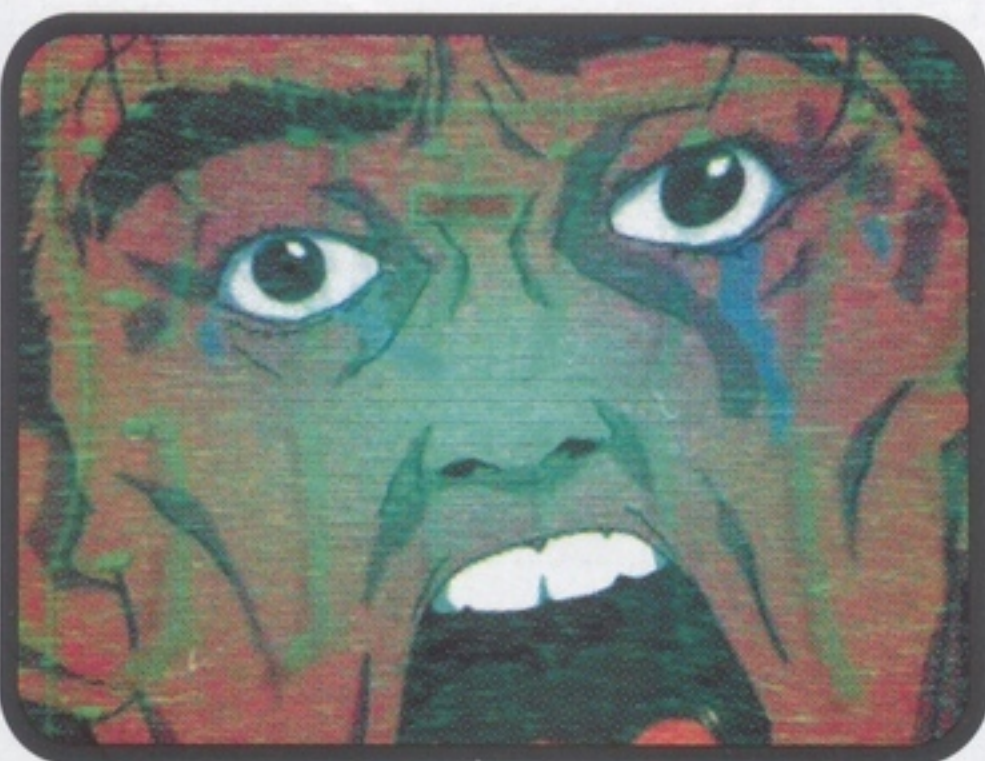




place exists, the boss replies, "... you'd better get started finding a place like that." Karl asks what they plan to accomplish by joining the Wired and the real world. "Something absolutely wonderful. I'm looking forward to it," the boss says just before driving off.



The pony-tailed man in black goes into lethal convulsions. His partner zooms in on the dying man's eyes and sees a distant image of Lain. Karl then sees a blurry figure approaching through the garage. It is not visible to normal sight, only in his optics, but the image is interspersed with flashes of Lain's sister Mika, and the assassinated Knight's members. The scene ends with Karl's tortured scream.



Alice stands outside Lain's home. Nobody answers the doorbell, so she

lets herself in. The downstairs is thoroughly vandalized with paint splashes (and perhaps blood), furniture broken, plants scattered, the contents of



shelves strewn wildly. A foul-smelling mist fills the hallway. At the top of the stairs, an image of the second Mika continues her mindless impersonation of a phone off the hook before vanishing. Alice, sobbing, barely manages to reach Lain's room.

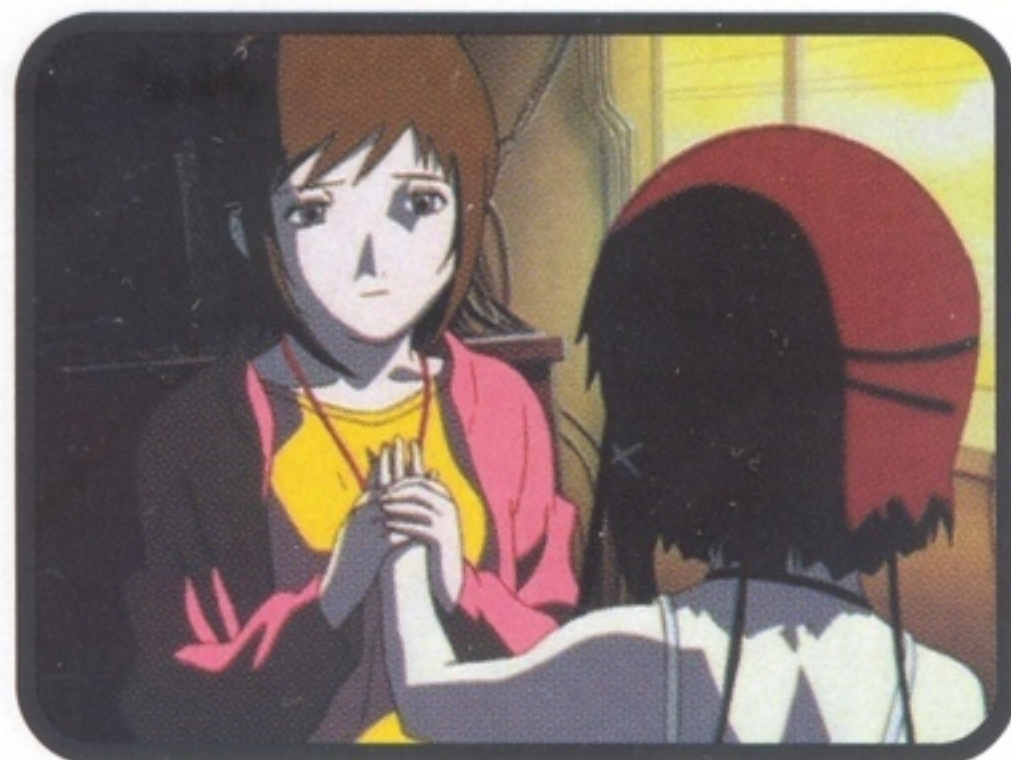


The mass of computers is even more complex, with huge floor-to-ceiling devices of unknown purpose. Lain emerges from a jumble of wires and startles Alice badly. Alice blurts out that she thought she had been going crazy, and demands to know why Lain left her horrible memories intact while changing everyone else's. Lain tries to reassure her. "I never meant to make you cry." She explains that Alice was always her closest friend, "even without connecting." This disturbs Alice greatly.



Lain says she restored the original connections all people once shared. She explains how "... it doesn't matter whether this side or the other side is real." Lain existed in both of them as a program to destroy the barrier separating the Wired from the real

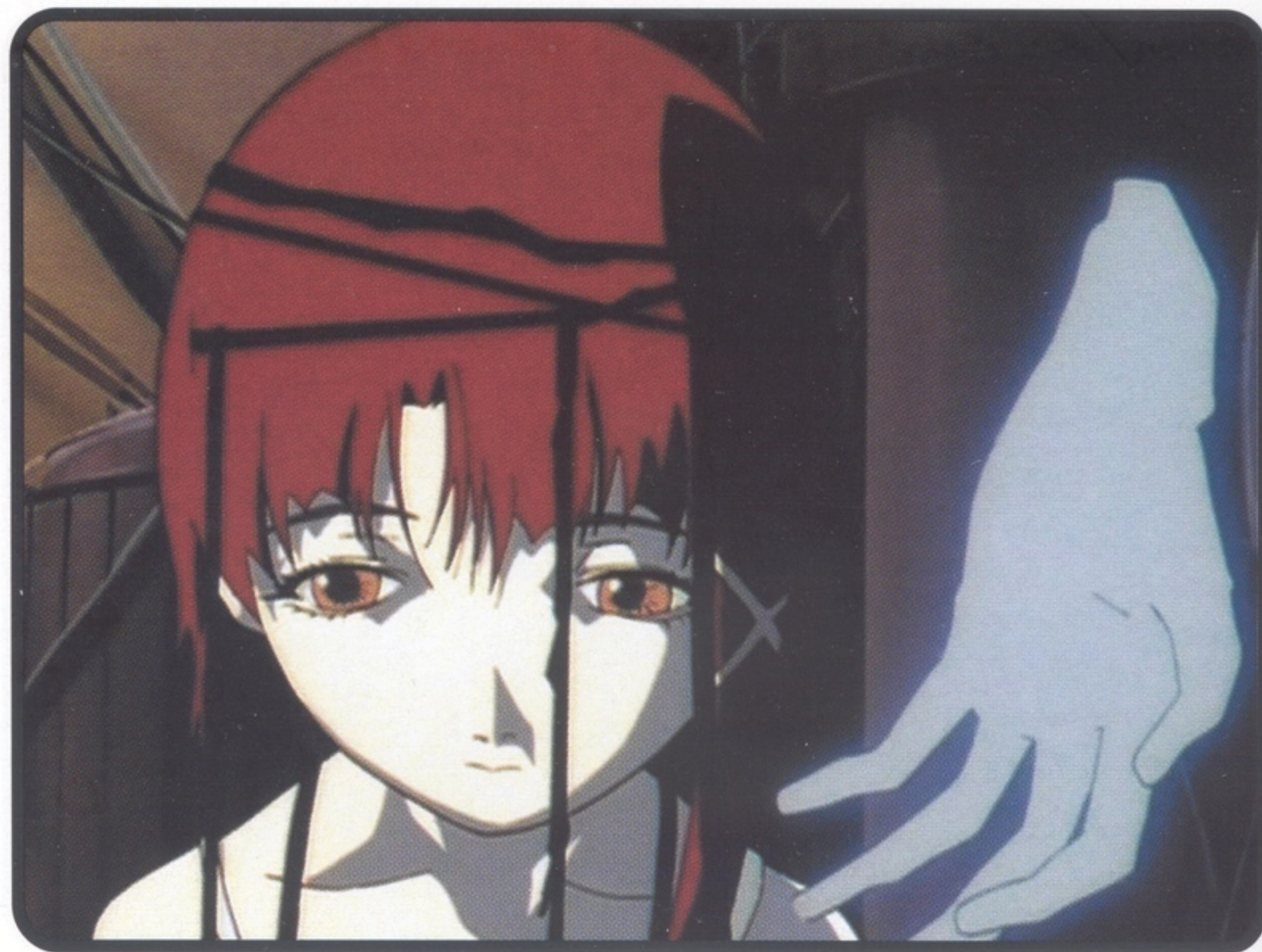




world." Lain adds that everyone, including Alice, are really just applications. Alice touches Lain. "You're wrong," she says. "You're alive, Lain." She places Lain's hand on her chest, so that they can both feel her heart beating. They share a laugh before Alice admits her fear.



Eiri floats behind Lain, saying Alice is only afraid of losing her body. Since all emotions are merely electrical activity, however, it is possible to select the positive emotions and eliminate the others. Alice cannot see Eiri until he stretches out a hand for Lain; she then sees the disembodied hand, and panics. Lain questions Eiri. She starts off by mentioning how he removed the necessity for peripheral devices to connect to the Wired; he agrees these

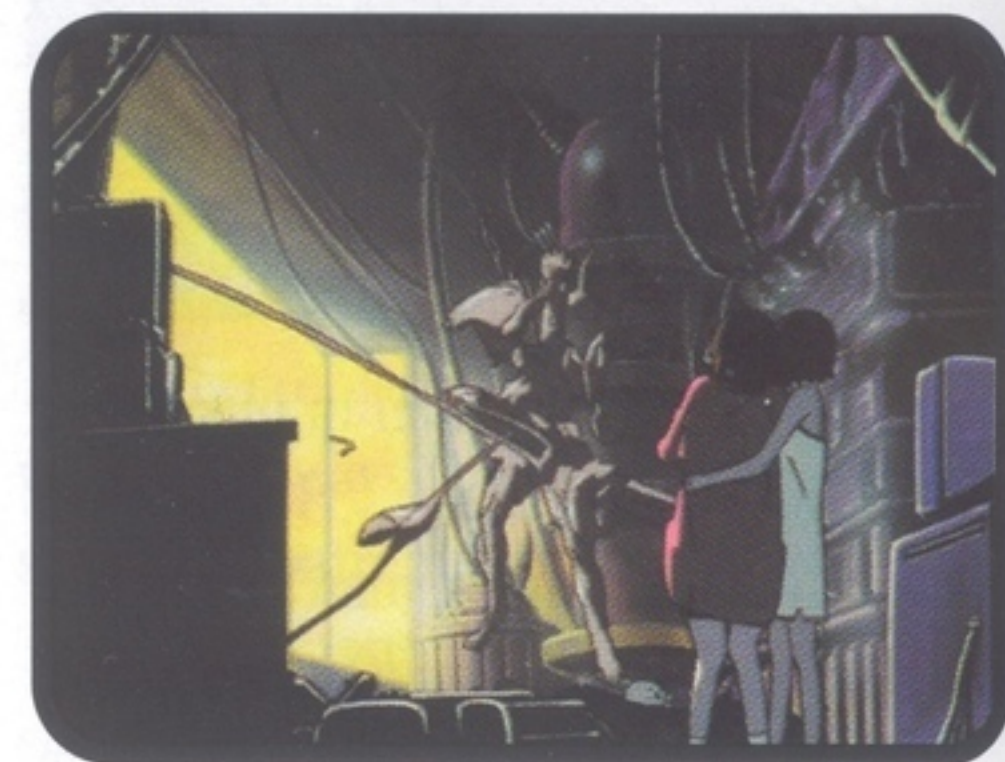


were once necessary steps in human evolution toward online freedom rather than ends in themselves. Lain then asks what made it possible for him to create and insert his resonance-exploiting code. "Did you honestly come up with these ideas all by yourself?"

*you were only
an acting god*

Eiri immediately understands her point, demanding "Are you trying to tell me there's been a God all along?" She answers it does not matter: without a body, Eiri could never understand the totality of the human experience. He shouts that he is omnipotent, having

created Lain and giving her an ego. She quickly retorts, "So if that is true about me, what about you?" He rages, "I'm different!" With an angry shout, he assembles a grey body and organs, seemingly from the ether, through sheer force of will. It is not very successful. The body writhes and contorts, sprouting short-lived limbs and organs, constantly folding back upon itself. It resembles a struggling mass of tumours and misshapen limbs.

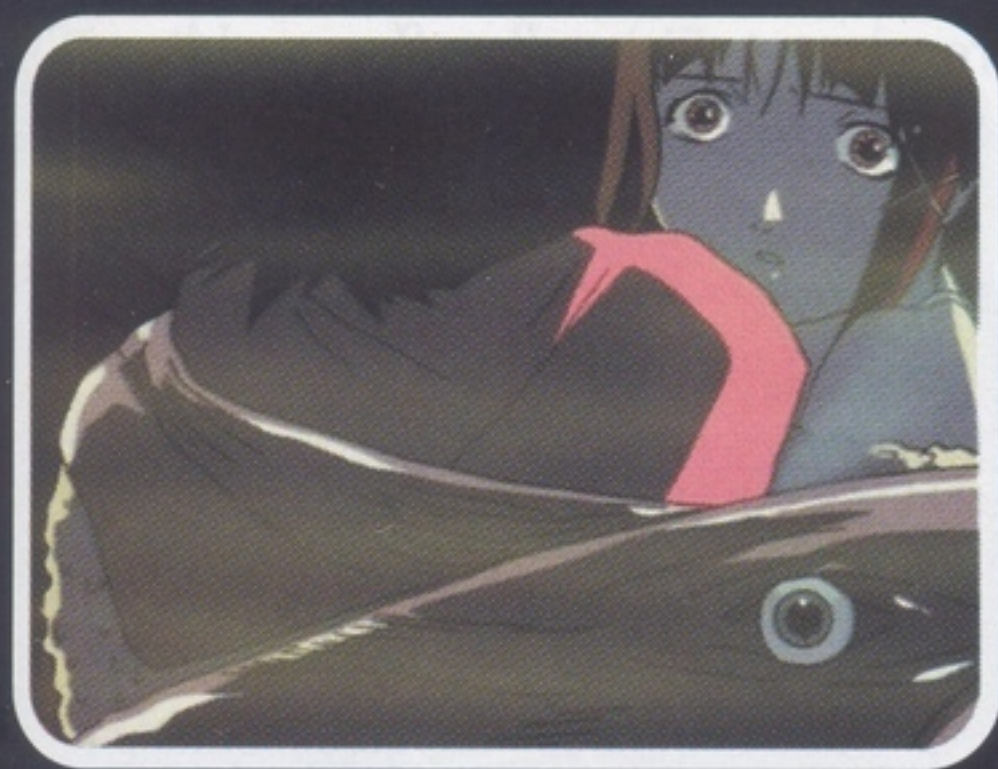


Lain calmly explains that the Wired is not an upper layer of the real world. Eiri was omnipotent within it, but he was only standing in for someone else waiting for the Wired to achieve its current form. "You were only an acting God." The monstrous manifestation wraps Alice and Lain in tentacles and starts crushing them while Lain hurls electronic devices into its mass. The episode ends with the girls staring at the crushed remains of Eiri's short-lived body, buried beneath the rubble of computers.

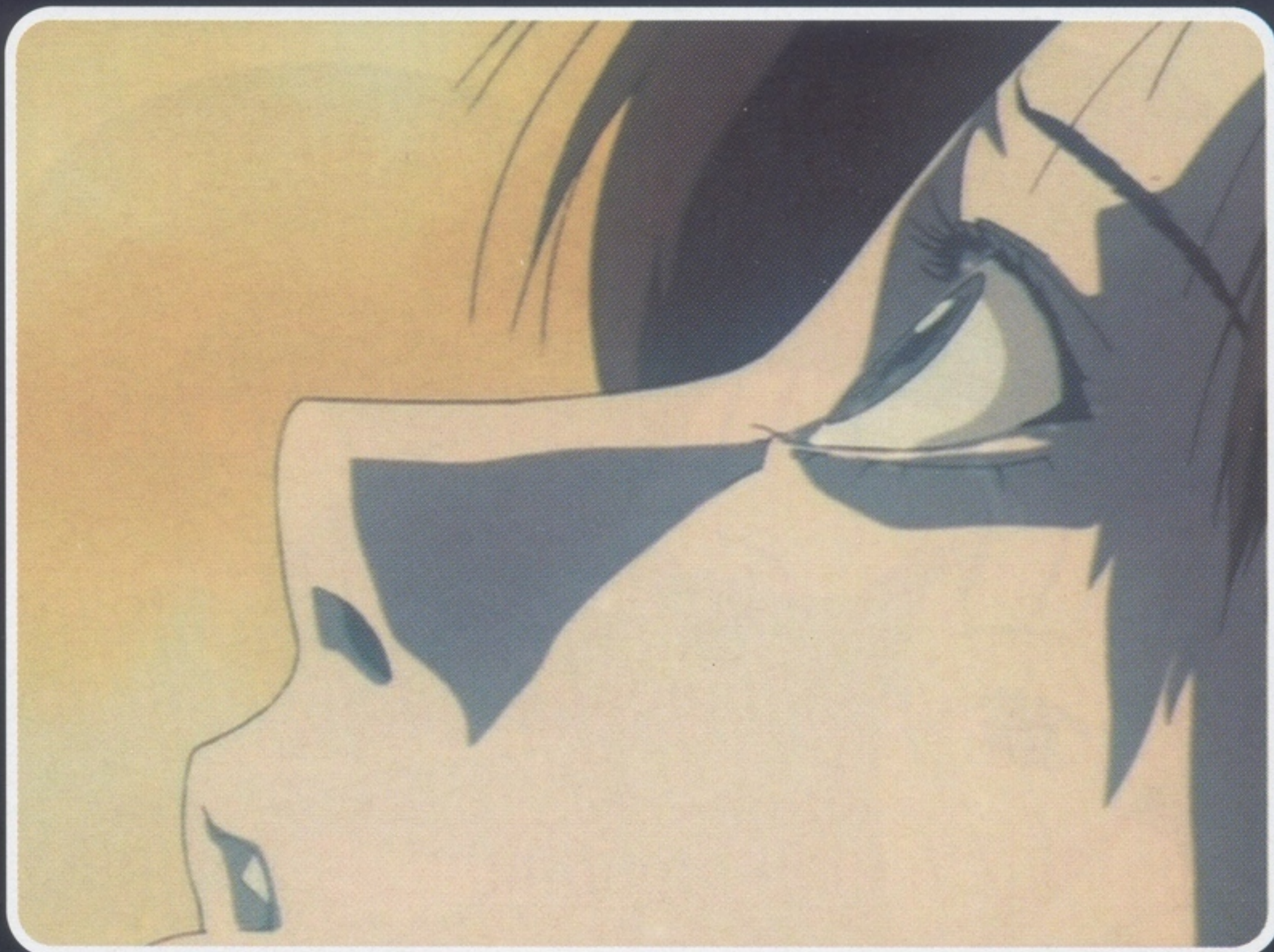




Layer 13: Ego begins with the blue static and Lain's face. She says, "I guess that I'm confused again. Am I here or am I there? ... Over there, I'm everywhere ... But here is connected to over there ... But then where is the real me, after all is said and done? Oh! There is no real me ... I only exist inside those people aware of my existence. But what about this me that I can hear talking right now? It's me, isn't it? This me that's talking. Who is it? Who's me?"



The final moments of the previous episode repeat, with Eiri's distorted body attacking Alice and Lain before a barrage of computers crushes him. Alice quivers in terror, and accidentally cuts Lain's cheek while flailing for release. Lain sobs, apologizing for her mistakes and

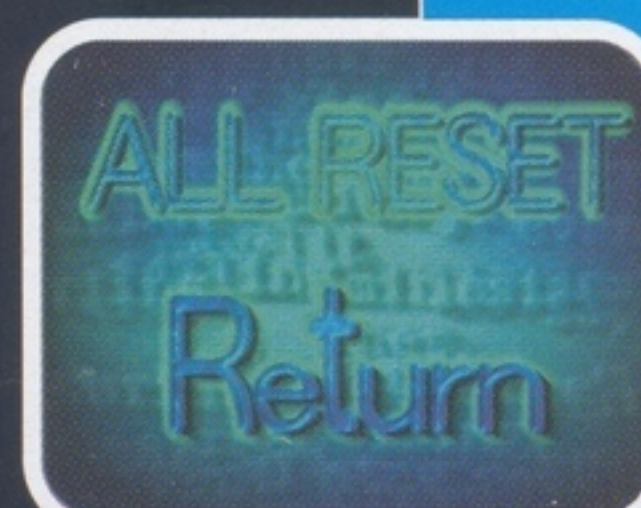


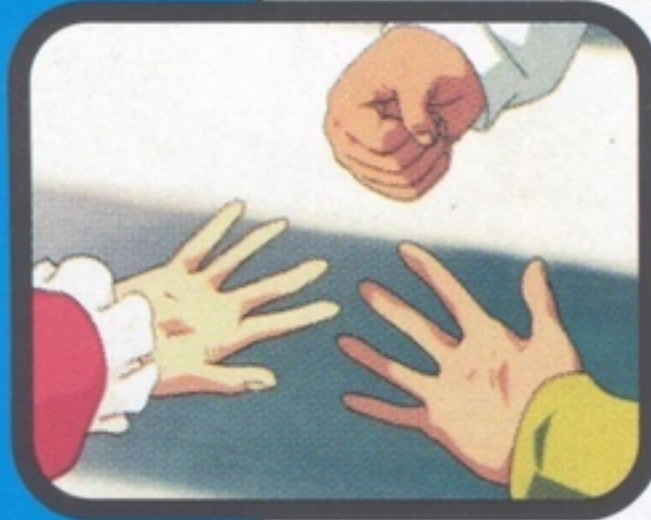
serial experiments lain

EPISODE SUMMARY LAYER: 13



worsening the situations. She holds her friend, who is now catatonic with shock. The scene fades to white, then to the blue background. The words "All Reset" appear, then "Return" flashes. A very rapid montage of people and events zooms by before static, and then white, dominates the screen.





The scene shifts to the exterior of the Iwakura home; blood and splashes fill the shadows as usual. The front door opens, but nobody emerges. Mika and her parents eat a typical breakfast, unmarred by the previous tragedies and



confusion. Mr. Iwakura pauses for a moment and looks at the empty fourth setting. He says, "Hey...." Mrs. Iwakura waits for him. "Nah, it's nothing," he decides. Lain's spot on the train is empty



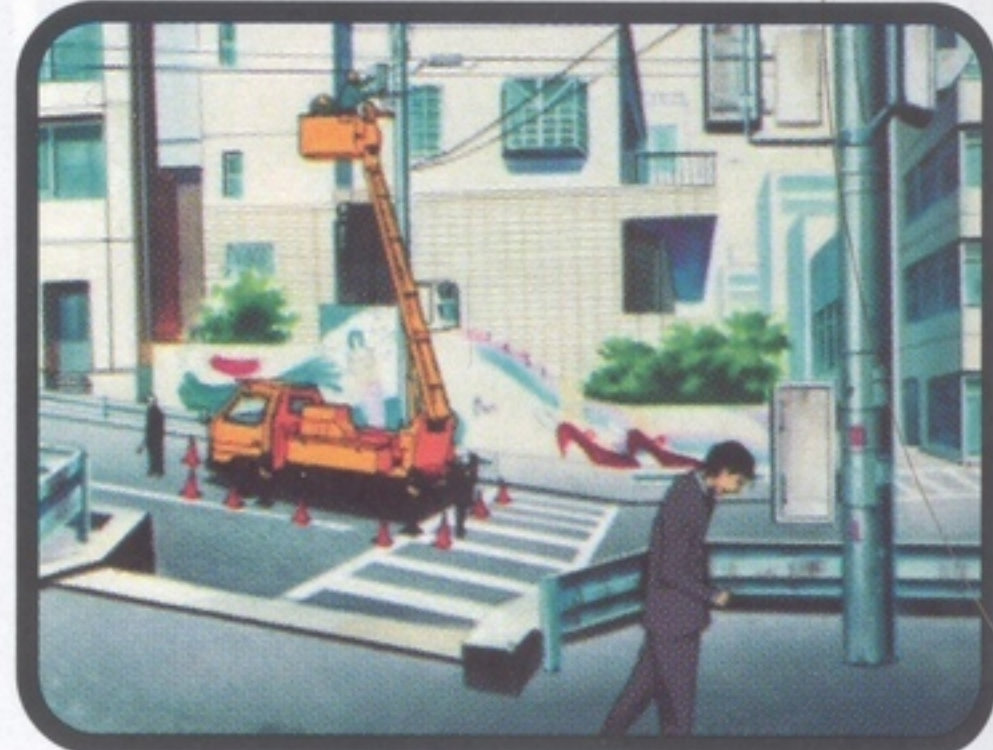
now, and there are no voices in the wires. Alice meets up with Julie and Reika, their friendship unstrained by nasty revelations. They want to go to Cyberia.

what isn't
remembered
never happened

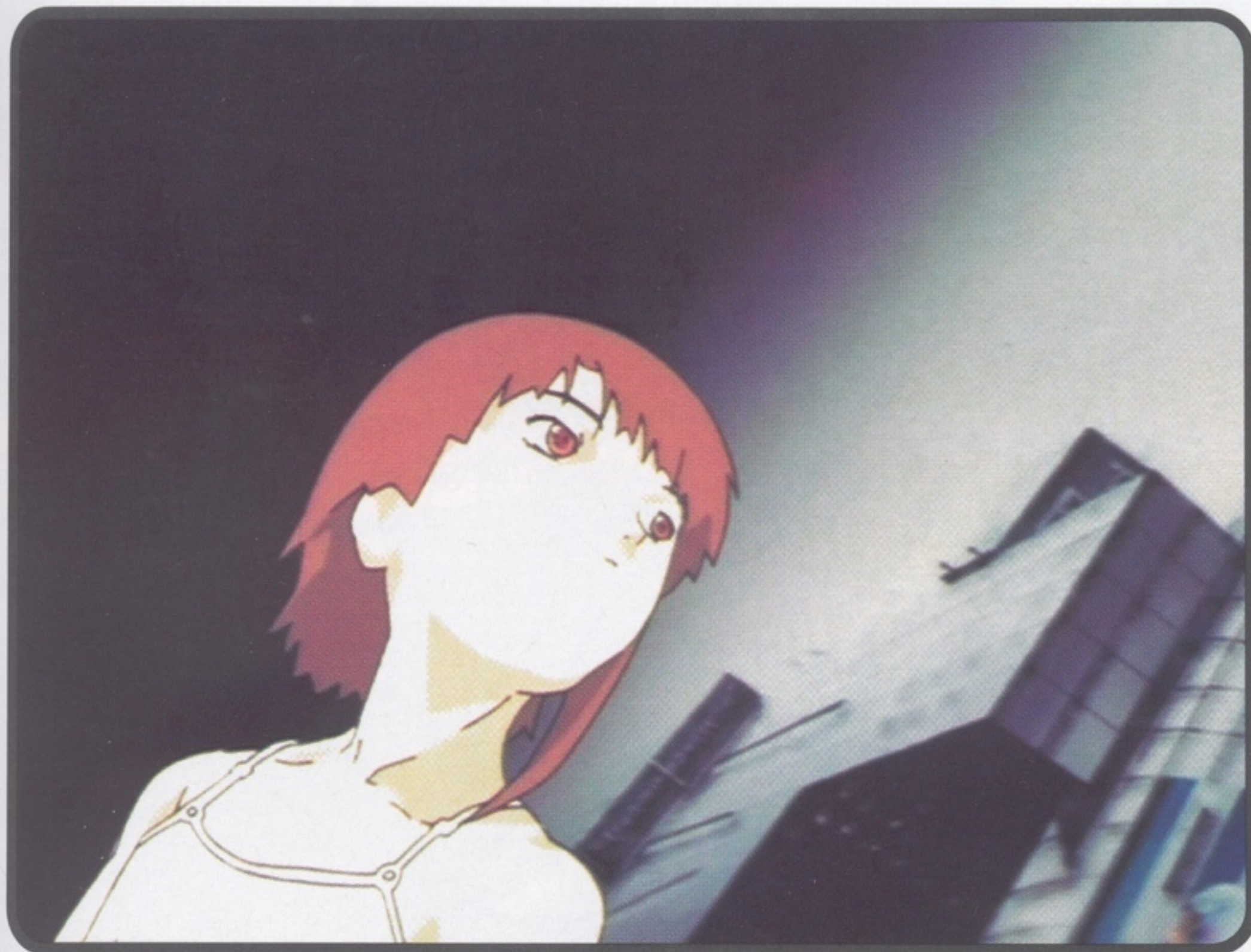
Alice takes out her handheld. "Better send mail to her, too." The other girls seem puzzled. Julie wonders if Alice means Chisa, who is alive and well. Alice seems confused, then smiles and says, "What isn't remembered didn't actually happen." The others are mystified. Alice adds, "I didn't really have anyone in mind."



Taro and his friends roughhouse around. Lain's face appears briefly in Taro's handheld, but none of them recognize it. The delivery boy passes by and remarks, "Nice machine." The three children head off, the confused Taro trying unsuccessfully to bring up Lain's image again. He pockets his computer and walks past Eiri. A disgruntled Eiri is alive and dressed in a business suit, muttering about quitting and how they'll regret underestimating him. He peers up at two men working on a phone line; it is the two men in black, now as repairmen. Eiri stalks off, grumbling "I'll quit today for sure."



The cityscape fades to black. White letters appear: "What isn't remembered never happened. Memory is merely a record. You just need to rewrite that record." Lain's voice asks, "Is that true?"



There is a burst of blue static and the opening sequence of words, "Present day, present time." Blue static follows, then the opening cityscapes. Normal urban sounds fill the scene. There are no manifestations lurking beneath this reality.



Lain stands alone on a foggy street of the empty city sobbing. "Why are you crying?" her own voice asks. "Because you deleted yourself from everyone's memories? But isn't that what you wanted all along? ... You must feel good

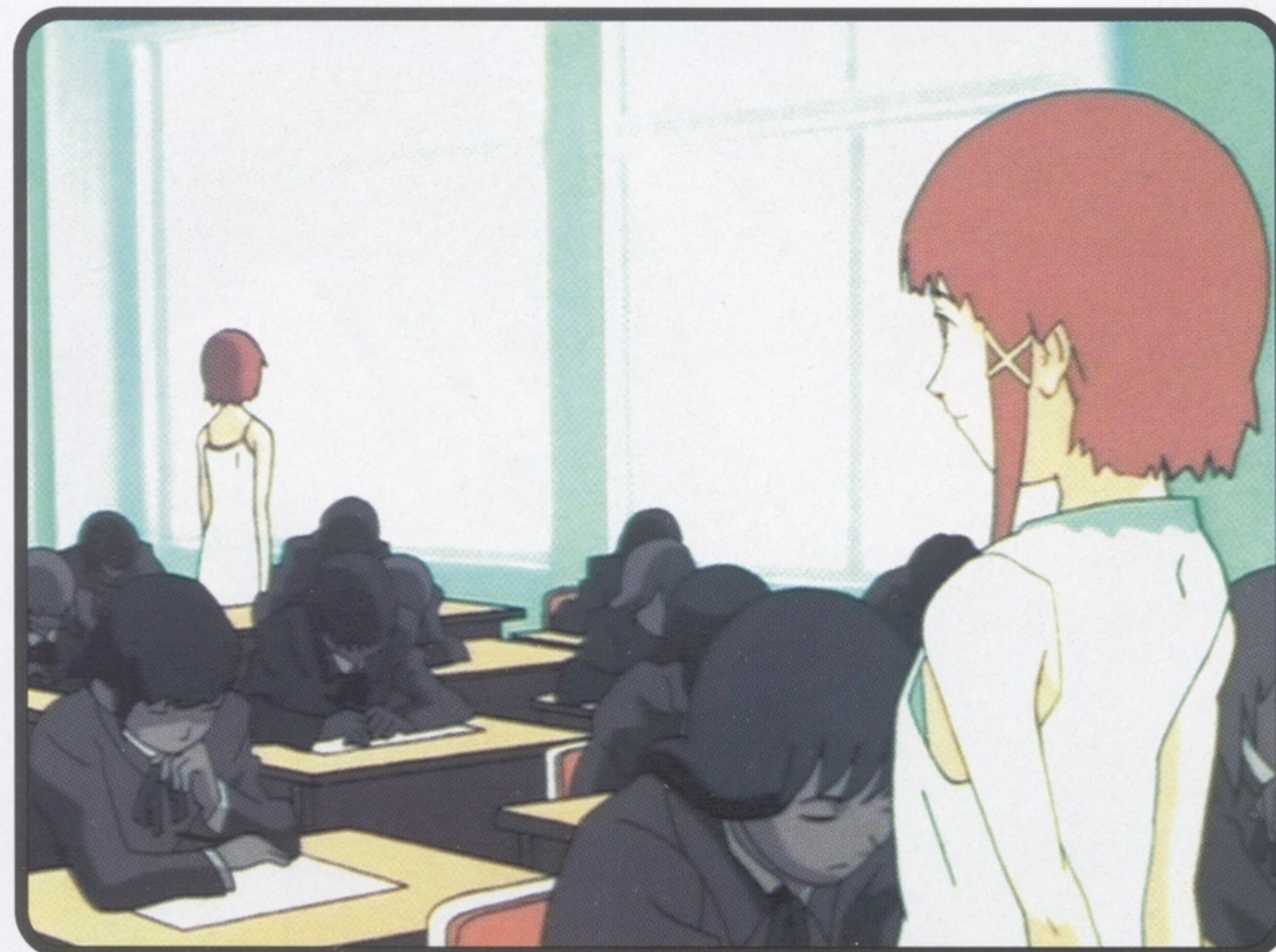


that no one is dying in any strange way, and no one is being hurt. And no one hates you." The first Lain sobs, replying, "Yeah, I guess." The other presses on with a cheery smile, "And don't forget that dead people's information is no

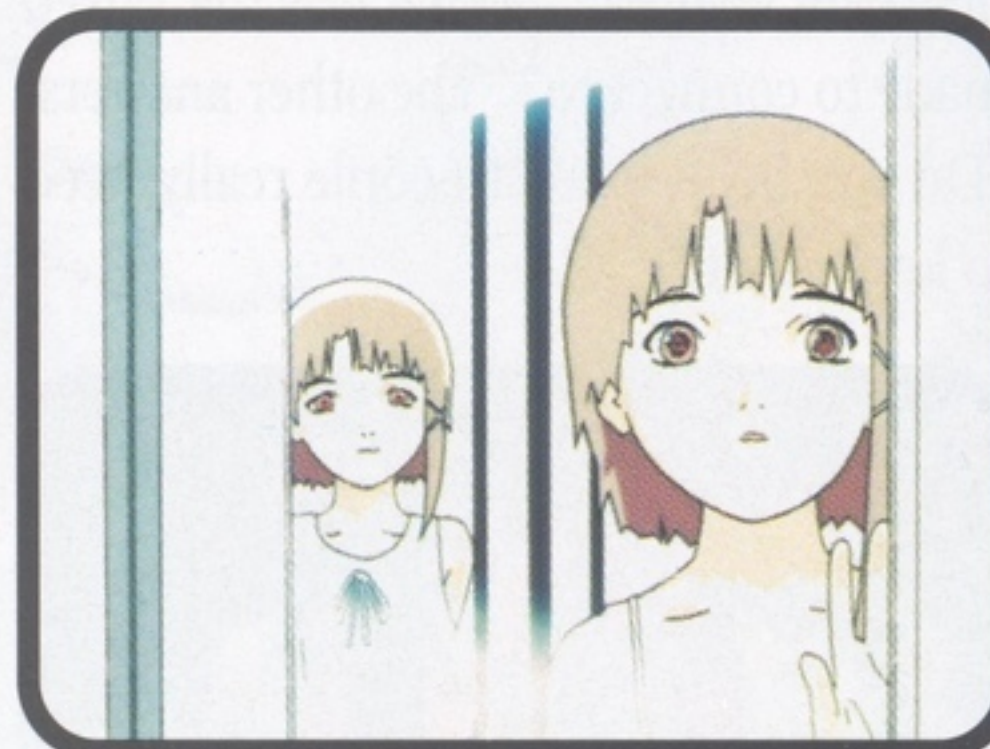
longer leaking out of the Wired anymore. So at last Lain is free, and no longer needs to be anywhere." The second Lain's voice becomes increasingly mechanical, as if coming out through cheap speakers; she says, "This is the way you wanted it to be, isn't it?"



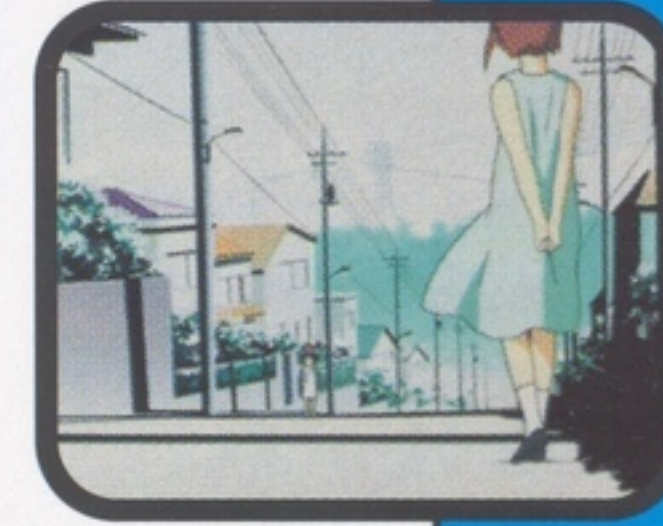
The original Lain says that her other self sounds just like "him." The second Lain dismisses the thought, pointing out that that version of Eiri no



longer existed. Lain wonders who and where she is, if nobody remembers her. As the two Lains converse, the point of view pulls back to show the city covered



with a blue dome of light and air, on a chunk of rock several miles across, floating in a completely black void (see "The Dome" on page 76 for more about this.) The second Lain points out that information's very nature is to be in





motion. People's memories are not fragmented but shared in the collective unconscious; humans did not create this system. They merely tapped into it. The first Lain wonders, "What was the Wired made to connect to?" The other answers, "Do you believe most people really need to know that?"



The second Lain describes their combined existence in overtly divine terms: present everywhere, seeing everything. The first Lain says, "Wrong." The second one continues, saying it would be much easier to be God. No one would ever look down on her, pass judgement on her, or hate her. She wants the first Lain to reset things so that she can exercise her power. The first Lain shouts, "Enough!" The other Lain freezes like a caught frame on a reel, and

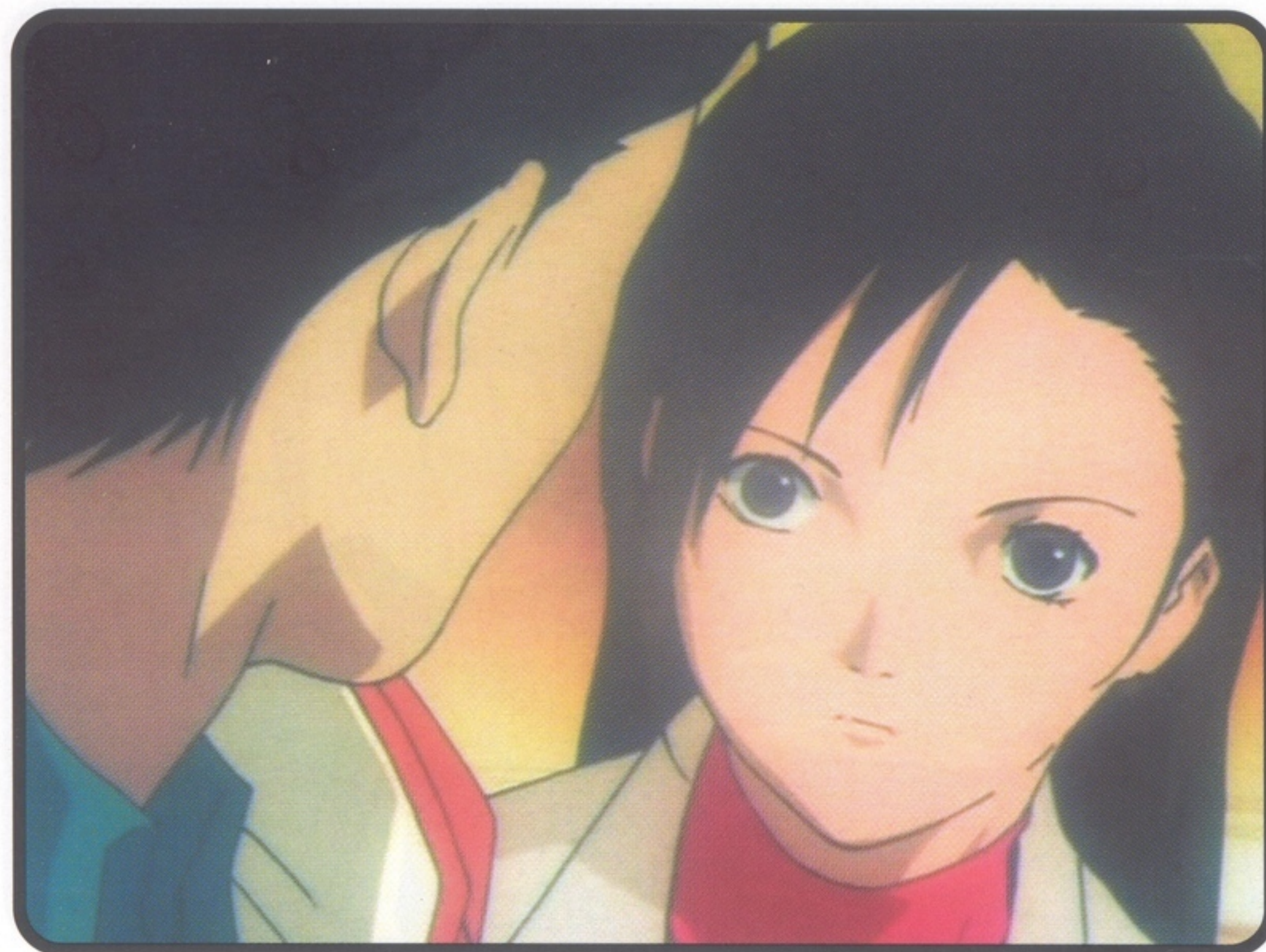


vanishes into static, leaving Lain entirely alone in a pool of water in the midst of a black void. A single light shines down on her, and her father says, "Come, Lain." She is suddenly dressed in her bear suit, sitting at a table in the sky with him. He tells her she does not have to wear the suit again. She struggles to say that she loves everyone, but he completes her thought. He speaks cheerily of teatime snacks while she sobs.

you never know

The evening cityscapes appear again in skewed colours. Lain speaks in voice-over, "So memories aren't only of

the past, are they? They can be of right now, or even tomorrow." A grown Alice and her boyfriend walk down the street. She looks up and sees Lain standing on a pedestrian bridge. Alice does not recognize Lain consciously but feels drawn to her nonetheless; she leaves her boyfriend for a moment to greet her Lain. Alice wonders if Lain might be a student in the school where Alice was student-teaching. Lain greets her pleasantly, with a touch of familiarity. The boyfriend comes up, and Alice tells him, "I thought she was someone else." To Lain she says, "You never know, we might run into each other again someday." Lain waves as they walk off, and says, "You're right. We can see each other any time." She is suddenly alone on the crosswalk (apparently, the same one from the opening sequences), staring down at an empty city.



The blue static returns a final time. Lain says, "I promise you I'll always be right here. I'll always be right next to you, forever." The clouds roll past the power lines at night, and the end credits play.

...and the surprise, but her propensity

I am me, right?

We are not even here.



Lain Iwakura

At its heart, *Serial Experiments lain* only has two influential characters: Lain and her creator, Masami Eiri. Everyone else plays out roles assigned to them, or at least begin with those assignments, created histories, and arranged backgrounds. As the series progresses, not everyone stays in their little niches, of course, and the creator ends up with a substantially more complicated world than he intended.

For most of the series, Lain Iwakura is a divided soul. We first see her in the way she thinks of herself: an eighth-grade schoolgirl in Japan, a little shy, and quite ordinary. Neither she nor the viewers know of the pre-existing electronic entity named Lain, created as the first new soul within the Wired.

The physical Lain lives in straightforward circumstances. She is the younger of two sisters; Mika is also in school but several years older. The two show affection toward each other, although Mika is, typically enough, exasperated by Lain's occasional awkward and slow moments. Mr. Iwakura works typically long hours at an unnamed office and comes home to work on a huge array of computers, which takes over one entire end of his den. He loves his family and demonstrably thinks about Lain's well-being, what she will need to know to succeed in school and later in life. He does not share his feelings often, however. Mrs. Iwakura stays at home (except under mysterious circumstances like the night of the Cyberia shooting in Layers 02 and 03), and maintains a good home without much overt display of emotion. It is even possible that the Iwakuras play the role of family for Lain like any other job; at the end of the day, when Lain goes to bed, they call it quits and retire to their real home, thus explaining why the house lacks in personal touches. Mrs. Iwakura often seems detached to the point of negligence, like when each of the girls tries to broach some difficult subject but feels unable to continue.

The fact that the Iwakuras live in a house rather than an apartment is more unusual in Japan than it would be in America. Real estate prices throughout the Tokyo area, where the series takes place, are fantastically high thanks to constant demand, and many people could never afford to own real estate at all. A family like the Iwakuras likely inherited their home from previous generations, or received it as per their assignment with Lain, or earned it as part of a particularly choice employment deal (with Mr. Iwakura's unknown employer picking up part of the cost).

Before Lain's school experience altogether vanishes in the face of changing realities, she seems to be an average, if not invisible student. Her teachers call on her with the usual sternness, and she approaches assignments with no more or less dread than her friends in the same classes. Conversation in Cyberia about the Psyche processor makes it clear that she did not pay complete attention to everything in her computer textbook, which fits with her early unfamiliarity with e-mail. Again, this puts her right in the average range for student interests



and perceptions. It is uncertain whether she goes out with her friends when they go shopping and snacking, but we know from Chisa Yomoda's post-mortem account and Lain's own memory much later that she also enjoyed quiet socializing. She is hesitant about the riskier atmosphere of Cyberia, though she does go after repeated invitations.

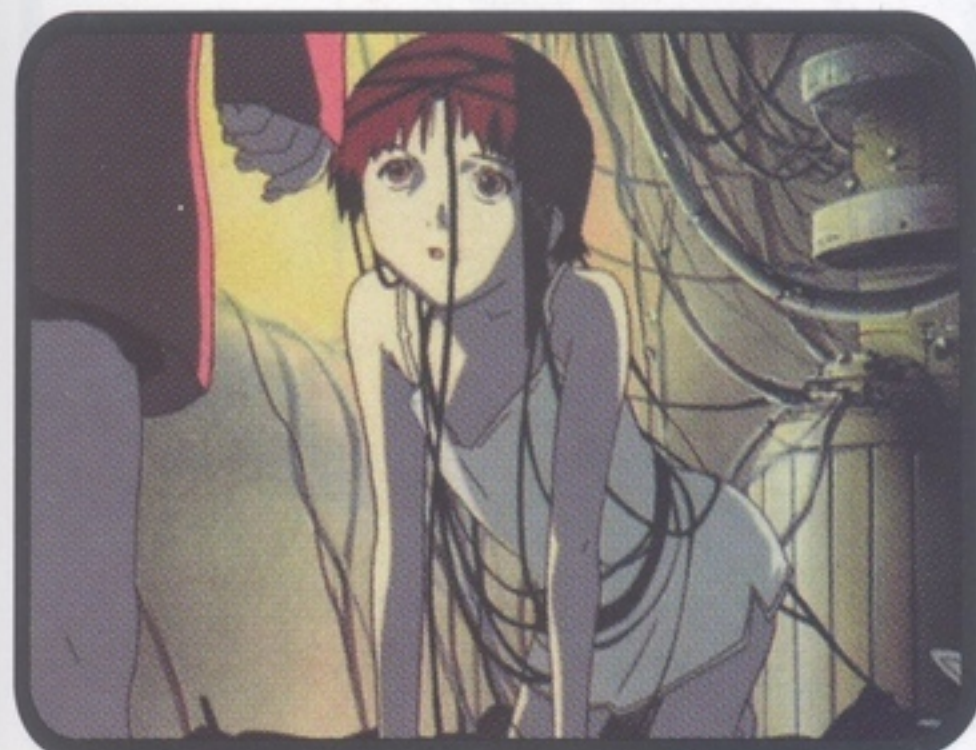


The Lain of the Wired spent her whole existence in the midst of other people's experiences, and the physical Lain's life contrasts this (perhaps deliberately). She lives on the edge of





things: on the outskirts of the city, on the periphery of her social circle, removed from the hubbub of teen life in person or online. The rhythms of her life do not lead her toward the discovery of her Wired nature: she is in fact pushed toward awakening. More accurately, others, including Chisa, are pushed to shake Lain awake.



The Lain of the Wired is a very different person. For her history, the audience must rely on the accounts of Masami Eiri, who claims to have created Lain, but who may well be less than honest. He clearly manipulates the information available to her in efforts to dictate her responses, so it is appropriate to approach his claims with some skepticism. If he is telling the truth about her origins, then she was created at the moment he translated himself into the Wired, bringing intelligence to it. We do not know how deliberate her evocation was, and it would certainly be in character for Eiri to claim credit for something he happened to find there.



Eiri tells the physical Lain that her Wired self was the heroine in all the Wired's fairy tales, and later she tells

herself that she existed in everyone using the Wired. The "ghost-in-the-machine" Lain was certainly cognizant of anything that she chose to be aware of, even if it sometimes took time or effort to discover. There were no guaranteed secrets, only matters that did not interest her.

Unfortunately for everybody else, the Wired Lain never developed a conscience to go along with her curiosity, intelligence, and cleverness. The idea that others should be more than toys did not occur to her, at least not strongly enough to affect her behaviour. She apparently did not even engage in systematic experimentation or objective analysis; she played games with others, pushing them to see what would happen in response to unforeseen (generally unwanted) changes in their environment.

Wired Lain did not necessarily want everyone around her suffering all the time. Several people in Cyberia refer to the great parties held in her honour, and her voice-only fans in the Wired give the impression of enjoying her company. It is just that she did not seem to feel concern about whether someone was unhappy or worry about the consequences of her actions.

The physical Lain's moral development must have baffled her Wired counterpart(s). Physical Lain did care about others, very deeply: she was, in the end, willing to remove herself from the world rather than continue hurting others. She spent most of her abbreviated time in the physical world watching rather than vigorously participating in life, but it was not wasted time either. When she needed to act, she showed that she understood more about humanity than either her Wired selves or her creator. Others' pain sometimes takes her by surprise, but her propensity to consider how others feel prepares her to see further into Eiri than he ever did in self-examination.

When the two Wired Lains fight directly, the advantage of this moral vision become clear. In the end, the wild Lain proves unable to think of herself apart from those she manipulates, and therefore tries goading the confident Lain into accepting the same sort of power which ultimately consumed Eiri. The physical Lain succeeds partly because she believes there is a self in her to prevail, which can endure whether or not others remember her, while the Wired Lain cannot conceive of herself without a world of minds to manipulate.

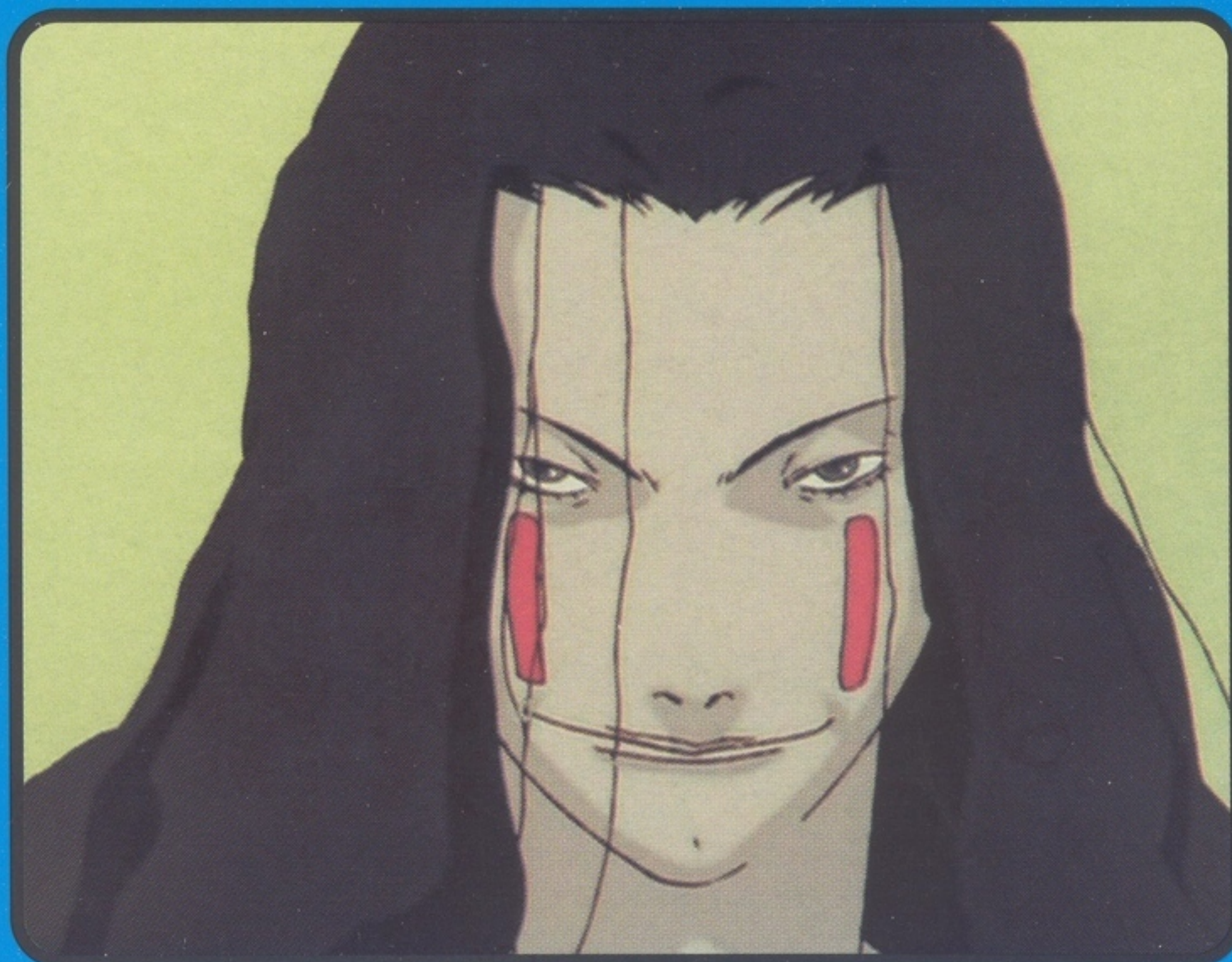
Our last glimpse of a possibly whole and completed Lain, meeting (a possible) Alice of the future, suggests that the best of the physical Lain's personality prevails. She has imagined, or projected, or discovered a happy future for Alice, with both challenges and satisfactions, and she has not used her encounter to detract from Alice's pleasure. The kindness she has always felt remains important.



lain

SERIAL EXPERIMENTS CHARACTERS





Masami Eiri

Masami Eiri, the self-proclaimed God of the Wired, appears as much through his effects on the Wired as a personality in his own right. He is possibly present in Layers 01 and 02, his face rising briefly beneath the twisting features of the girl Lain sees run in front of a train, and again when the girl with changing faces haunts Lain at school. For most of the series, he manifests in visions and whispered oracles, rousing Lain's curiosity and emotions without giving her enough actual information to make informed decisions.

Everything we learn about his life fits this pattern of manipulation. He is very fond of preaching about evolution and the biological features of society, and seen in those terms his own role immediately becomes clear: he is a social virus. He relies on the "genetic material" of other people's ideas and the "tissues" of their labour to exercise his own vision, rather than creating or participating in a community of equals. In the end, Lain deals with him, becoming a sort of social immune system by cutting away his parasitical connections and leaving behind all that was truly his, a monstrous ego bonded with self-deception.

Eiri's crucial act, after all, was the discovery of Professor Hodgson's work, which the professor did not quite destroy as thoroughly as he hoped. We do not learn just how Eiri found the lost files, but real-world hacker history provides many examples of people willing to go through actual dumpsters and their electronic equivalents like "core dump" files. With many operating systems, a computer that experiences a serious failure in some crucial routine writes out the entire contents of its memory at that moment, producing many megabytes' or gigabytes' worth of mostly boring data for troubleshooters to examine. It is possible to retrieve valuable information from a core dump, if something like a password were in memory at the time of the dump, but it takes great patience in the face of overwhelming irrelevance to find and extract anything valuable. Almost certainly it was some largely mindless process like this that earned Eiri the tools he needed.

Eiri's paper on the Shuman resonance and networking was apparently genuinely creative work. Here he brought together disparate ideas and crafted something new. He implemented the idea, of course, by returning to his parasitic ways with Tachibana resources to fund his pet project. We can be fairly confident that none of his documentation for IPv7 included declared goals like "elevate myself to godhood." Foundational protocols take the collaborative effort of a



great many programmers, and real-world history shows that would-be clever insertions almost always impair the efficiency or reliability of the rest (there are some famous exceptions, but not many). Eiri was willing to risk everyone else's work for the sake of his, and shows no sign of even having considered the possibilities. This is one possibility.



Then again, given the Tachibana boss's awareness of the crumbling barrier, it is feasible Tachibana knew of Eiri's plan, and even sanctioned it without telling him. They might have figured they would allow Eiri to bring his plan to fruition, then assume control over the project and its results. His suicide, however, must have come as a surprise since Eiri did not kill himself in a controlled setting. Surely Tachibana would have wanted to supervise Eiri's



death had they approved of his ultimate goal, or even supplant him with their own "God." Because of the nature of Eiri's suicide, it is possible Tachibana knew about the hidden protocol's subversive nature, but did not realize Eiri planned to elevate himself to the role of digital god. The series does not show the



details of how Eiri recorded his mental states for encoding into IPv7. Hodgson's K.I.D.S. apparatus filmed a large laboratory, but then he had more wide-ranging concerns than Eiri. Whatever he used, Eiri certainly did not explain himself honestly to anyone else, and



perhaps disposed of the evidence before committing suicide. Presumably, nobody discovered the inserted software until after he became active enough in the Wired for Tachibana and the Knights to trace him and work out the missing pieces of the story (if they did not know about it beforehand).



His physical work done, Eiri killed his body and translated himself into a purely Wired existence. If IPv7 had not already reached the moment of critical complexity in which it created the Wired



Lain, it did so now. There is an implicit weakness in Eiri's scheme, which Lain does not call attention to, but is worth noting here. Eiri rants about how biological health, the suppression of mutations and the like, keeps humanity from evolving. His own existence in the Wired is even more fixed, however. His very self depends on the continued function of all IPv7 software copies fitted with his special additions. Software is fragile: change a few bits at random in the way that mutation changes a few genes, and the program almost always stops working. He can count on his code working only insofar as it does not change. He has, therefore, locked himself into a completely fixed fundamental nature. Only moving the entire record out of IPv7 and into some other repository would give him the freedom to leave old boundaries behind, and he shows no sign of wanting to do that.

No great personal growth seems likely in the months or years between Eiri's "death" and the beginning of Lain's awakening. His primary activity was apparently exploiting and harvesting the energy of Phantoma users and other people interacting with the Wired. The world at large shows no signs of moving any closer to real evolution, however, much as he might rant about it as his goal.

Finally, of course, Eiri intervenes directly in Lain's life, shoving her toward an awareness of her full potential. Left to herself, as she was at the start of the series, Lain could have continued indefinitely without realizing she was more than a teenage girl. Eiri casually sacrificed others, both people near Lain, like her friend Chisa, and Eiri's own constructs like Mika, to pull Lain out of her routine. Then came confrontation and Lain's superior insight into the implications of Eiri's existence. Faced with the possibility of something beyond himself, Eiri rejected the notion of growing or changing to accommodate, and instead burned himself out in a final frenzy.

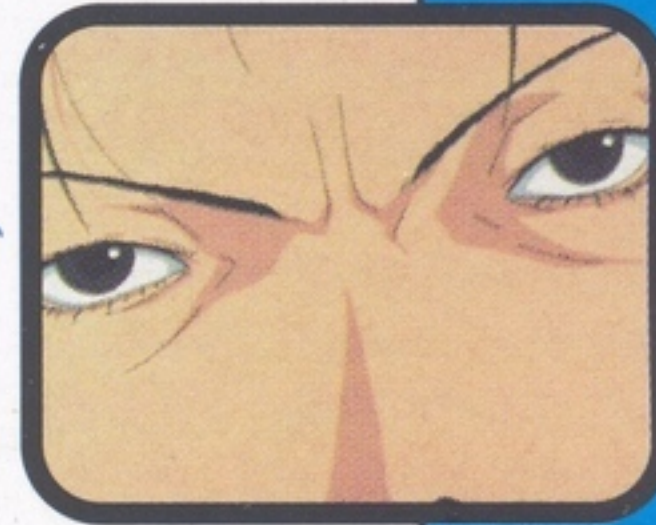
Eiri's fate after his terminal insight is somewhat unclear. In theory there could be many back-up copies of his mind: a copy for each system running IPv7, in fact. In practice he does not appear between his ghastly failure at body-building and Lain's general reset of the world, and after that he never did exist in the Wired. Some things lingered after the reset, however, like when grown Alice experiences a not-quite-memory of Lain. Eiri, however, apparently lacked that spark of soul. He missed the potential (and the need) for something besides data, and passed away with the world he had made.

At least, so it seems....



lain

SERIAL EXPERIMENTS CHARACTERS





Alice (Arisu) Mizuki

Alice plays the most important role in developing Lain's humanity. As her closest friend, she is Lain's bridge to the world of normal experience: a little risk-taking, enjoying her life, willing to try new experiences, alert to the potential in others.

The show never states this explicitly, but since the physical Lain only arrived in the world relatively recently, none of them can have known her for very long (though Eiri or the Wired Lain could have given them false memories, of course, but there is no hard facts of such alterations). Alice seems to know Lain best, and brings her along even when Julie and Reika are less than completely enthusiastic about it.

Quite unwittingly, Alice hits on Lain's central secret early on, while inviting Lain to Cyberia. "I'll bet there's a really fun girl inside there, just dying to get out." Well, there is indeed something inside Lain dying to get out, though it's not much fun for Alice. Nonetheless, Alice's steady encouragement has a lot to do with Lain's developing an appreciation for human existence. Alice guides her in dealing with grief and with relaxation, and sounds the warning when Lain begins to drift further away from her human side. These are the actions of someone who embodies the best in "average" humanity, in sharp contrast to Eiri's morally stunted genius.

Yasuo Iwakura

Lain's father demonstrates the perils in over-confidence on the part of the world's would-be "Supreme Being." By his own admission, he was created without (or lacks) free will. Before he passes from the scene, he demonstrates both the willingness and the capability to act independently.

His primary role in Lain's life is, apparently, introducing her to computers at the right time, perhaps by alienating her from her own family. Early on he shows greatest enthusiasm working with his own machines, making computerized models similar to the one created by an unseen informant in the Wired who explains IPv7 to Lain. Mr. Iwakura ensures she receives the hardware she will need to achieve her potential.

The series is vague about Mr. Iwakura's motives when he warns Lain about confusing the real world with the Wired. He may be acting out a script in such scenes, ensuring Lain is thoroughly ready when she takes the final steps, but his concern does not seem compatible with Eiri's disregard for nuances or the wild Lain's ruthless ambition. In the course of watching her lose herself, he seemingly develops an appreciation for himself and for her as individuals. Within the limits available to him in his role as a "typical" businessman/father, he genuinely tries to do the right thing for Lain as a typical daughter.

Mr. Iwakura's glasses provide a subtle indication of his progress toward humanity. At first they are clear and normally reflective; he looks like the normal person Lain believes of him. As he becomes more involved in his role as mentor and overseer, they fill with the blue glow of reflected video monitors even when he is not looking at a computer. Finally, when comes into a sense of himself, they clear again to show him as an individual.

His farewell scene unquestionably happens of his own volition. A completely scripted software package (or actor, depending on his real nature) would not care whether Lain can find others to love and welcome her. He does. Whereas Eiri and the Wired Lain have become substantially less rounded than normal people, Mr. Iwakura at last achieves the complexity they set aside. He has his reward, though he will never know it. In the end, Lain includes her family in the remade world as a real family.



Miho Iwakura

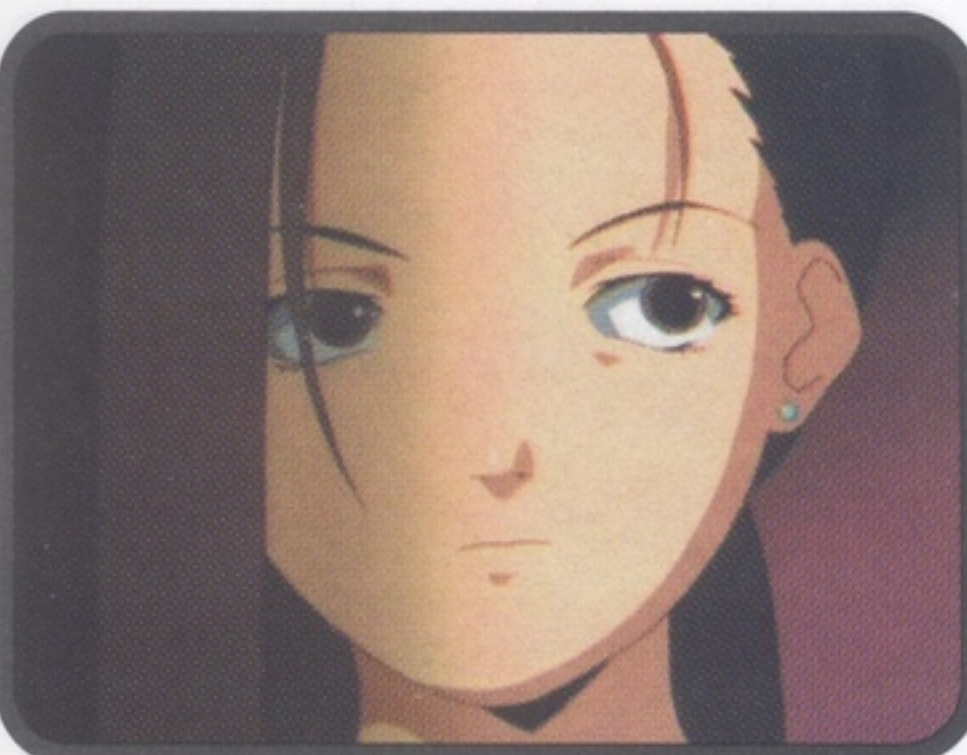
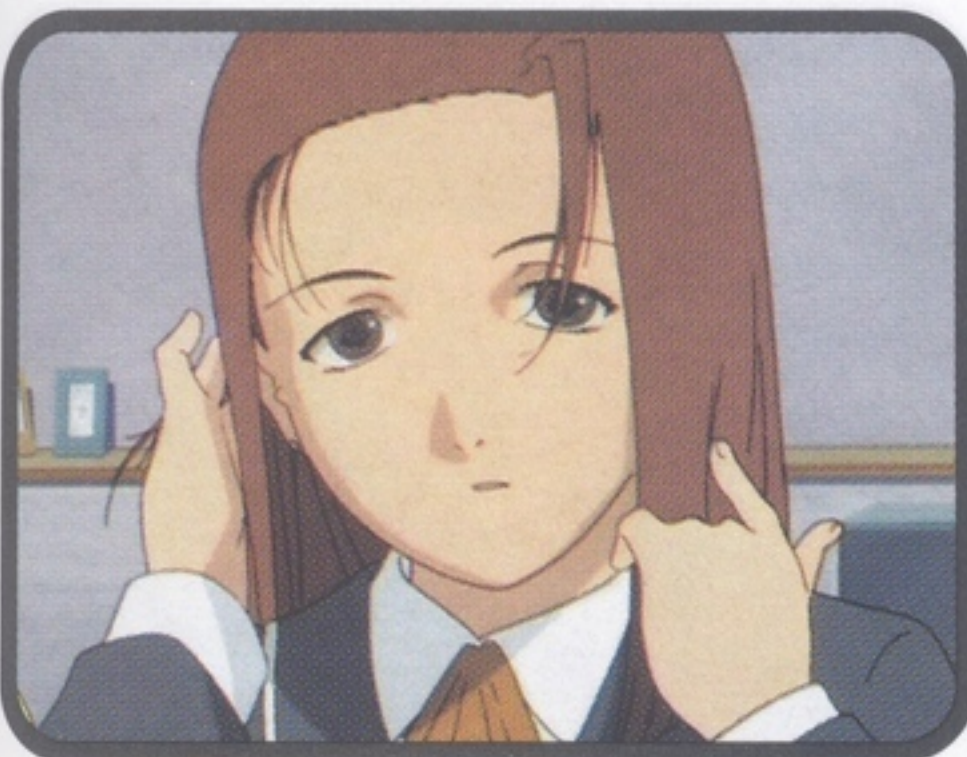
Lain's and Mika's mother, Miho, is dispassionate to the point of chilling. In fact, the only time she displays any human frailties is in the arm of Yasuo. Even then, the two act more like survivors of a common calamity than a couple. Whether this is the result of recent events, or a lacklustre marriage remains unknown. Are the Iwakuras actors pulled in to serve the role of parents? Or were they a real family forced to accept Lain into their lives. Regardless, Mrs. Iwakura plays her part with all the enthusiasm of wet cloth, and seems unconcerned with the most harrowing event, the disintegration of Mika's sanity.

Mrs. Iwakura is no longer interested with her part in this play, if she was to begin with. She is on the verge of exhaustion, and merely parrots the motions of normalcy. This is evident in her smothering silence that greets her daughters' questions, and by the dishevelled strands of hair she never bothers to tie back. Her question to her husband concerning the approaching end indicates her overwhelming fatigue, and an eagerness to resolve the play, possibly even if it means her own death. More than anyone else in the series, Miho Iwakura is painfully aware that her entire life conforms to somebody else's script, and there is little she can accomplish outside her part. She has seemingly surrendered to the futility of the situation.

Mika Iwakura

The sense of familial bond initially comes from Mika, oddly enough. While Mika is neither friendly nor chummy with Lain, she is not isolated from reality either. The audience only sees Mr. and Mrs. Iwakura in conjunction with Lain, but Mika exists outside the home. She has a boyfriend (as seen in Layer 05), and she attends school if her uniform holds any truths. She treats Lain like many older sisters might, as a peculiar younger sibling and a constant nuisance. In fact, it is debatable whether or not she actually realizes Lain is not her sister, though there is one instance when Mika sees Lain standing in the middle of traffic, and does nothing to intervene. In fact, she simply walks away, displaying a callousness that would make her mother proud. Does she do this knowing Lain's power, or is she so removed from life that she simply does not care (she is also indifferent after witnessing a car accident)?

Unfortunately for Mika, in the grand scheme of things, she is nothing more than a catalyst for prophecy. She heralds Eiri's ability to influence and alter the real world, which Eiri does when he yanks her from dinner and sits her in the diner. Her eventual dissolution is prophecy in that it not only demonstrates Eiri's growing powers, but it foreshadows Lain's eventual rise as well. Why Eiri chooses Mika to serve in this role, however, remains a mystery. Was Mika a sacrificial lamb from the beginning, or did she somehow fail in her role as sister? Maybe the audience sees her life, because she was not supposed to have one beyond the house. Certainly, out of all the family members, Mika seemed the most contentious; she brokers little nonsense, and displays the typical indifference of many teens. If this is the case, then the messages demanding "fulfil the prophecy," could have been a warning for her to resume on the straight and narrow.





Julie (Jurie)

The audience's first encounter with Julie is in Layer 01, while she sits at her desk crying over Chisa's email. Both immediate and subsequent impressions indicate that Julie is perhaps the follower of the group, and the most emotionally fragile. While good-natured (as shown by her concern for Alice through her see-mail), Julie seems to follow Reika's lead, perhaps exemplifying Lain's observation that people only exist in the memories of others; Julie often mirrors Reika's mood and temperament. The only times the audience sees Julie acting of her own accord is in her sympathetic message to Alice, and her waterworks following Chisa's email. In both instances, Julie appears perhaps overly sensitive or even melodramatic. Whether these are attention grabbing ploys or simply indicative of a sheltered, even naive nature remains unclear.

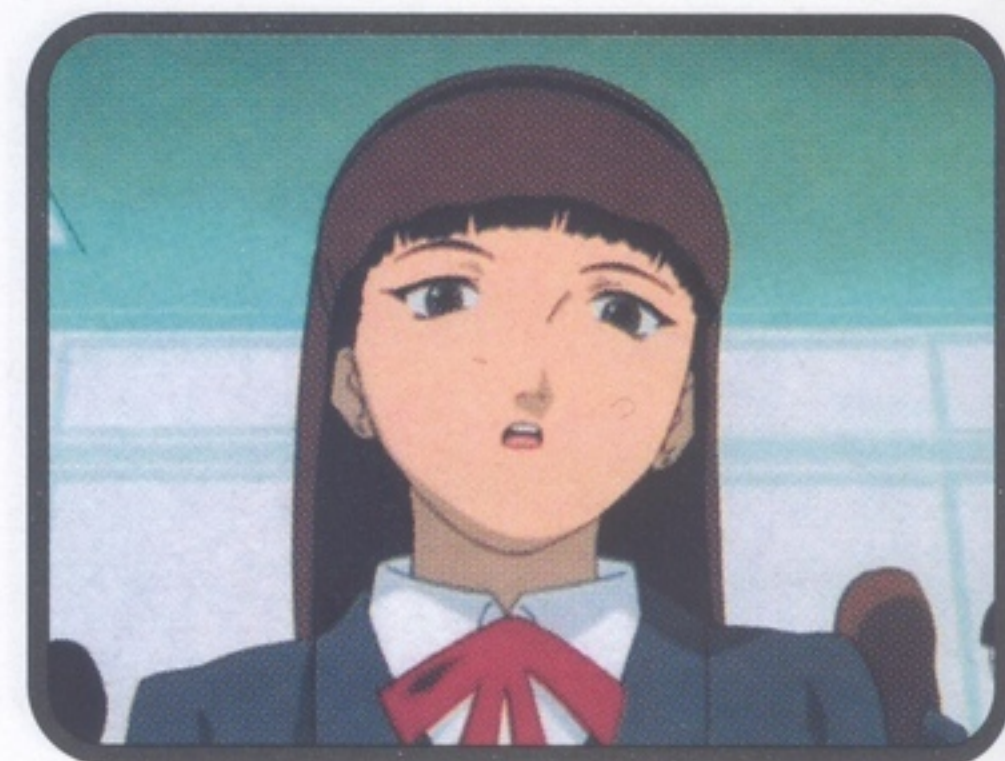
Reika

From the beginning, Reika demonstrates a no nonsense and tough mien. Little fazes her façade, and her reactions sometimes border on cold-hearted. Reika's presence indicates she is possibly the leader of her group, or at least the one who drags them off to more adventurous sorties in places like Cyberia. Still, Reika hardly, if ever chastises Alice or Julie, perhaps demonstrating an unspoken fondness for her two closest friends. This is subtly evident when Reika, who has proven her willingness to gossip earlier, scowls at Lain after Alice's secret crush, and possible affair with a teacher, comes to the public fore. This indicates that despite her wilder side, Reika still has scruples when they apply to her friends. Unfortunately, before the two resets, Lain is not truly a friend, and Reika only tolerates her presence because Alice wants her along.

Men in Black

Until Lain builds her massive über-NAVI, the two men in black (MIBs) are perhaps the most overt display of "cyberpunk" and near-future technology through their "mecha goggles." As for the duo themselves, the series definitively establishes them as trouble-shooters and mercenaries-for-hire. This makes sense for reputable companies like Tachibana General Labs, which may want to distance themselves from corporate espionage and wetworks (assassinations, like when the two MIBs kill suspected Knights) by hiring outsiders.

The audience sees the bearded man in black, later identified as Karl, as early as Layer 02, though without his goggles. He appears unhinged, a situation he does not remedy by staring at Lain with a sense of desperation or longing. Karl claims to love Lain, though, and may in fact have known her longer than she has known herself. It is possible he delivered Lain to her "family" in Layer 09. If this is true, then it adds another layer to the lies and red herrings dropped throughout the show. If Masami Eiri did create Lain, and the MIBs delivered her to the Iwakuras, then that would establish a definitive tie between Eiri and Tachibana even after Eiri's death. That said, the two MIBs are obviously dedicated to their duties. They return to monitoring Lain even after she breaks the shorter man's goggles with just a thought, and Karl still follows procedure even though it eventually means removing Lain's influence from the Wired. Karl claimed to love Lain, but does anything supersede that belief? His duty? His reward? The audience may never know since the two men die horribly at the hands of Wired assailants.



Taro

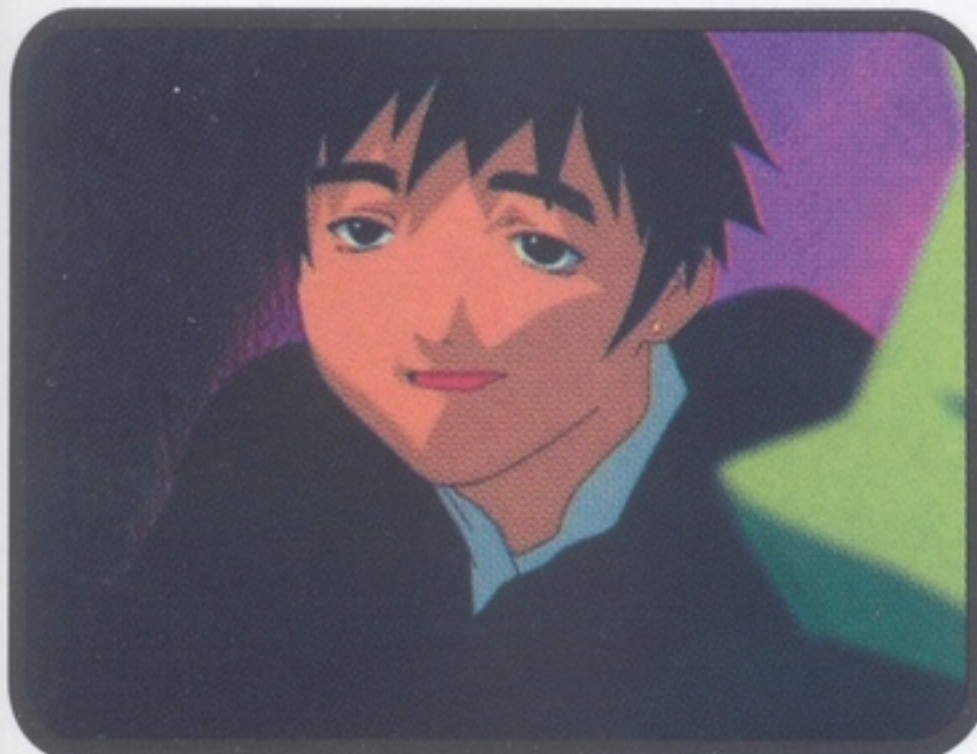
Young, savvy, and cocky, Taro is the nexus of his clique (which includes Myu-Myu and Masayuki). He is also on the periphery of the Knights, deep enough to know about certain agendas, but not involved enough for the MIBs to murder. A regular patron of Cyberia, Taro is exceedingly intelligent for someone so young, and fully familiar with elements of the Wired; he is also competitive to the point of being audacious. It is unclear whether Taro is actually in love with Lain, or feels a need to prove his own ability by showing off to someone of her stature. Regardless, the fact that after the reset he still sees an image of Lain means that possibly the two established a meaningful connection on some level. It is not as deep or as intimate as Lain's relationship with her father or with Alice, but it is noteworthy nonetheless.

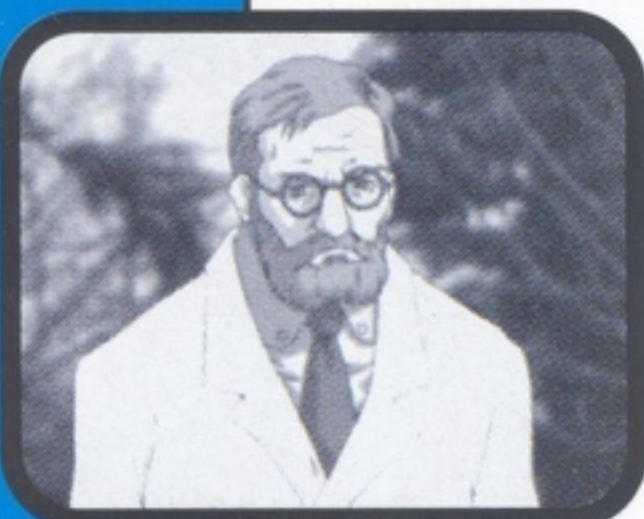
Masayuki

Like Myu-Myu, the gangly Masayuki plays second fiddle to Taro; it is obvious he is exceedingly proficient with Wired-related technology (enough to know how to install a Psyche chip), though he is probably not as well versed as Taro. He does not have any visible equipment, like goggles or portable NAVI-gun, so he might have learned all he knows through his friend. Masayuki obviously idolizes Taro in some fashion, but not to Myu-Myu's degree. He acts more laid back and nonchalant, though Myu-Myu's ploy to exclude him bothers him on some levels.

Myu-Myu

The series does little to establish Myu-Myu's character save for her general inclinations. It is uncertain whether she possesses a high degree of computer skills or ability, but her comments to Lain at their first meeting indicates some familiarity with the Wired and the basic operations of the NAVI. Myu-Myu is in love with Taro, that much is certain, but she displays typical child-like jealousy in trying to win his attention. She even resorts to cruelty, telling Masayuki that Taro barely tolerates his presence in an obvious ploy to keep Taro to herself. Taro is well aware of Myu-Myu's feelings for him, but it is uncertain if he keeps her around as a friend, or because he enjoys being the centre of attention.





Professor Hodgeson

A minor character with significant impact on the series, Hodgeson is a villain of sorts under his *nom du guerre*, the child-killer scientist. Whatever is happening in *Serial Experiments lain*, Professor Hodgeson is a precursor to it all. Fifteen years ago, he headed the Kensington Experiment, whereby complex machinery called the K.I.D.S. system converted weak electromagnetic waves from the brains of children through collectors called Outer Receptor. Hodgeson was attempting to pool the relatively weak Psi energies present in most kids, but apparently the storage method proved inadequate and there was an explosion of some kind that resulted in fatalities. The professor destroyed K.I.D.S. afterwards, but somehow his schematics found their way into the Wired, where someone (presumably Eiri) applied them to games like Phantoma.

Professor Hodgeson is an enigma, perhaps more so than most other characters. He recognizes Lain's power, and even remarks he did not expect her to be so life-like. Whether he means her appearance as a construct or her manifestation in the Wired remains unknown. It is interesting to note, however, that Hodgeson, like Lain, is fully manifest unlike most users who can only manage ears or a mouth. Still, he is an old man waiting to die, though he demonstrates regret for the children's deaths, but not actual sorrow. They were a means to an end, and they satisfied a certain scientific curiosity.

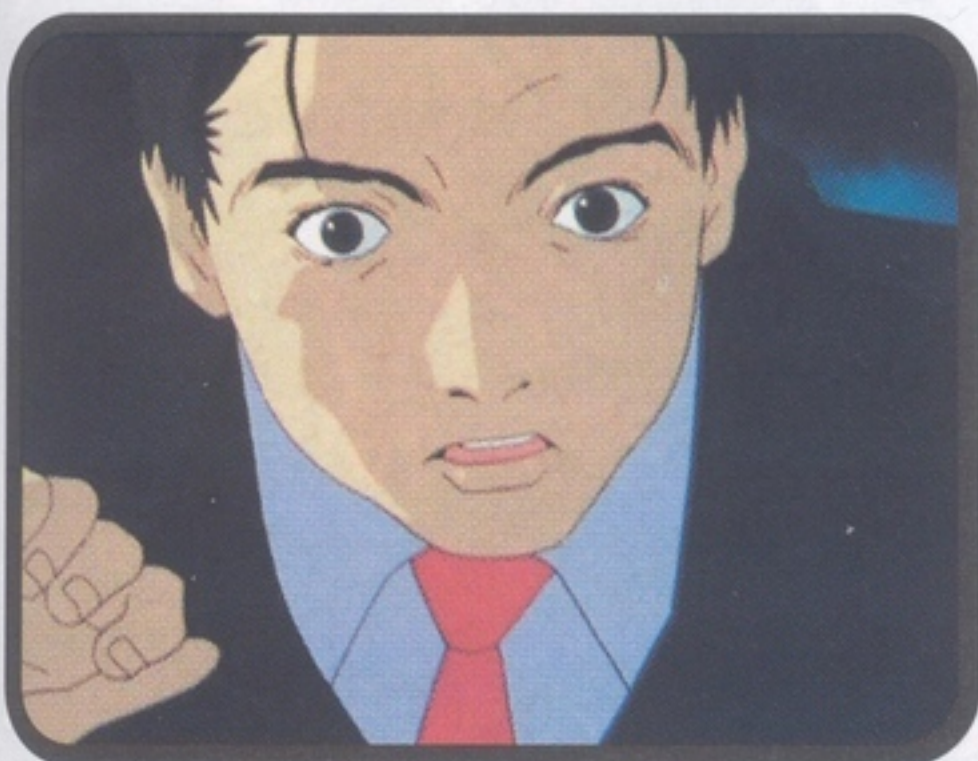
Nezumi

Another minor character who earns brief notice in the series, Nezumi is a weasel-like individual desperate to join the Knights. He displays some mechanical aptitude through his contraptions and VR-goggles, navigating the streets like he is navigating the Wired. By all appearances, however, Nezumi is also unhinged and, sadly, a loser. He appears fanatical, almost frantic in his earnest to join the Knights, and desperately wants to play Phantoma, though his appeals seem pathetic. His comment leads the audience to wonder if these games are specifically geared towards children because of their potential Psi ability. Regardless, his over-enthusiastic petitions earn him the attention of the three Knights (the business man, Shou's mother, and the heavyset player), who apparently kill him for his efforts.

JJ

JJ, Cyberia's resident DJ, remains a mystery. He seems friendly and has never done anything untoward, but the Knights are using Cyberia's music and light show to alter people's memories. In all likelihood, however, JJ remains unaware of the situation. He only knows the one wild Lain, and seems mystified after Lain communicates with him remotely. He is Wire-savvy by his response to Lain concerning Phantoma and the Knights, but aside from that, he appears a simple DJ raver with an eye on good times. His story is one that requires no epilogue or alteration by story's end. He remains unaffected, which possibly attests to his role in the series as nothing more than a plot device for information.





The Knights

Although there are presumably many Knights, the series only touches upon three, and even then, it is debatable as to their involvement. The three members are Shou's mother, the businessman, and the heavy-set man, but they never seem actively aware of their true roles in things. It appears as though they are simply playing games, until one considers the processor with the Knights logo delivered to the mother. Taro confesses to Lain that the chip contains non-volatile memory, allowing it to overwrite another person's memories. After seeing one such device burnt out in Shou's sink, one must wonder if the real Knights are using the chips to create scapegoats; are the chips reprogramming people to play games, when in fact they are controlling events across the world? Are the chips creating pawns, false members to act as fronts and protect the real Knights? If one can indeed alter memories, why not allow someone else to pretend, and even believe they are you without assuming any of the risks. If that is the case, then it is possible the real Knights are still out there. Unfortunately, this supposition jars with Eiri's statement that his worshippers, the Knights, are dead, only leaving Lain to adore him. One possible explanation is that the Tachibana man is a real Knight, and used these programmed drones as control mechanisms to limit Eiri's power. If Eiri grew too strong, it would be simpler to remove his worshippers, effectively hemming his influence. Once Lain uncovered who the "Knights" were, the Tachibana man sent the MIBs to remove all evidence leading back to him.

Another option is that the chips are actually programs to weaken the barrier between the Wired and the real world, much like Lain, hence increasing Eiri's powers. When Lain uncovered the roster of Knights, she either inadvertently also listed the carriers responsible for weakening the barrier, or someone fed her false information to eliminate the competition. In either case, "murdering" these reprogrammed drones allowed Tachibana to stage a coup against Eiri, thus increasing their potential hold over the Wired.

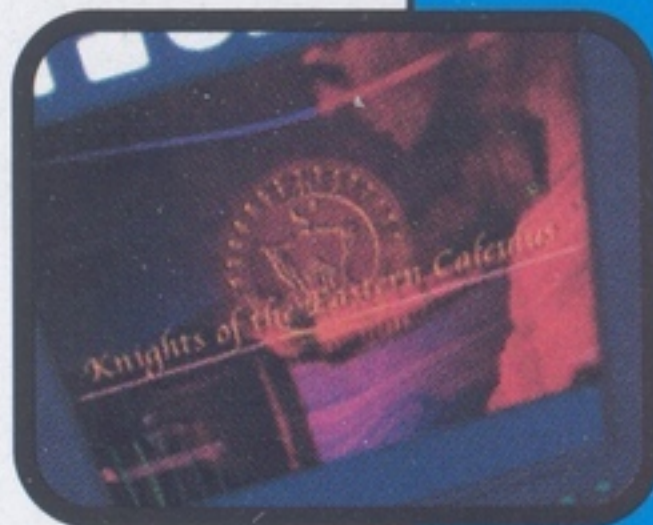
The Tachibana Man

Tachibana General Laboratories' mouthpiece, and possibly CEO, is a mysterious figure seemingly at the crux of several plots. There are allegations he is in league with Eiri, if not a pawn of the digital god, but he distinguishes himself by saying he dislikes the anarchist rabble trying to change the world. It is obvious he is a major player looking to control the cards, and if that means eliminating both Lain and Eiri as a threat, then so be it. At the very least, he shares Eiri's interest in breaking the barriers down between the Wired and the real world. The difference is that he does not seem attracted by worship; rather he looks forward to recreating the world itself.

The Tachibana Man is a wild card. While presumably not a Knight, he seems to share their goals in fostering his version of the truth. Presumably, the Knights stand in the way of his (and possibly Tachibana's) goals, so they must be eliminated as both threats and as Eiri's support structure. Is the Tachibana Man operating alone, or does he represent the interests of his company? An interesting little tidbit is that throughout the series, various Wired browsers and machinery bear the Tachibana logo. It seems unlikely that a serious company would try to undermine their own technological advantage by creating a world where devices were unnecessary ... unless, of course, Tachibana's goal was a forced evolution of humanity and dissemination of a universal technology.

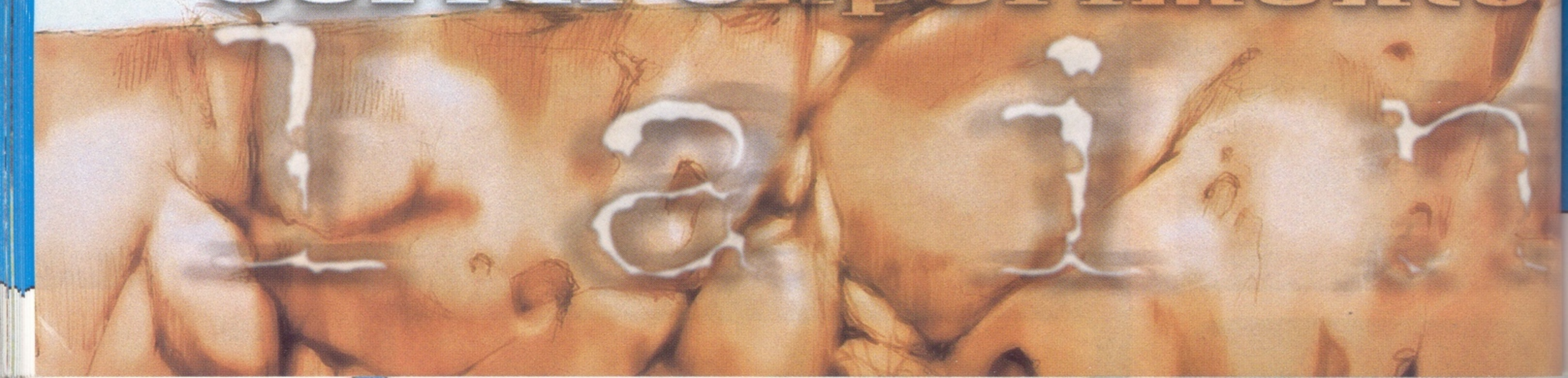
lain

SERIAL EXPERIMENTS CHARACTERS





serial experiments



Lain's World

The series never provides a framework more detailed than the opening assertion of "present day, present time," and the mocking laughter that follows it at the start of each episode becomes increasingly appropriate.

Some aspects of Lain's world are firmly established as props created to shape her experience as a human being. The disembodied Eiri arranged a family and home for Lain's physical self, and either Eiri or Lain's pre-existing Wired personality (personalities) manipulated events, guiding the physical Lain toward an awareness of her entire existence. The brief glimpse in Layer 13 of her city adrift in the void raises the possibility that everything shown as part of physical reality is also a prop: just as Lain at one point builds a model of her computer in her mind (in Layer 11), so too perhaps Eiri or the Wired Lain created an entire environment, not just pieces of it.

In this extreme case, the world around Lain may reflect the physical world that Eiri left behind, or may not. Professor Hodgeson's story of the K.I.D.S. experiment and the complex tangle of historical influences described in Layer 09 seem true, in the sense of explaining the world in which Lain moves. If the world itself is a prop, then Eiri's own background may be very different from what his unwitting minions tell Lain. On the other hand, that glimpse of extreme separation does not happen in isolation. Throughout the series, as early as Layer 02, various characters, in addition to Lain, appear alone in pools of light in the midst of empty darkness, and in these cases it is clearly a matter of illustration style projecting an emotional state into visual terms.

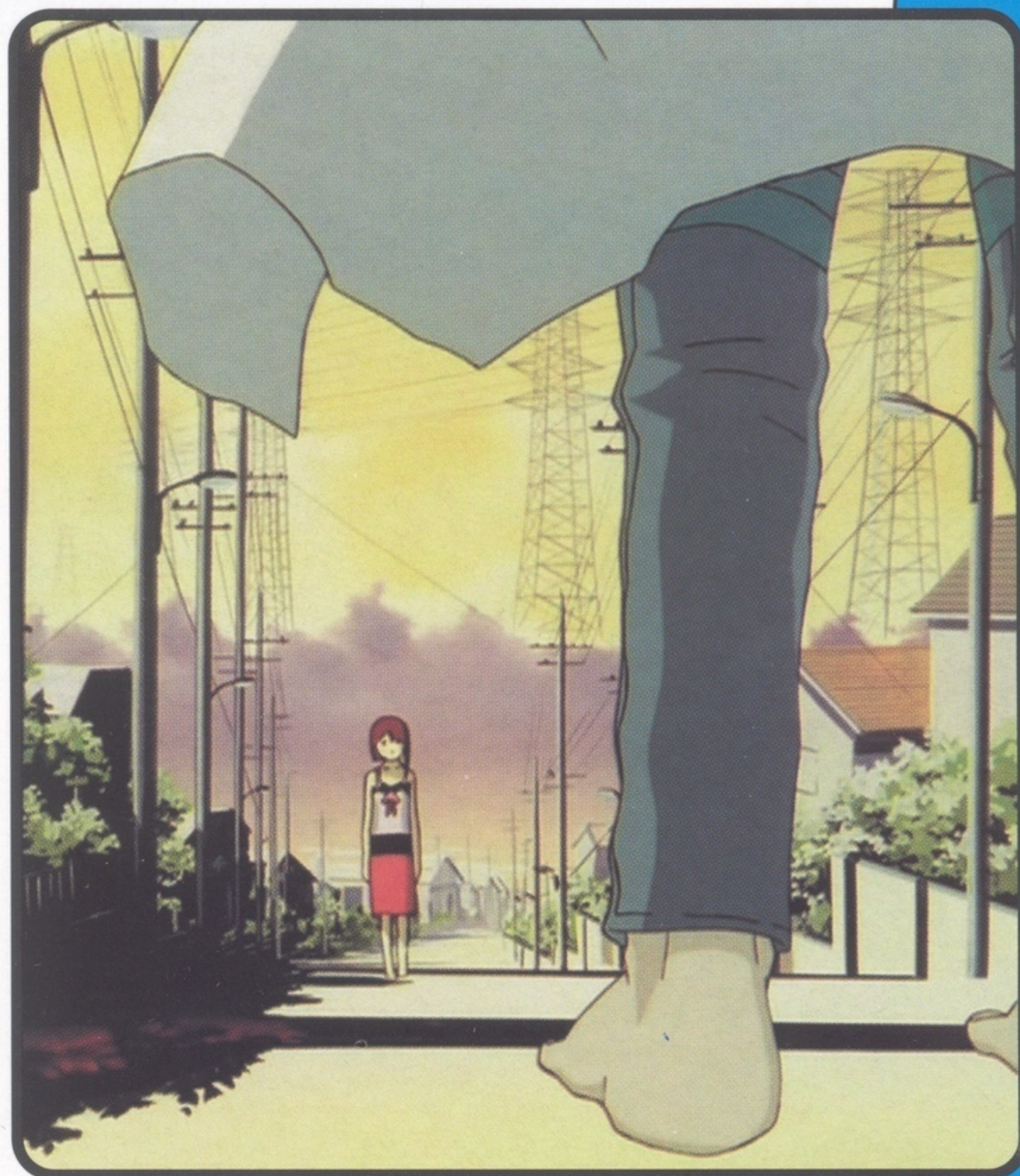
Even if the extreme case is not the best answer, interpreting the evidence of the series requires careful sifting. Lain's thoughts and emotions influence her environment whether she realizes it or not, so that no "fact" necessarily remains unchanged throughout the series. In addition, many elements are simply left vaguely defined, if defined at all.

Superficially, Lain lives in a version of Tokyo slightly more advanced than the real world, a few steps beyond the "present time" mockingly presented at the start of each episode. The look of the city is much the same, without anything as obvious as mile-high skyscrapers or flying cars; the culture of schoolgirls and the people around them is also generally realistic. Some of the changes clearly suit Eiri's agenda, such as the Navi computers. Their voice recognition routines, as well as other properties, outstrip anything currently existing, and the inclusion of Navi maintenance and engineering as part of the junior high curriculum may be one more way Eiri sets Lain for her awakening.

The forces of governance and secret authority remain shadowy in Lain. The two Laser Watchers act in classic "men in black" fashion and might well be government agents, except that in Layer 08 it becomes clear that they have been watching Lain on a contractual basis, which suggests some sort of freelance operation. Their employer might well be an official somewhere in the Ministry of Information Control, which has the authority to watch and perhaps pursue hackers and other offenders in the Wired, as well as maintain the high-tech traffic control system. Whatever his day job, however, he is also an agent of Eiri's, apparently a voluntary one, using the MIBs and their unseen comrades elsewhere until the Knights have been eliminated.

The classes Lain and her friends take reflect a straightforward middle-school curriculum: English, computers, and other standard subjects. Their fashions and entertainment show no sign of massive modification or distortion, though Cyberia seems remarkably tolerant of juveniles. This degree of acceptance serves Lain's awakening and therefore passes without notice by any of the characters.

In short, Lain's world is very much like reality except when its manipulators need or want it to be otherwise, and then it becomes as different as they choose.



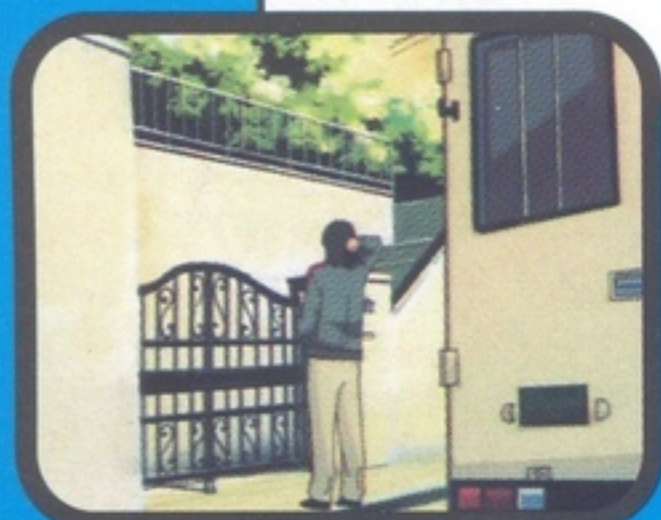


Places

Lain spends most of her time in the real world (if it is real) in mundane locations: her home, the route to and from school, school itself, social hangouts for teenage girls, the streets. Apart from a few glimpses of ominous, gothic buildings behind conventional skyscrapers, there is nothing particularly dramatic about most of this. It is simply the setting for characters to interact and the lower levels to be trampled while the Wired bleeds into the real world.

School

Like Lain's home, her school is sterile and lacking in evidence of an active student body except for the students themselves. By appearances, there are no extra-curricular activities or clubs except for personal interactions. With the rare exception it almost seems as though students and teachers do not mix, though many of the girls seem friendly towards one another. Otherwise the school is painfully nondescript, from the classrooms facing the corridor windows that look outside, to the near monotonous march of uniformed students to and from class. Throughout the series, this environment appears contrived, a situation not helped by Lain's perceptions involving the dissolution of her fellow students into shadows.

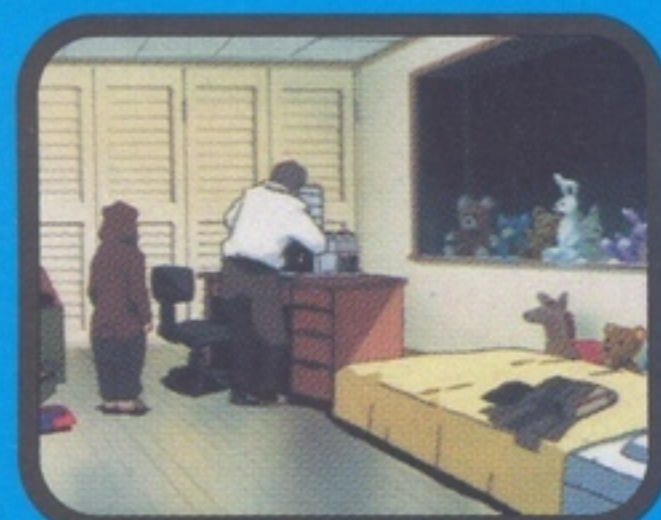
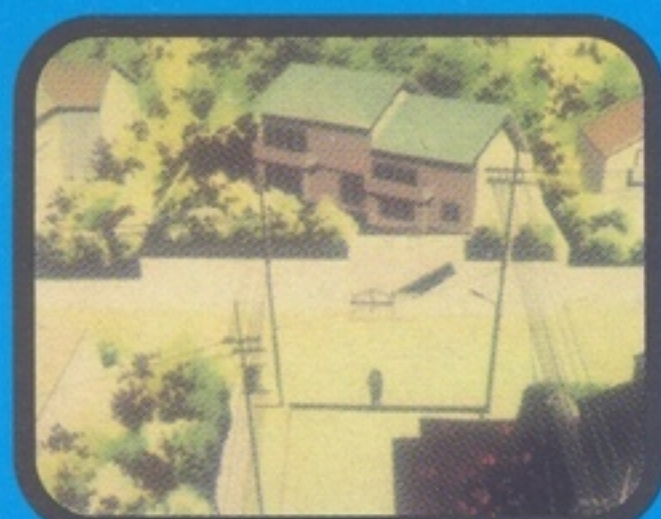


Iwakura's Home

As cold and as sterile as the Iwakuras themselves, Lain's house serves as a reminder of an almost unsettled and isolated existence. Her home is a privileged rarity in Tokyo, a seemingly spacious domicile with three bedrooms upstairs and a living room separated from the dining room and kitchen through half-walls. The garden outside is covered with verdant trees and shrubs, almost burying the house, while the second story façade alone has two balconies. It is obvious from the show that Lain lives on the side of the house angled towards the street, though there is little indication whether Yasuo Iwakura's study is on the ground floor or on the second story. Most likely, it is the former.

The Iwakura home is a mix of Oriental and Occidental aesthetics, with the removing of shoes in the foyer, Lain's floor-mattress bed, and the sliding doors for the living room testifying to the Japanese influences. Most everything else is Westernized, however, in a strange and almost nondescript fusion of forms without any real style. Lain's home is the bland of both worlds.

Everything about the house is almost too clean and pristine. It possesses an abandoned quality and lacks few personal touches save for the potted plants. Otherwise there are no pictures to speak of (except for the one in the parents' room), and no knickknacks. Several times, the camera pans across the living room, and each time it looks virtually untouched, right down to the side table with one lampshade slightly askew. One would think if Mrs. Iwakura is living in the house and that fastidiously clean, she would have arranged the lampshade at some point in the series. Even Mr. Iwakura's study with its nondescript bookshelf and empty coffee table with bare ashtray is Spartan — like he works there but does not sleep there. In fact, the only two rooms with any semblance of life are Lain's and Mika's bedrooms. Interestingly enough, Mika has clothes, a few stuffed animals, posters, and no computer. This supports the possibility that she possessed a life outside the home, and the potential reason why Eiri robbed her of her spirit and independence.



Cyberia

The Cyberia club is the one prominent exception to the generally sterile physical environments. Inside the cement walls on which its neon logo hangs, many unusual things transpire.

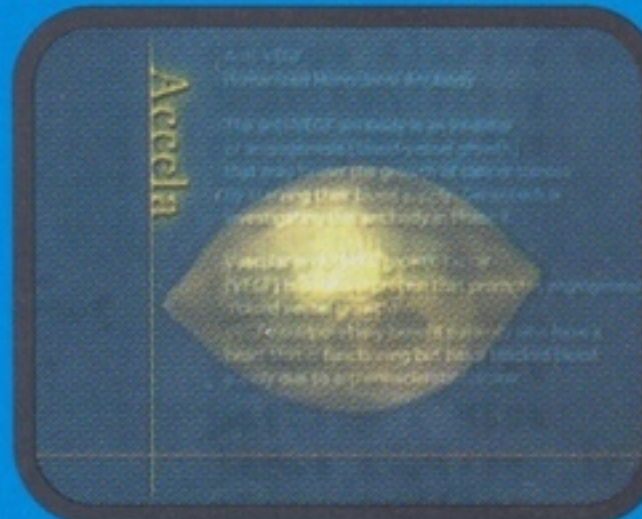
Up the stairs lies unknown territory. Since Cyberia caters to tastes for exotic and often illegal goods, with waitresses dealing in Accela alongside freelance dealers plying their own trade, might stockpiles of popular goods wait up there?

The visible action all happens downstairs, however. The dance floor spans the entire basement floor, or nearly so. Mirror balls and mechanized frameworks with which to move arrays of lights keep the scene flashing in vivid colours. Whenever Cyberia does business the music plays loud. In Layer 01, Alice says that "it plays really hard-core techno for a really hip young crowd," and she is not far off the mark. Strong beats anchor occasional elaborate synthesizer pieces and generally incomprehensible vocal lines. The crowd on the dance floor often appears as little more than silhouettes, but there are some shots with more details. The men seen clearly almost all favour sharp suits, while the women generally appear in flashy, revealing dresses and outfits. The teenagers watching from tables along the walls are not as trendy, though some of them try; they are more likely to own elaborate portable computing gear than fancy wardrobes.



The fashionably scruffy bartender/DJ serves in multiple capacities. Sometimes we see him mixing and serving drinks, sometimes tending the music mix, sometimes referring to the wall full of books, tapes, and more obscure packages behind his counter. He relays information and holds messages and envelopes for at least some customers, and his conversation suggests he is up on developments in the Wired as well as what transpires in the club itself. If there is anything he definitely cannot or will not do, it is not obvious from his appearances.

Cyberia seems to occupy a legal limbo when it comes to the presence of minors. In the real world, both in Japan and in the West, some clubs do cater to teens. They cannot serve alcohol, or can serve it only in specific controlled circumstances; they seldom attract much of an adult clientele because of the restrictions on hours, the nature of allowed performances, and other aspects of operation. Any business flaunting these restrictions for an extended period of time must have staff or owners with good connections, paying off the police and inspectors in some suitable currency (it does not have to be money; favours and information go far toward keeping corrupt authorities happy and at a distance). The presence of exotic substances for sale and the fact that, at least in the case of Accela, their vastly inflated pricing suggests that someone behind the scenes has connections. It is also possible that the club is as way is to provide the right stage on which to shock Lain into new insights.



The Dome

The world around Lain undergoes some drastic changes throughout the series. At first they are physical: a train accident happens, or does not. Someone can spy with elaborate gear, or cannot. Later the changes expand to include minds and even memories: it remains an open question whether something actually happened if nobody remembers it. At the climax of the series, Lain wipes out her own history and everything necessary for it to come into being. She reduces the former God of the Wired to the status of a frustrated programmer, the men in black to line repairmen. Her host family carries on reasonably happy without her, as do her friends at school and those she encountered at Cyberia. The city itself seems largely unchanged ... until the crucial moment when the camera pulls back to reveal city floating on a small rock in the middle of nowhere.

The audience knows by the last couple of layers that the physical reality of the series' beginning has been extensively modified. Eiri made whatever changes he deemed necessary to guide Lain toward self-awareness. Lain herself modifies the world, first unconsciously and then deliberately. Her changes become more and more sweeping.

Up until that one glimpse of the domed city, however, the show has always suggested that its events take place on Earth, albeit an edited homeland. For the moment of that glimpse, at least, the audience knows that is not true. The rest of the world has vanished, perhaps to return, perhaps not. There are several possible explanations.

The most drastic is that the entire series took place on this city-sized asteroid. Eiri and his subroutines and henchmen forged references to events elsewhere to preserve a satisfying illusion, but we never saw Earth at any time. Perhaps there was an Earth on which he could base the construct, or perhaps not: all of Earth and history could be part of the stage dressing.

Somewhat less drastically, perhaps the show began on Earth but moved to isolation (presumably through Eiri's intervention) when Lain's powers gained great strength. Alternatively, after she saw the terrible power of the K.I.D.s system, she may have created the asteroid city as a haven for herself, so that even if she lost total control she would not destroy the planet.

Another option more in line with the series' theme is that the city is an advanced manifestation of the Wired without Eiri's hidden protocols affecting IPv7. Thus, nobody except Lain can access this graveyard of sorts, or perhaps only she can manifest this completely. It might serve as a place where memories go when forgotten, or Lain exiled herself within this empty world. This certainly seems plausible from the opening credits, where the audience never sees Lain interacting with anyone directly. Instead, she is either completely alone in a deserted city, or she is an image on a computer/television screen.

Finally, perhaps the domed city is just an early stage in the new Earth. Lain started with what was closest and most important to her, and will fill the rest when she can. Her late inclination to explore past the boundaries of the present moment suggests the willingness to provide a world as full and rich as possible, capable of growth and surprise. She has godlike power, but not godlike pride: she specifically resisted that part of her soul which wants to rule, in favour of observing and participating as her most limited, physical self. The dome may be a step in replenishing the world just as Lain's encounter with future Alice is a step in renewing her own humanity. In time, perhaps both will develop further.

If the promise of connection is true, then someday that world may have to be big enough for all the hopes and fears of everyone alive. Lain, knowing this, may be germinating the future in the form of one seedling city. Its bloom waits for the fullness of time.

Organizations

In sharp contrast to the precise clarity of the world immediately around Lain, the social forces operating on a broad scale remain almost completely undefined. The series evokes them rather than detailing them.

At least three separate causes contribute to this vagueness. First, as a teenage girl, Lain simply does not have much interest in the workings of government or opportunity to study esoteric cabals. Nor do the individuals she encounters representing either sort of group offer much insight. Everything useful she learns comes fairly late in the series, from her own probing into the Wired. Second, the major organizations of the series aren't primarily concerned with the activities of teenage girls. We see only scattered glimpses of them in part because most of their activities have no relevance to the story. Third, the groups are all subject to manipulation by forces in the Wired, including Eiri's and Lain's ability to rewrite the past, and it is difficult to maintain any constant identity when the authors of the world choose to edit.

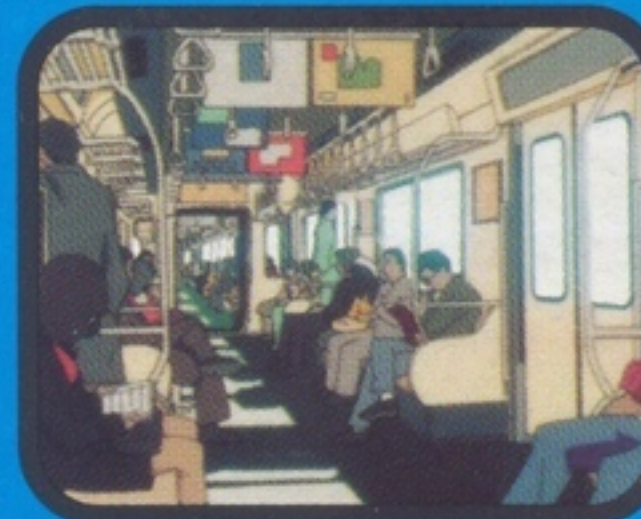


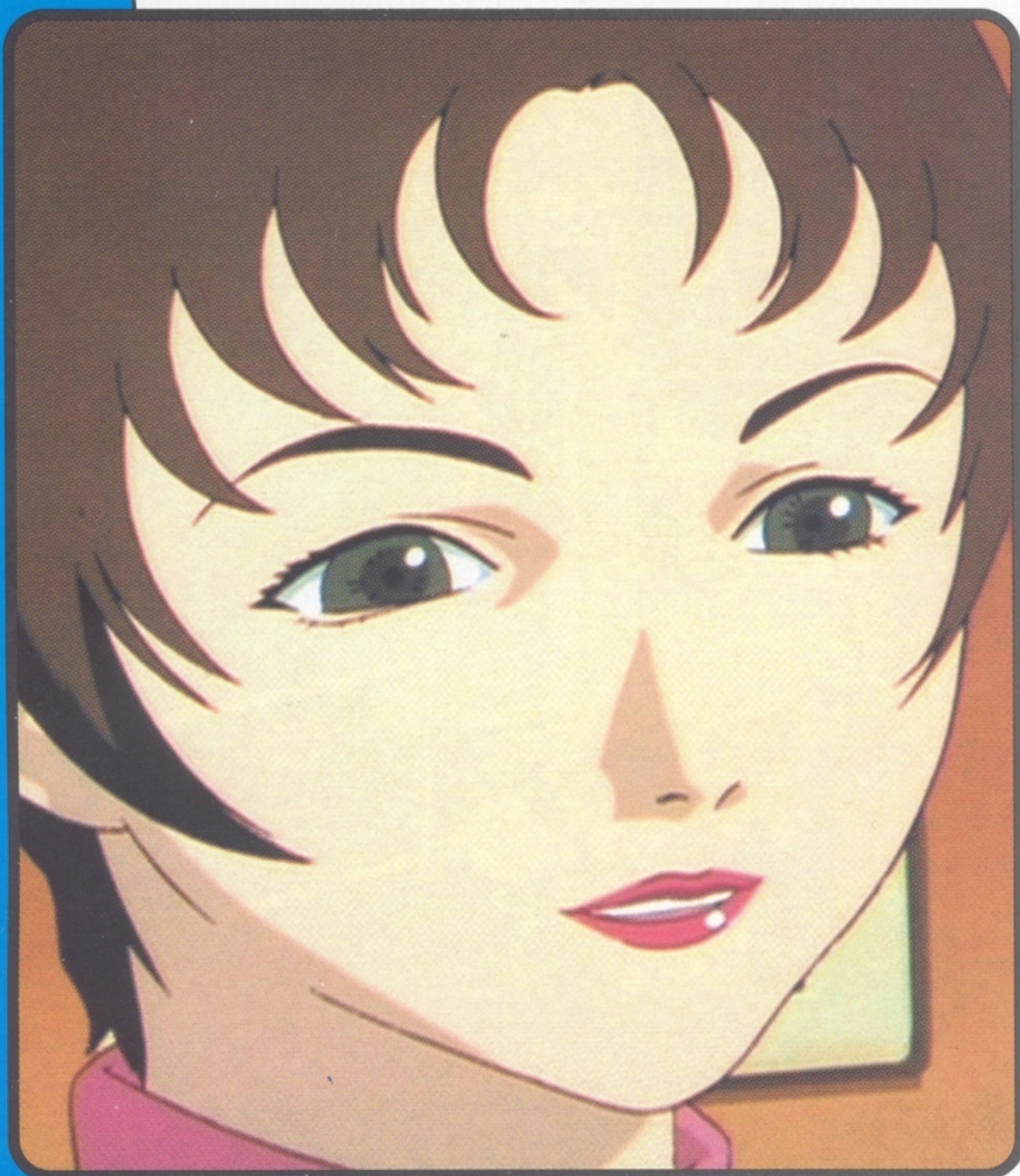
The Ministry of Information Control

In Lain's Japan, the Ministry of Information Control has sweeping authority over matters concerned with computers. They respond to hacking and electronic incursions. Conversation in and around Cyberia suggests the Ministry monitors at least part of the Wired for computer crimes. The Ministry apparently pursues intruders and enforces regulations on Wired users about appropriate software tools and their sanctioned use; Wired surfers do not have unlimited freedom to behave as they want, even in defense against attempted intrusions.

The Ministry also oversees the computer-related infrastructure. When computer-controlled traffic signals go haywire in Layer 05, the Ministry responds to the situation, inspecting for damage, fixing defective units, and bustling around to provide the public with reassurances that it will not happen again.

At no point in the show does anyone say explicitly that the MIBs or the man employing them work for the Ministry, but it is one possibility. The MIBs seem experienced, familiar both with their gear and with the routine of dealing with suspects, intimidating bystanders, and conducting their investigation. Likewise, their employer is definitely a man informed about and concerned with the Wired. If he does not work for the Ministry, he works for some other unnamed organization with overlapping jurisdiction.

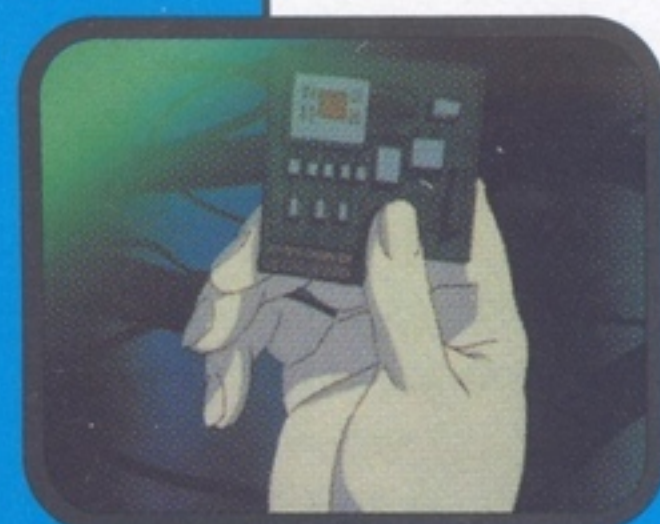




The Knights

The Knights are crucial to Lain's awakening and ensuing experience, and yet they exist as scarcely more than silhouettes on the backdrops of the world. Whether the Knights worship or are opposed to Masami Eiri is left open. They have their own plans for the world, they monitor the Wired and operate through an extremely diverse range of agents, attempting to sabotage any opposition to them. In the end it all fails for them, leaving behind only corpses, rumours, and scattered fragments of a plan. Little is known about the Knights' organization. Even their origins are obscured. Amid the swirl of revelations in Layer 09 about technical and conceptual influences, very few details emerge about actual institutions. The Knights are at least part of an intellectual tradition running back to the Knights Templar and other groups investigating the mysteries of the world, but they may have no direct legacy of membership. Their logo shows the compass design favored by Freemasons and cryptic characters resembling cuneiform, but these might only indicate inspiration rather than proving inheritance.

The people we actually see associated with the Knights in one capacity or another include Taro, a yuppie businessman, a housewife, and an overweight hacker. At least one of these, Taro, admits he is not a full-blown member of the Knights. They are probably using him, and very likely stringing him along with plausible stories about membership that they might have no intention of fulfilling. Taro is bright but not free of gullibility or simple yearning for acceptance. The others occupy ambiguous places in the Knights' hierarchy. The businessman could easily be engaged in all sorts of conspiratorial activity, while hackers are necessary to the Knights' operations online. What role does the housewife play in their



schemes? She may monitor some kind of net traffic (she could be one of those anonymous voices in the Wired or a silent listener), or (wittingly or otherwise) inculcate skills in her boy that the Knights will use later. Of course, it could be something else altogether.



One Wired rumourmonger suggests that the Knights do not actually exist as a group at all. They are an ideal to which some hackers and other users aspire to in varying degrees. This is not entirely compatible with the notion of a group at least well-enough organized to bomb Lain's computer rig, unless that is actually the work of one or a few individuals acting in the name of the Knights. Nor is it altogether compatible with the existence of special hardware made to the Knights' specifications like the circuit boards some Knights' associates receive, unless some well-positioned individual usurps the work of others for the groups' own purposes. One mid-level manager at a hardware manufacturer could arrange for custom designs, or redirect part of a production run for another client. We do not actually see the Knights ever act in a manner requiring large-scale co-ordination. The Knights may unknowingly advance aims they do not understand by virtue of their receptivity to the Knights message.



At the other extreme of possibilities, the Knights may be ubiquitous. Traditions of conspiracy theory both in Japan and the West ascribe some or all-important developments in world affairs to a well-connected cabal. Particularly when supported by the advanced technology available in and through the Wired, the Knights could well be an international cabal who actually do shape almost all aspects of society as they pertain to the Wired, using the rest of humanity as tools in their search for esoteric wisdom. This would certainly fit with their reprogramming of memories through the chips or their involvement in Cyberia.



Eiri spends enough time with Lain to hear her suggestion that he is just a pawn in a larger scheme. The Knights do not receive that opportunity, but perhaps they should. Eiri makes use of an infrastructure that, at least in part, the Knights created for their own ends. Since Eiri plays a necessary role in Lain's awakening, it is possible that the Knights were also manipulated by the deeper forces of humanity to play their part in creating the environment in which Lain could come to know herself fully. They are removed only after Lain takes her first steps to awakening, without ever knowing the full consequences of what they have done.



I thought I was innocent,
but I'm being punished.
I didn't start this,
but I have to finish it somehow.

I can't say I didn't know about it,
but I don't remember taking part in it.
I get the feeling my freedom cost me dearly,
but I don't remember selling my soul cheaply.

Hey hey!
Until I die and say goodbye...
Hey hey!
...no one will ever catch me.

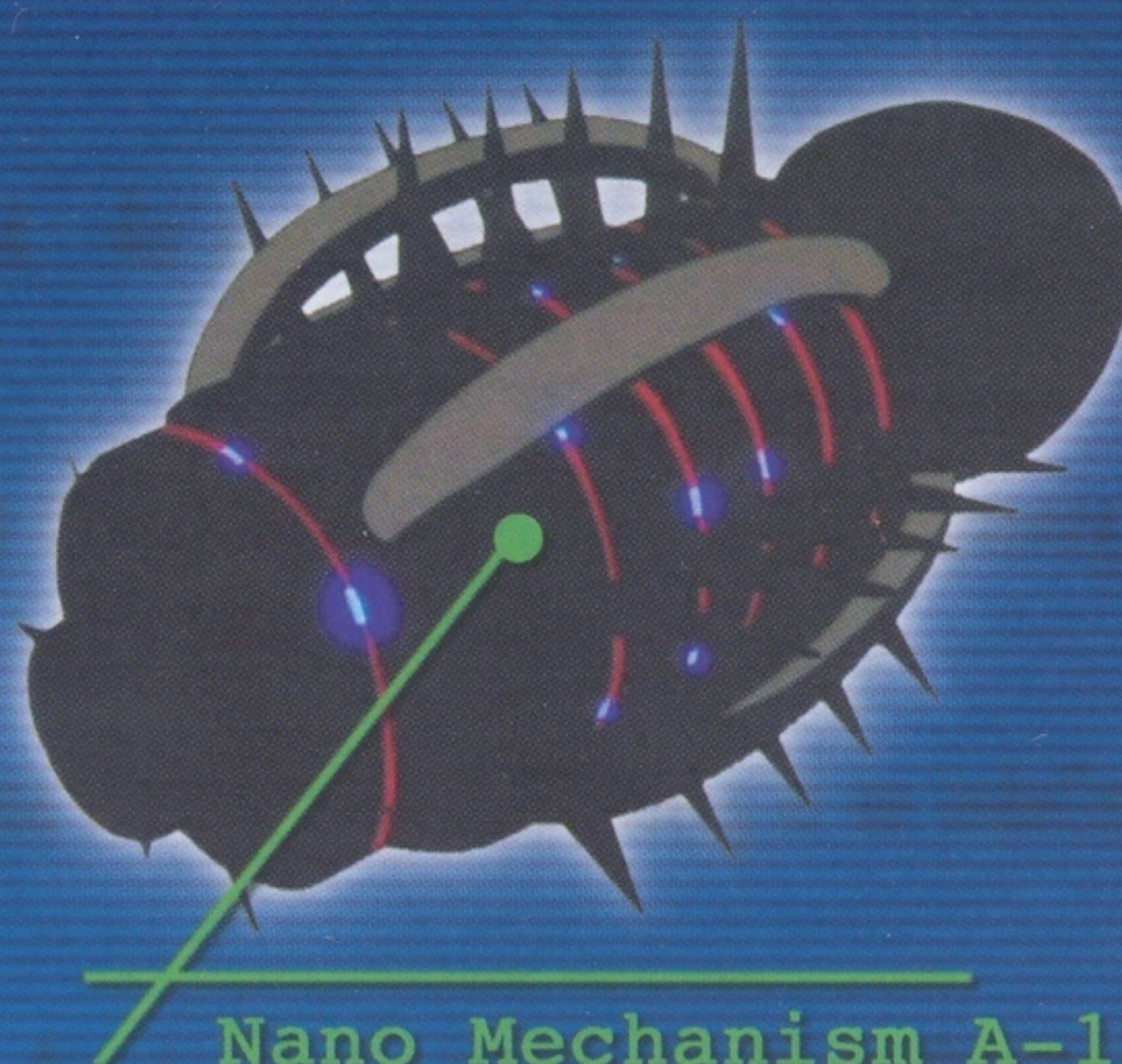
You probably don't know the eternal outlaws
who wander the distant night.

Accela

Anti-VEGF Humanized Monoclonal Antibody

The anti-VEGF antibody is an inhibitor of angiogenesis (blood-vessel growth) that may hinder the growth of cancer tumors by starving their blood supply. Genentech is investigating this antibody in Phase II.

Vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) is a natural protein that promotes angiogenesis (blood vessel growth). VEGF could potentially benefit patients who have a heart that is functioning but has a blocked blood supply due to arteriosclerotic coronar.



Nano Mechanism A-12

Accela — BESM RPG Information

Accela is the most distinctive recreational product of Lain's world. As an observer in the Wired says, "it's not exactly a drug." In fact, Accela is a pill-sized piece of machinery that oscillates at a specific frequency, causing the body to natural produce a natural hormone. It comes packaged in a gel capsule, giving it an indefinite shelf life and making it easier to transport around given its tiny size. Accela boosts the user's Mind Stat by 2 to 12 (roll two dice to determine the increase), and gives the user the Attribute Heightened Awareness Level 2, but only in relation to the Body Stat. This augmentation applies specifically to matters involving speed of response and thought: it provides the user faster reflexes and the ability to work through puzzles more quickly, but does not provide boosted strength, innate intelligence, or other aspects entailed in those Stat increases. These benefits come at a fairly steep cost. The Accela user's resistance to psychic assault, through mental powers, Wired manipulation, and the like, is at a +3 dice roll penalty. In short, he or she appears more susceptible to suggestions or coercion. The Accela hormone is most active for 24 hours (before the body's digestive juices destroy the A-12 nanobot), during which time the user suffers the Awkward and Easily Distracted Defects at 1 BP each. The GM assigns a trigger for Easily Distracted based on the character's history and personality. After the drug wears off, the user might suffer from Recurring Nightmares in the form of hallucinations. This lasts for as long as the Game Master deems appropriate. One dose of Accela is a Minor Item of Personal Gear.

THE WIRED

The rules presented here have little to do with computer logistics in the real world. They are concerned with the fictional technology of *Serial Experiments lain*.

The Wired operates on two distinct levels: Using the Wired and Being There.

Using the Wired

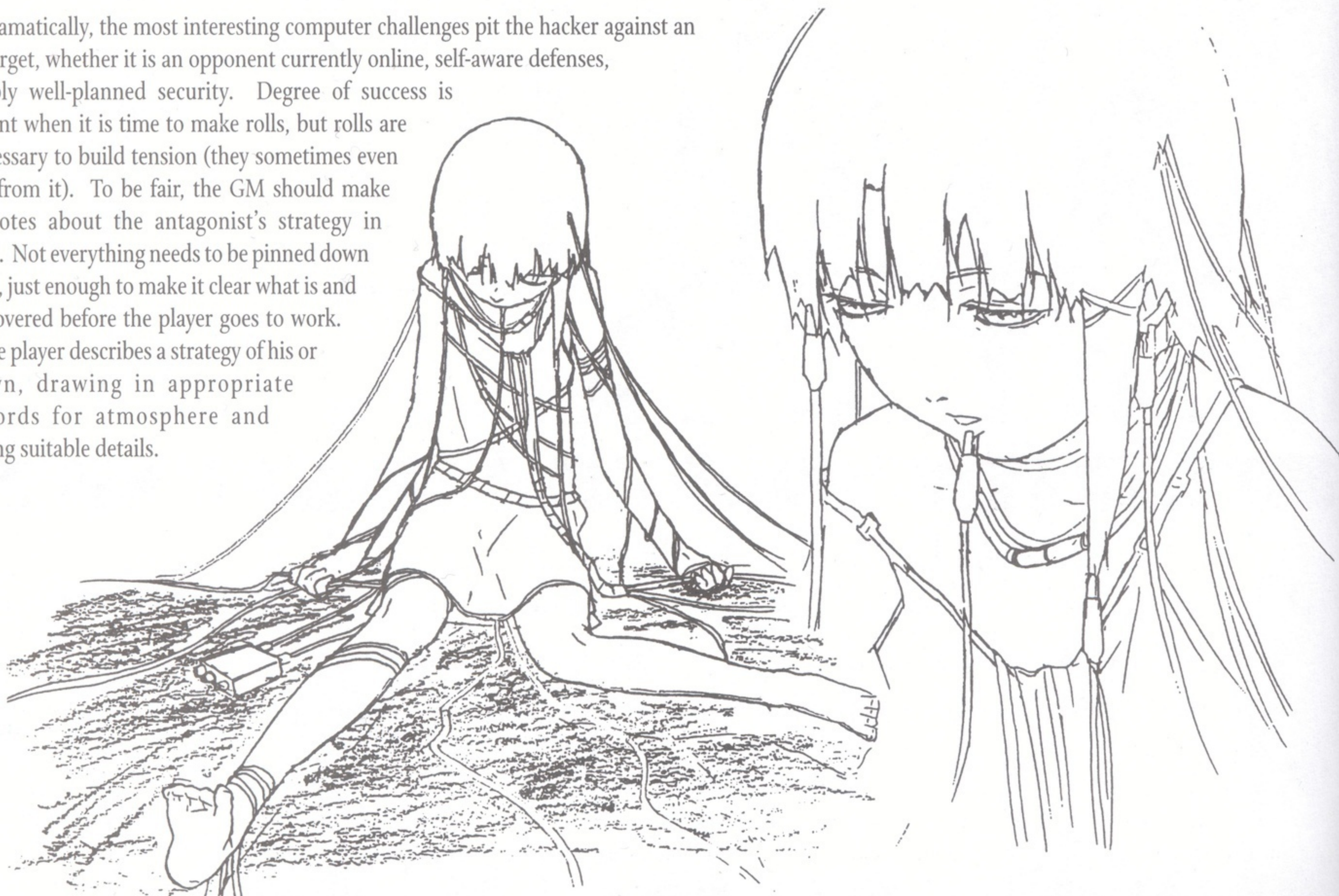
This is how most people interact with the Wired. In game terms, characters use the Computers Skill to accomplish tasks. Other Skills, such as Electronics, Police Sciences, Stealth, etc., may provide dice roll bonuses as secondary Skills, if the Game Master (GM) deems this appropriate.

The key question about using computers during a game is not simply "Can we do this?" but "Can we do this in time to save the day?" If the characters are searching for information about the Knights (or if they are Knights, trying to discover who is after them), for instance, they can usually do it, sooner or later. When they face unknown assailants closing in, however, they want their answers right away, and that is an uncertain matter.

The GM should use the degree of success to provide some detail beyond "yes, you'll eventually get the answer" or "sorry, you'll have to try something else." On a marginal success, the task in question works, but it may take days to produce the data, compile the program, detect all the open ports, or do whatever it is the character is trying to accomplish that time. On a minor success, perhaps it works in a few hours. On a major success, it works in minutes. On an extreme success, it works within a few seconds, possibly about as quickly as the player can state the desired goal.

For the proper subgenre feel, the GM should apply bonuses for clever and appropriate descriptions. It is not necessary for these descriptions to make any technical sense; it is important they evoke the right atmosphere. In a game with government espionage, "classification" and "inter-agency contact point" are good buzzwords, while in a cyberpunk-predominant setting, terms like "stacked memory" and "multi-tiered encryption node" come into play. Computers in Lain's world clearly benefits from the invocation of "next generation," "protocol," and "full access." It helps, therefore, to say, "My character applies that pointer from her old friend about a back door subroutine in the telephone access protocol," if one wishes to probe the Wired. The list of buzzwords varies from one particular setting to the next. Game Masters can compile a list of appropriate terms that apply to their setting by watching the relevant source material. Anything that many characters refer to earnestly counts for this purpose. For *Serial Experiments lain*, this might include protocols, Navi, Phantoma, PK, plugs, carbon coolant systems, voice recognition, barrier, Knights, see-mail, processor, motherboard, volatile memory, IPv7, firewalls, Ministry of Information Control, etc.

Dramatically, the most interesting computer challenges pit the hacker against an active target, whether it is an opponent currently online, self-aware defenses, or simply well-planned security. Degree of success is important when it is time to make rolls, but rolls are not necessary to build tension (they sometimes even detract from it). To be fair, the GM should make some notes about the antagonist's strategy in advance. Not everything needs to be pinned down this way, just enough to make it clear what is and is not covered before the player goes to work. Then the player describes a strategy of his or her own, drawing in appropriate buzzwords for atmosphere and supplying suitable details.



Plans that exploit weak points in their opponents' defenses enjoy increased success, whether the GM rolls or simply provides suitable descriptions, while plans that run up against well-prepared fortifications do not work so well. The important thing is to build the sense that the characters are engaged with specific targets rather than abstract difficulty levels.

Note that the flowchart of actions in combat rounds (*BESDM*, page 202) applies very well to this sort of non-combat dramatic engagement too. The principle of thrust and counter-thrust is the same even though the damage is measured in firewall integrity and account balances rather than stitches and lost pints of blood. Also note that the system of prepared defense compared to description of intrusion works when it is the characters on the defensive. The GM needs to preserve proper objectivity, keeping in mind that NPCs do not review the players' notes.

Being There

Beyond users at terminals, beyond consensual hallucinations and multi-sensory simulations, there is an entirely separate realm of computer engagement available to a chosen few. In game mechanic terms, full immersion of a character's viewpoint and consciousness into the Wired works very much like magic, especially in *Lain* where Wired effects sometimes translate into the real world (like manifesting a Phantoma gun and opening fire). The rules for paranormal and magical activity presented in *BESM* work well for this purpose.

Computers providing immersive access produce results like those of Astral Projection. If character must "physically" pass through each space of the network universe to reach somewhere, use Astral Projection, Flight, and other movement powers, while direct transfer from one net address to another uses Teleportation. Dimensional Portals and Places of Power cover the cyberspace manifestations of particularly interesting locations; Dimensional Portals may apply to places found only online (like Hodgeson's Italian villa balcony), while Places of Power exist on both sides of the digital divide (possibly Cyberia, for example).

Viral infections and parasitical software use Contamination. Electronic Counter-Measures act like Force Fields in limiting movement and sensory activity. Exorcism targets the subject's connection between the Wired and his or her physical existence, leaving behind (depending on the Exorcism's success) data and detached software to examine without requiring the user's permission.

Good hackers assemble their tools of the trade using the guidelines given for Magic, building software (and the supporting hardware) that treats the Wired as a real but highly malleable environment. Master hackers, rogue artificial intelligences, and other great lords of the Wired world use Dynamic Sorcery.

The names and appearance of things convey much of the game's atmosphere. In the classic cyberpunk story, *True Names*, by Vernor Vinge, the visible layer of the net realm is classic fantasy, complete with dragons and wizards, while data manipulation happens mostly in users' subconscious. More commonly, cyberspace features its own environment, full of vivid geometric forms and animated structures that do not closely mimic anything in reality. In *Lain*'s world, the Wired combines purely abstract backgrounds for sound-only interactions with increasingly realistic pocket realms. Occasionally, games like *Phantoma* or *Taro's* cel-shaded fantasy game shape the surroundings, creating a wildly diverse environment. The GM can vary the style of cyberspace from one area to the next: many programmers and users all contribute to its definition, so there is always room for something new.

Some sample Wired-style names for existing Attributes:

Astral Projection	Interfacing, On-line Icon
Contamination	Virus Attack, Worm Re-Programming
Dimensional Portal	Subnet Access Node
Dynamic Sorcery	Master Hacking, Full-Access Immersion
Exorcism	Disconnection
Insubstantial	Encrypted
Item of Power	Custom Hardware/Software
Magic	Hacking
Reincarnation	Backup & Respawn
Servant	Utility
Swarm	Distributed Processing
Transmutation	Parameter Redefinition, Non-Volatile Memory Cache

Mecha as supporting software and hardware fits some settings and not others. There is nothing like them in *Lain*'s Wired, for instance, but they would be very appropriate in a game with a highly evolved cyberspace like the one in *True Names*. The GM has final say on this matter. In settings that do not use mecha, build special tools with Item of Power, Armour, and other individual-artifact guidelines. In some cases it may be appropriate to handle highly sophisticated but compact artificial intelligences (and other exotic entities) with "Own a Small Mecha" and restrictions on the size-dependent Attributes.

The nature of combat in cyberspace also varies depending on the setting. In most cases, the Mind Combat rules in *BESM* (Page 231) should apply. If, however, the digital environment makes use of prosthetic feedback and other ways of drawing on the user's physical form, than it is exotic but nonetheless Body-based combat. Finally, characters existing purely within the electronic environment should use a form of Soul combat.

LAIN UFG ATTRIBUTES/SKILLS/DEFECTS

APPROPRIATE ATTRIBUTES

Appearance
Art of Distraction
Astral Projection
Aura of Command
Contamination
Damn Healthy!
Dimensional Portal
Divine Relationship
Dynamic Sorcery
Electronic Counter-Measures
Energy Bonus
Exorcism
Flight
Flunkies
Focused Damage
Force Field
Gun Bunny
Healing
Heightened Awareness
Heightened Senses
Highly Skilled
Illusion
Insubstantial
Invisibility
Item of Power
Light Armour

APPROPRIATE ATTRIBUTES

Magic
Mechanical Genius
Mind Control
Mind Shield
Organizational Ties
Personal Gear
Place of Power
Precognition
Regeneration
Reincarnation
Sensors
Servant
Shield
Sixth Sense
Special Defense
Special Movement
Speed
Spirit Ward
Stealth
Swarm
Telepathy
Teleport
Transmutation
Unique Character Attribute
Weapon Attack

APPROPRIATE DEFECTS

Ageism
Attack Restriction
Awkward
Cannot Talk
Conditional Ownership
Easily Distracted
Girl/Guy Magnet
Inept Combat
Magical Restrictions
Marked
Nemesis
Not So Fast
Not So Strong
Not So Tough
Owned by a Megacorp
Physically Unappealing
Phobia
Recurring Nightmares
Red Tape
Restricted Path
Sensory Impairment
Significant Other
Skeleton in the Closet
Special Requirement
Unique Character Defect
Unskilled
Vulnerability
Wanted

SERIAL EXPERIMENTS LAIN SKILL COSTS FOR BESM

SKILL	COST
Acrobatics	2
Animal Training	1
Architecture	2
Artisan	1
Biological Sciences	3
Boating	1
Burglary	2
Business Management	2
Computers	5
Controlled Breathing	1
Cooking	1
Cultural Arts	2
Demolitions	2
Disguise	2
Driving	1
Electronics	4
Forgery	3
Gaming	1

SKILL	COST
Interrogation	3
Intimidation	4
Law	3
Linguistics	2
Mechanics	4
Medical	2
Military Sciences	2
Navigation	2
Performing Arts	2
Physical Sciences	3
Piloting	1
Poisons	2
Police Sciences	3
Riding	1
Seduction	2
Sleight of Hand	2
Social Sciences	2
Sports	1

SKILL	COST
Stealth	4
Swimming	1
Urban Tracking	4
Visual Arts	1
Wilderness Survival	1
Wilderness Tracking	1
Writing	1
COMBAT SKILL	COST
Archery	1
Gun Combat	2
Heavy Weapons	1
Melee Attack	2
Melee Defense	2
Ranged Defense	2
Thrown Weapons	2
Unarmed Attack	2
Unarmed Defense	2

PERSONAL GEAR

MUNDANE ITEMS

Bicycle
Books
CDs
CD Portable Player
Cigarettes
Clothing
Concert or Event Tickets
Cosmetics
DVDs
Hand-Held Video Game Unit
Office/School Supplies
Pager
Sports Equipment
Standard Video Game
Telephone
Television
Toys (Stuffed Animals)
Train/Bus Pass

MINOR ITEMS

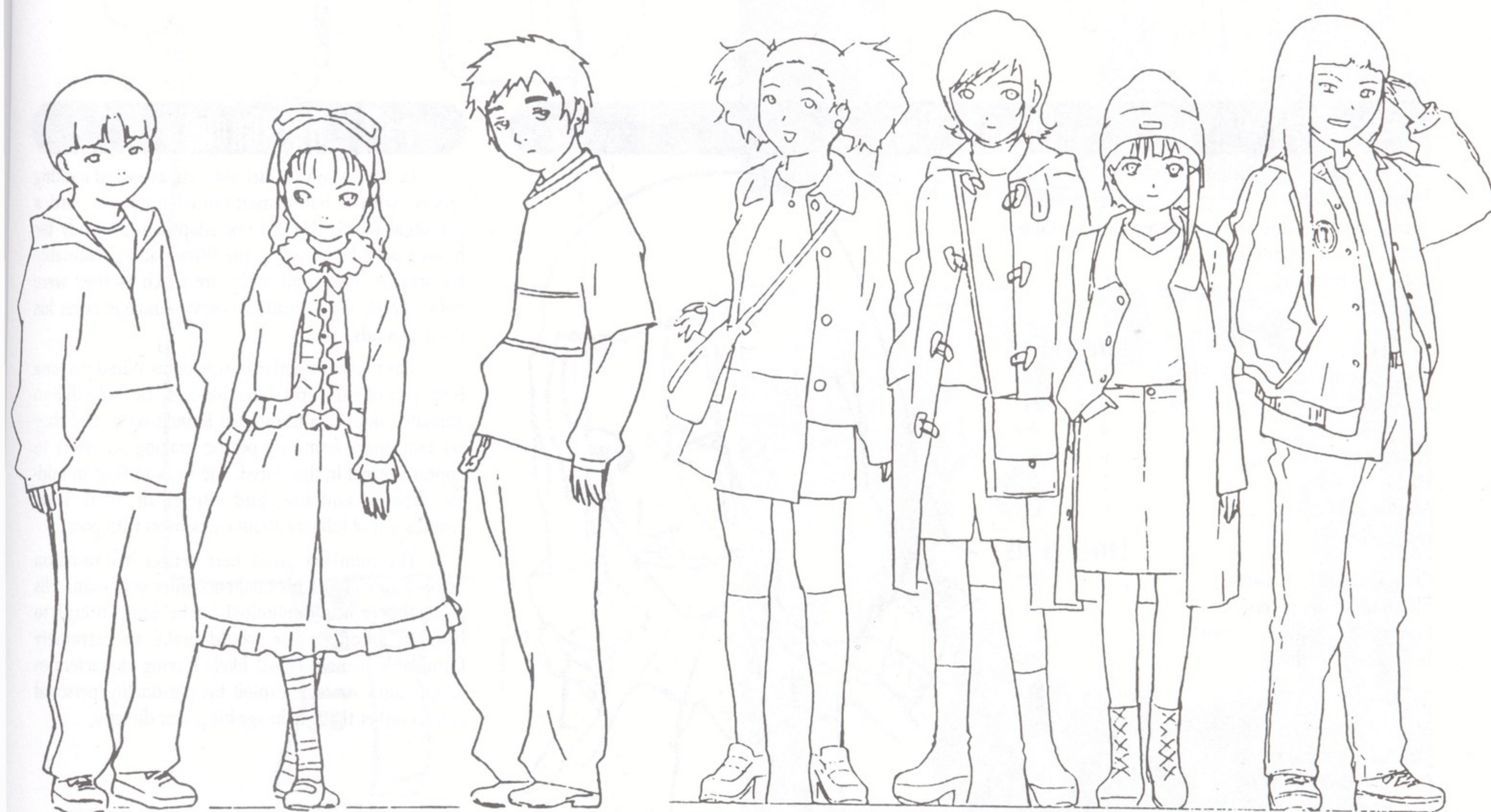
Accela (1 Dose)
Apartment
Car or Motorcycle
High-End Navi (Counts as 2 Items)
Low-End Navi
Mace or Pepper Spray
Navi Programs: Illegal (Counts as 2 Items)
Navi Programs: Legal
Phantoma Game
Portable Navi
Small Business
VR Goggles

MAJOR ITEMS

Handgun (especially in Japan)
Holographic Display Stations
House
Mecha Goggles
Psyche Chip
Technical Schematics: IPv7 or K.I.D.S. System

MAIN CHARACTERS

In some ways it is an exercise in futility to stat-out characters in *Serial Experiments lain*, since some are effectively omnipotent and others virtually automata. The write-ups herein emphasize characters' particular strengths and weaknesses for dramatic potential. Even though the principal characters can do everything, in practice they either do not, or they have not yet learned how. Their moments of haste and hesitation provide the basis for the numbers recommended here.



LAIN IWAKURA

Body 3 Mind 4 Soul 12
 Health Points 75 Energy Points 120
 Attack Combat Value 6 Defense Combat Value 4
 Total Character Points 90
 Total Skill Points 70

Attributes

Dimensional Portal
 Dynamic Sorcery
 Energy Bonus
 Highly Skilled
 Mechanical Genius
 Personal Gear
 Place of Power

Level	Points
6	24
6	24
4	4
5	5
4	8
4	4
6	6

Skills

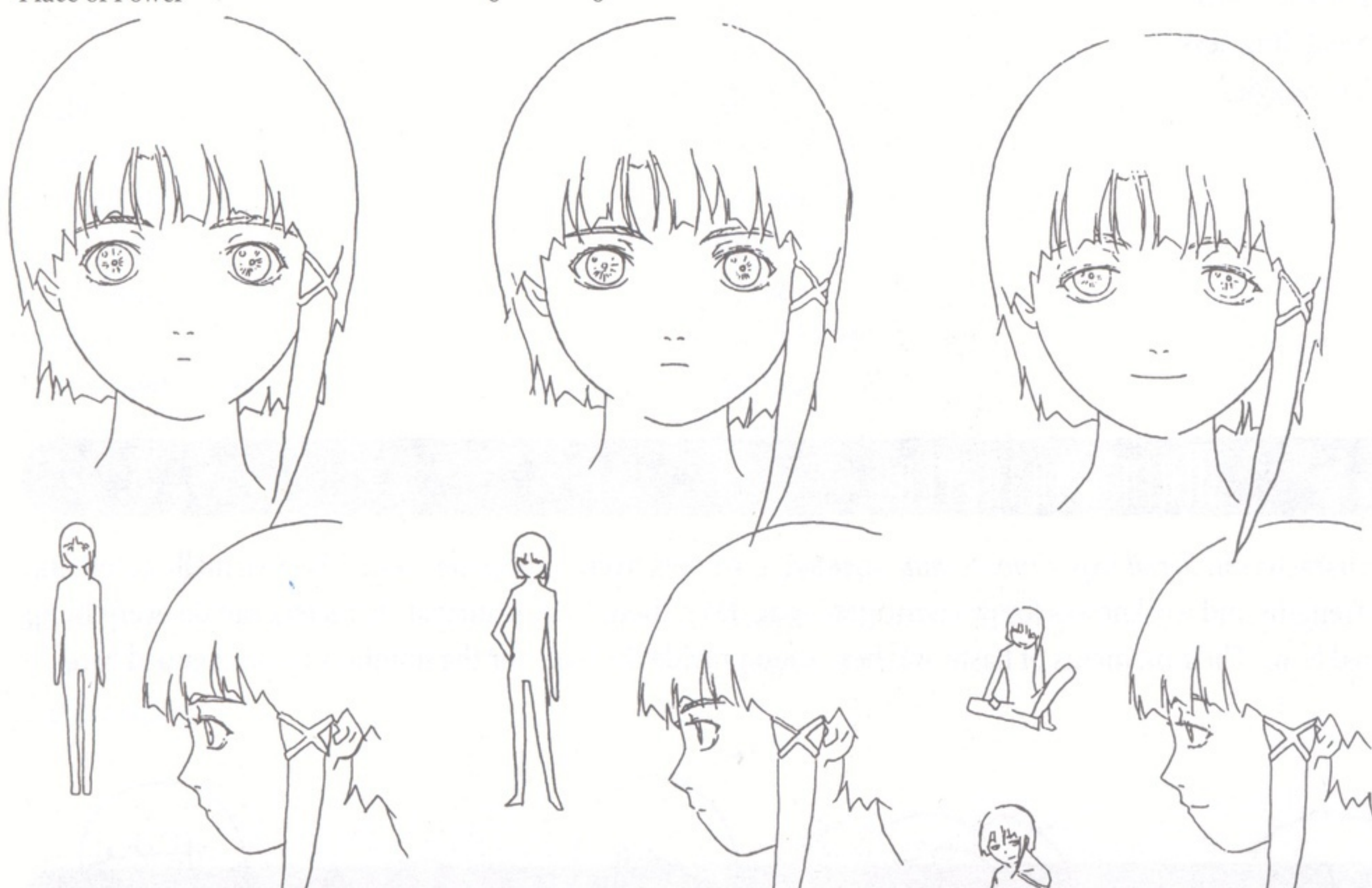
Computers (Networks)
 Electronics (Computers)
 Intimidation (Wired)

Level	Points
6	30
6	24
4	16

Defects

Magical Restrictions (Only with Wired)
 Nemesis (Masami Eiri)

BP
2
2



BACKGROUND

On the outside, Lain is an eighth-grade schoolgirl, noticeable mostly for her scruffy haircut and the two ribbons wrapped around her longest bang. She wears a school uniform during the day, conservative comfortable clothes after hours, and her favourite teddy bear sleep-suit with bear hood at night. She speaks quietly, and seldom laughs, though a quiet smile emerges when she is happy. The Lain of the Wired appears the same, but she carries herself differently. She favours current fashions, speaks with greater self-confidence, and has the proverbial flash of fire to her eyes. This Lain cares for the world around her and is not afraid to voice her opinions. The wild Lain is more akin to a dirty old man than a young girl. She delights at others' secrets and misfortunes, she's harsh, brash, unconcerned for feelings, and leers like a pervert.

The statistics here reflect Lain's self-understanding as of about Layer 11, when she knows her history and has mastered her potential. She is a near fusion of her real-world self and the confident Wired Lain. She is ready to confront Masami Eiri (even though she probably does not really feel ready). After the confrontation, her statistics become less relevant: they can be anything all she wants them to be in practice. The version presented here reflects a formidable Lain who would nonetheless treat others as equals rather than as their absolute superior.

MASAMI EIRI

Body 4 Mind 7 Soul 12
 Health Points 80 Energy Points 135
 Attack Combat Value 7 Defense Combat Value 5
 Total Character Points 95
 Total Skill Points 90

Attributes

Dimensional Portal
 Dynamic Sorcery
 Energy Bonus
 Flunkies (the Knights)
 Highly Skilled
 Mechanical Genius

Level	Points
6	24
6	24
4	4
6	6
7	7
6	12

Skills

Computers (A.I., Networks)
 Electronics (Computers)
 Forgery (Electronic Documents)
 Intimidation (Wired)

Level	Points
6	31
6	24
5	15
5	20

Defects

Magical Restrictions (Only with Wired)
 Wanted (Tachibana)
 Unique Defect (Bodiless)

BP
2
1
2

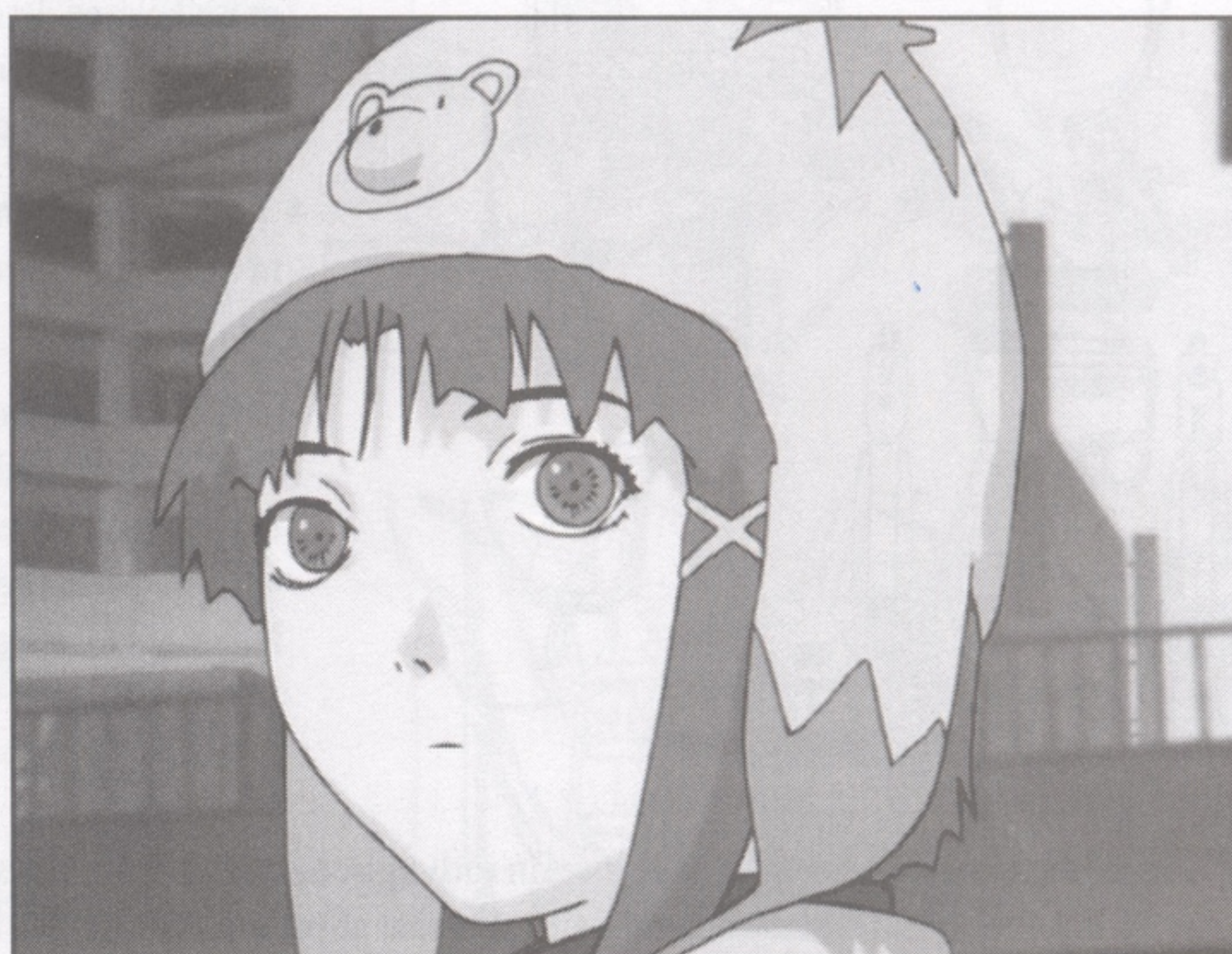
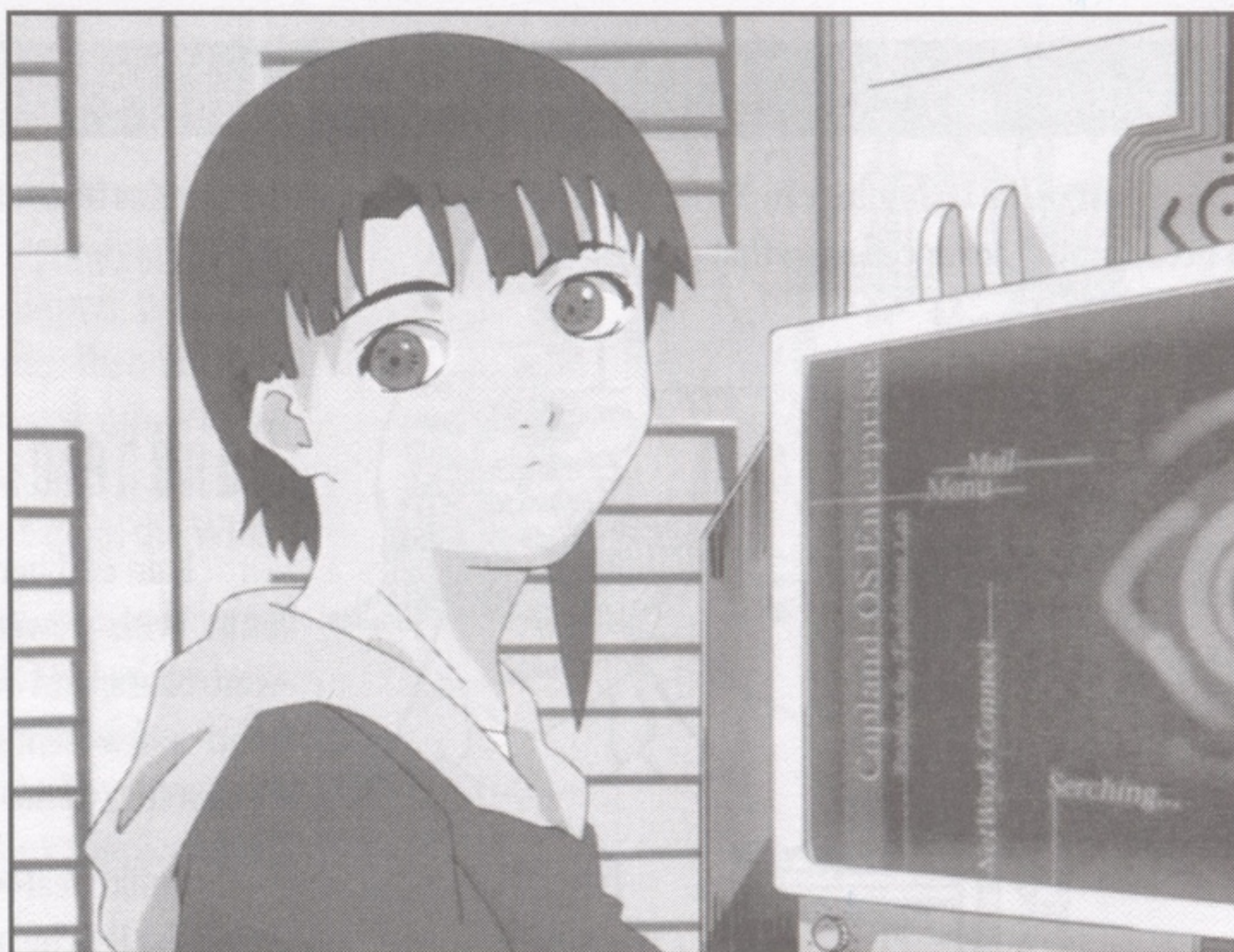
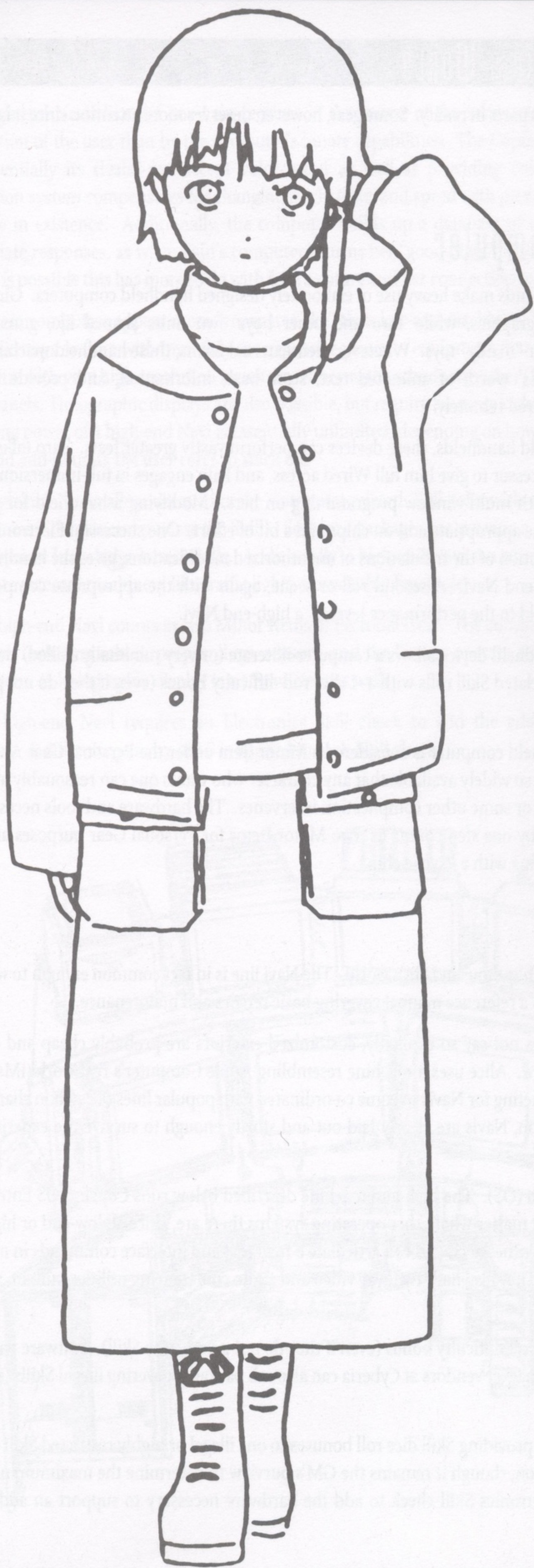


BACKGROUND

In life, Masami Eiri was an awkward-looking fellow, with a badly maintained crew cut and a perpetual scowl. He did not adopt a super-body for himself once he moved to the Wired, and presumably his scrawny chest and limbs are much as they were before death. By indications, heavy bandages cover his death wounds.

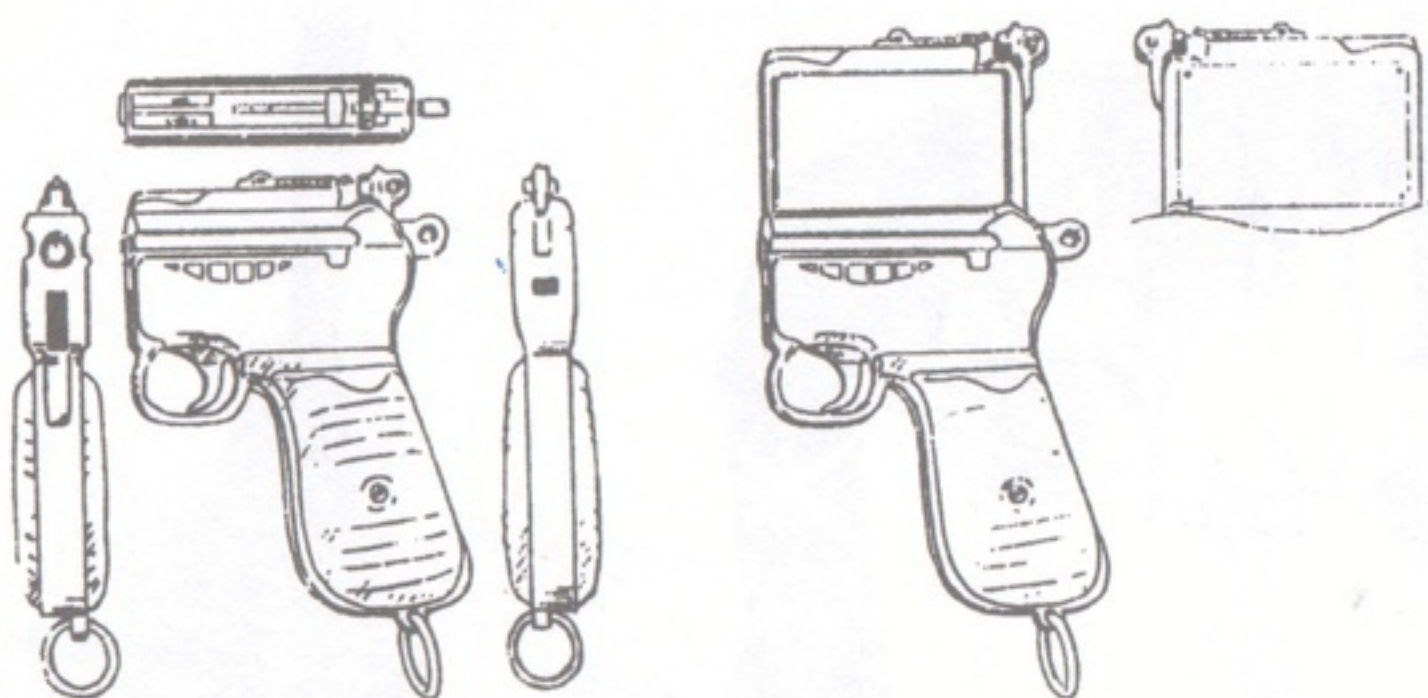
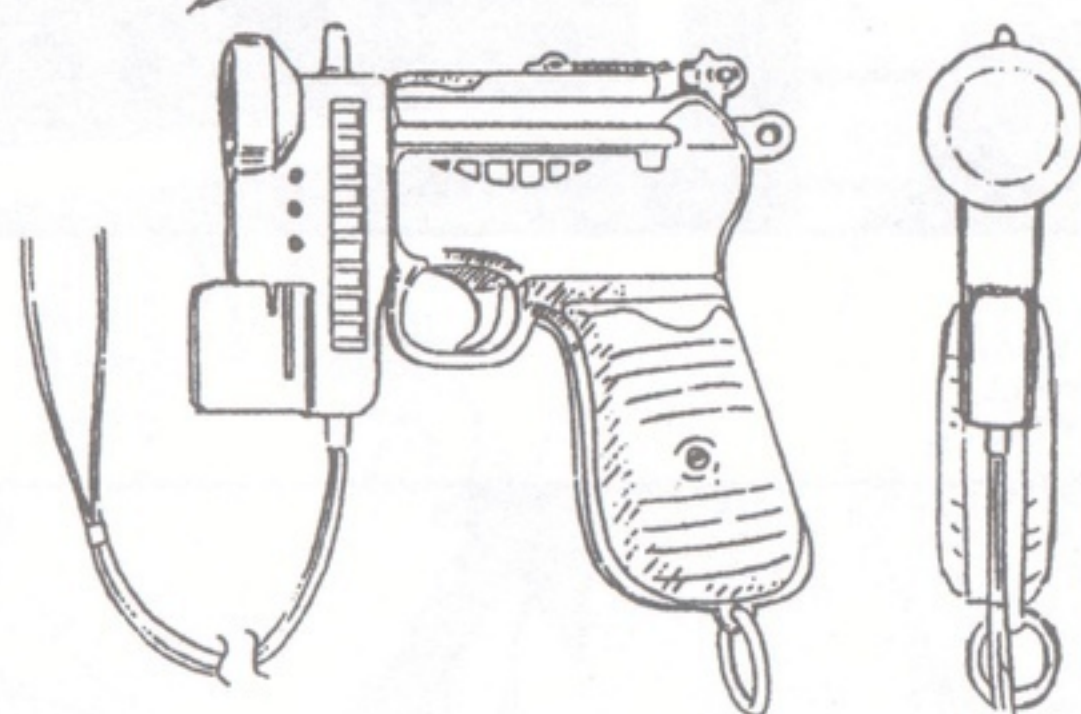
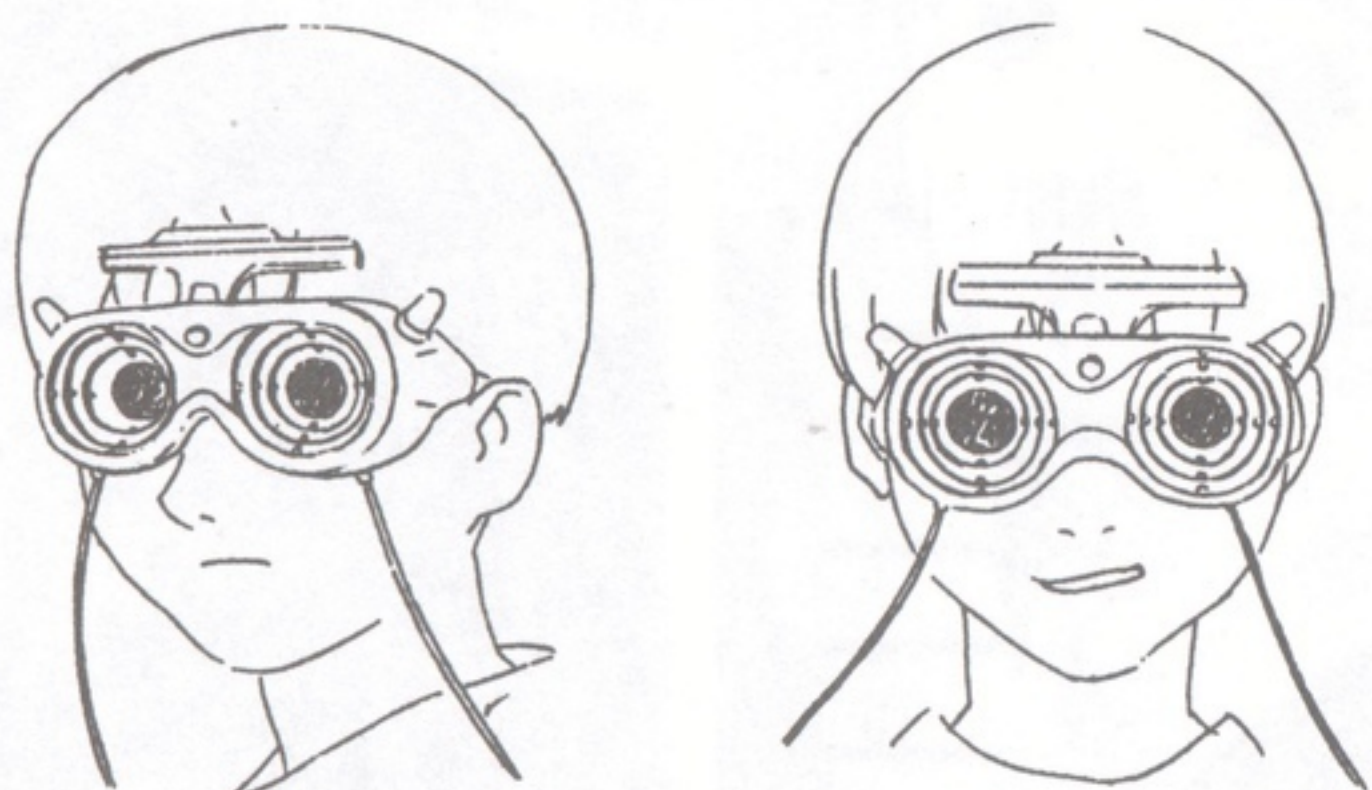
The most distinctive feature of his Wired persona is the pair of red marks under his eyes. He looks like an animated doll, or a traditional Kabuki actor, and they set him apart from any person making an effort to appear normal in the Wired. He loves to float in mid-air, fade in and out, and engage in other feats reminiscent of folklore about encounters with gods.

The numbers given here reflect his situation before Layer 11 and his final encounter with Lain. His power is in principle unlimited, but he cannot bring it to bear all at once. He would make an extremely formidable nemesis, most likely forcing characters to adopt Lain's strategy: exploit his personality/personal defects rather than challenge his power directly.



GADGETS OF LAIN'S WORLD

Most of the technology in *Serial Experiments lain* is just the same as its counterparts in reality. Some gear, however, deserves more attention since it is within a decade more advanced than that of present day.



Handheld Computer

Lain and her friends make heavy use of elaborately designed handheld computers. Girls have units with flowery graphics, while Taro and other boys own units shaped like guns, game controllers, and other “manly” toys. Whatever their external forms, these handheld machines can send a few sentences’ worth of animated text, store basic information, and provide limited connection to the Wired remotely.

Unlike real-world handhelds, these devices can perform vastly greater feats. Taro talks about using the Psyche processor to give him full Wired access, and Lain engages in full-immersion Wired exploration along with multi-window programming on hers. Modifying a handheld for greater capability requires the appropriate add-on chips and a bit of effort. One successful Electronics roll, or well-played description of the tribulations of unauthorized modifications, gives the handheld the capabilities of a low-end Navi. A second roll or scene, again with the appropriate components, upgrades the handheld to the performance level of a high-end Navi.

A standard handheld device allows a computer-illiterate (or very minimally skilled) character to make Computer-related Skill rolls with a -1 dice roll difficulty bonus (even if they do not possess the Skill).

A typical handheld computer is considered a Minor Item under the Personal Gear Attribute. They are presumably so widely available that any character who wants one can reasonably afford it unless abject poverty or some other complication intervenes. The hardware and tools necessary to upgrade a handheld by one step counts as two Minor Items for Personal Gear purposes and one Major Item if upgrading with a Psyche chip.

Low-End Navi

The simple desktop computer Lain uses in early episodes seems more or less ubiquitous in Lain’s world. The Navi line is in fact common enough to warrant coverage in junior-high textbooks on computers, so that anyone in eighth grade has a reference manual covering basic repairs and maintenance.

Navis come in a wide range of colours and shapes, and while the series does not say so explicitly, customized exteriors are probably cheap and readily available. Lain’s first Navi is a cherry red with a thin monitor and simple keyboard. Alice uses a machine resembling Apple Computer’s real-world iMac with presumably comparable capabilities. It would be in keeping with the Japanese marketing for Navis to come co-ordinated with popular lines of cartoon characters, currently fashionable styles in clothes, and other domestic possessions. In addition, Navis are clearly laid out and sturdy enough to survive the experimental tinkering of eighth-grade would-be hackers.

Lain’s computer identifies itself as running Communication Operating System (OS). The high-end machine described below runs Copland OS Enterprise, possibly a Tachibana General Laboratories subsidiary. For this purpose, it does not matter what other operating systems there are, since all low-end or high-end computers have roughly similar features. Low-end Navis have sophisticated voice synthesizers, and can articulate e-mail text and interface commands in more or less appropriate tones while displaying unfolding messages with clever animation. They also have two-way video and audio conferencing utilities built in, so they can act as basic videophones if the user has a high-speed connection to the Wired.

Low-end Navis allow users to make Computer-related Skill rolls with a -2 dice roll difficulty bonus (even if they do not possess the Skill). Software packages can provide a -1 or -2 dice roll bonus to appropriate knowledge-based Skills. Black-market vendors at Cyberia can also sell packages covering illegal Skills (such as Burglary), but at a cost.

A low-end Navi is a Minor Item of Personal Gear, while each software package providing Skill dice roll bonuses to one illegal or highly restricted Skill counts as another. A low-end Navi can run multiple software packages without modification, though it remains the GM’s purview to determine the maximum number of programs the system can handle before requiring upgrade. It requires an Electronics Skill check to add the hardware necessary to support an additional package. A difficulty penalty of +6 is applied to each Skill check.

High-End Navi

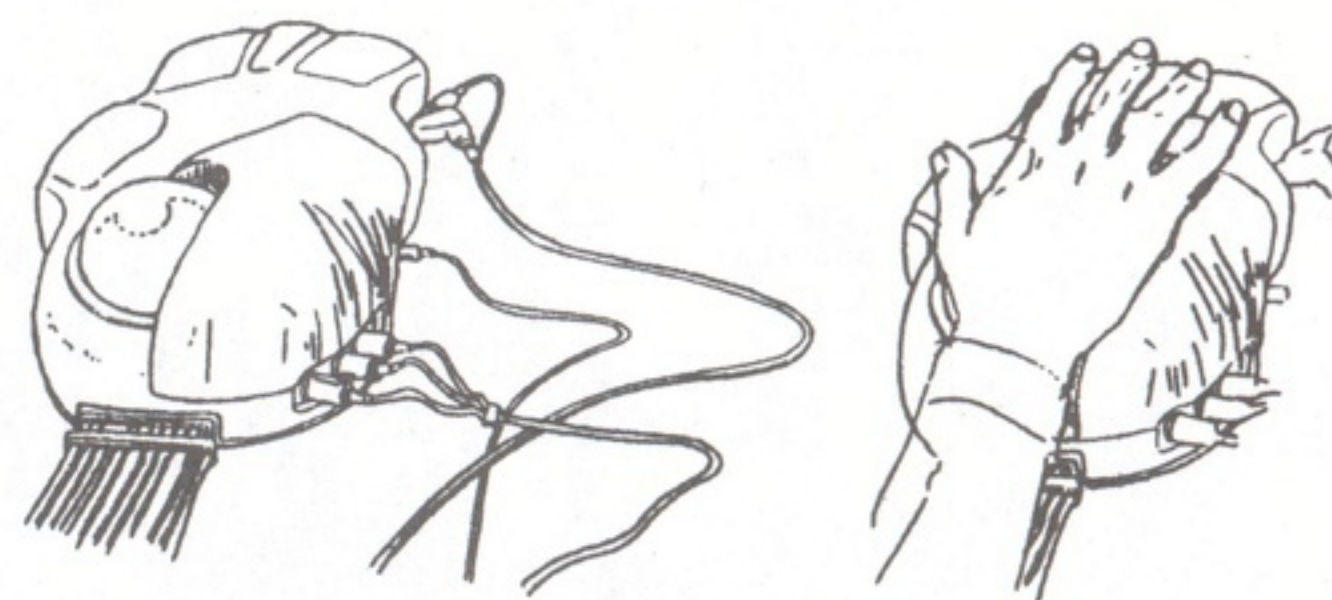
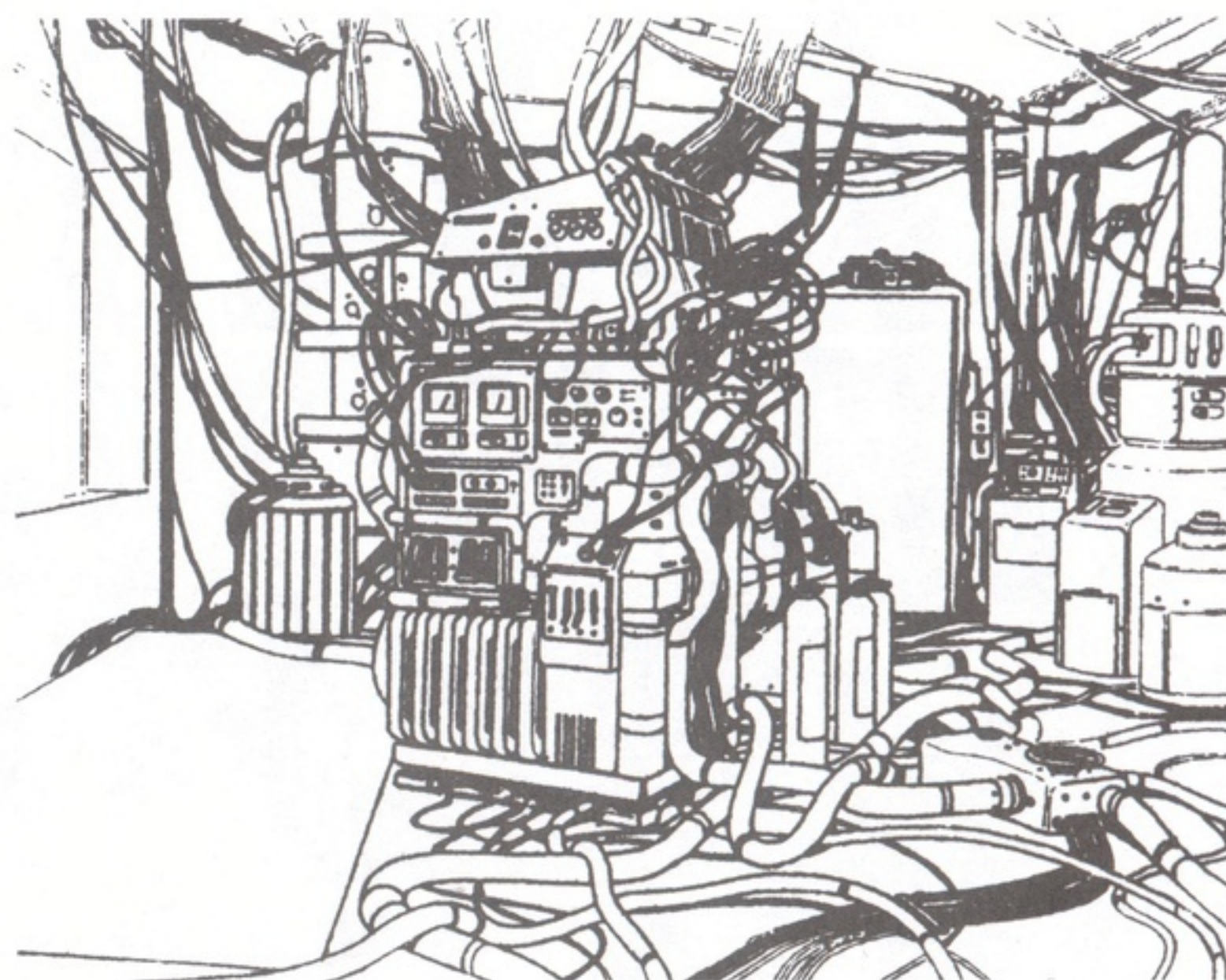
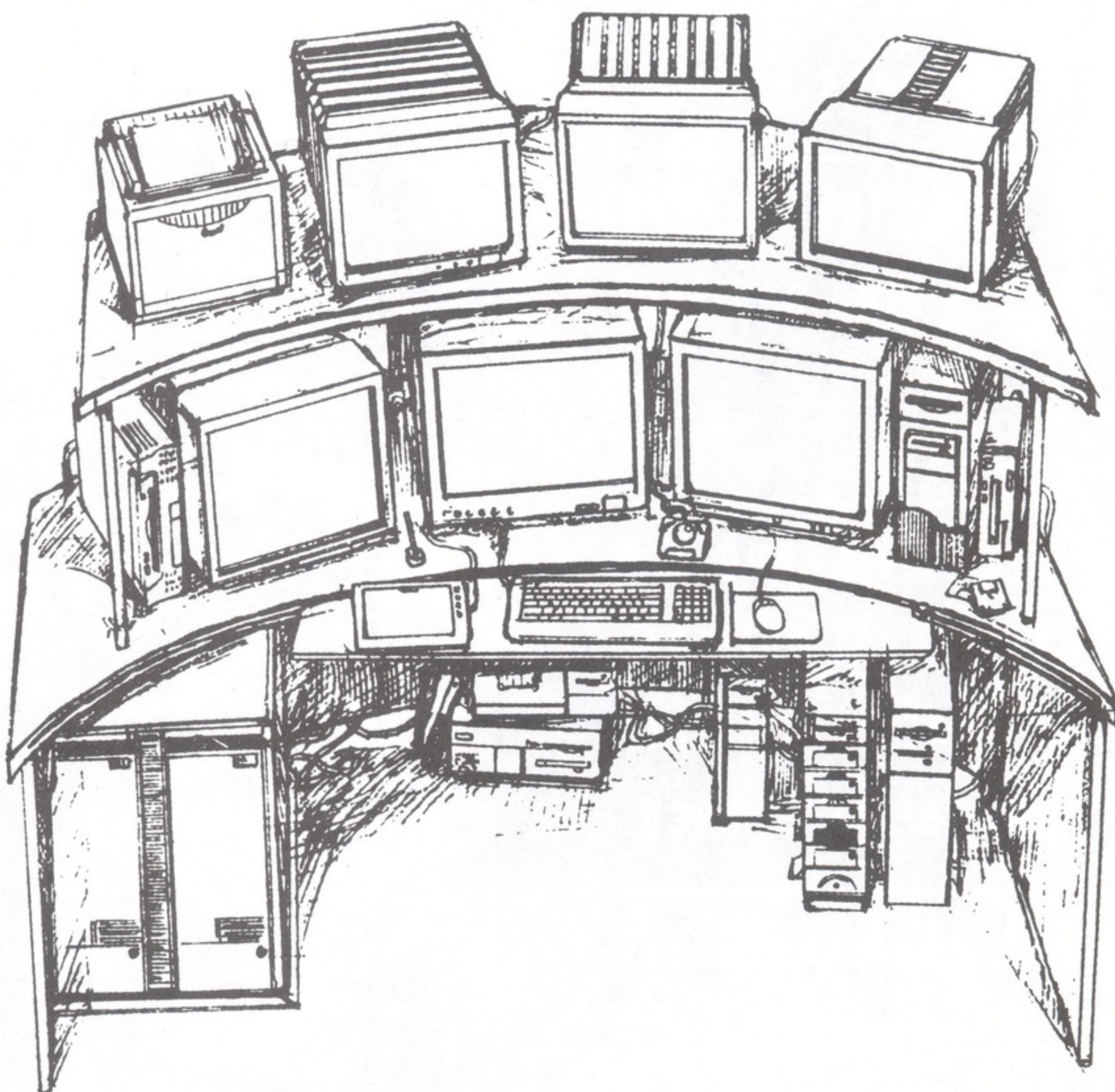
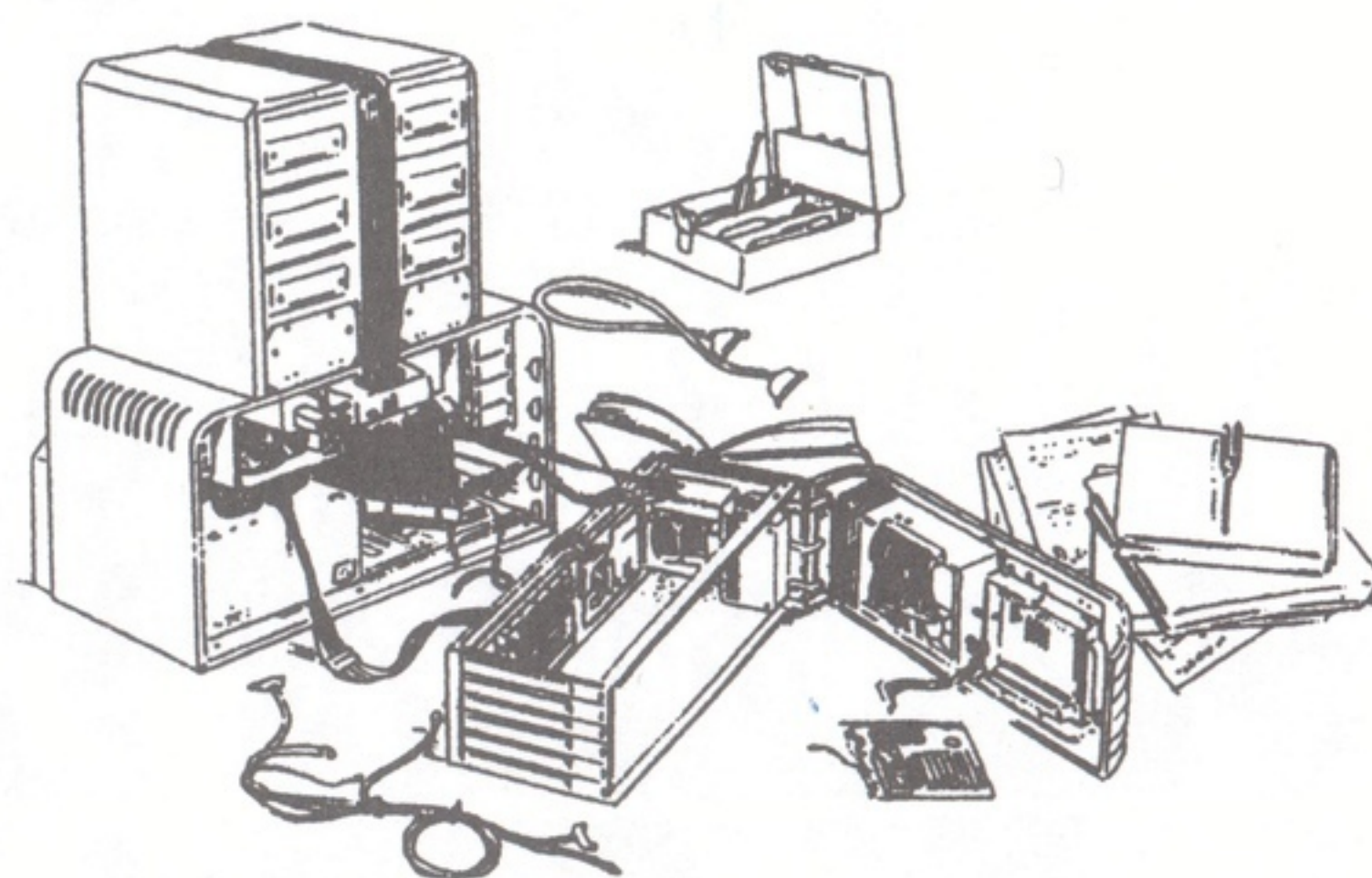
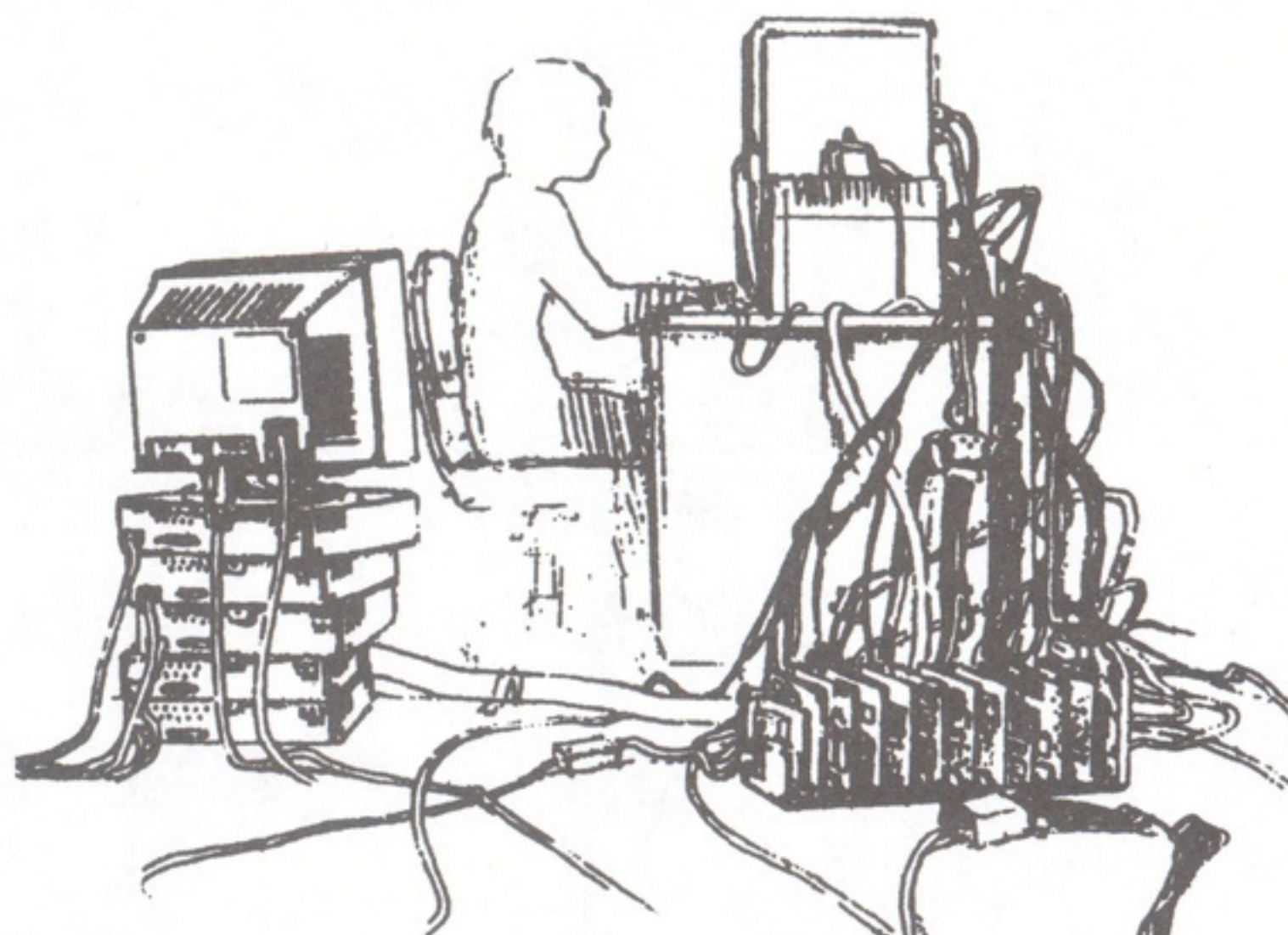
High-end Navis like the one Lain receives in the course of the series are limited more by the imagination of the user than by the computer's innate capabilities. The Copland Operating System, and potentially its rivals, can accept voice input as well as providing voice output; the voice-recognition system compensates for changing pitch, tone, and speed with greater ease than anything currently in existence. Additionally, the computer builds up a database of cues and can generate appropriate responses, as when Lain's computer returns her "good-night" with one of its own. Then again, it is possible this has more to do with Lain's nature and her connection to the God in the Wired.

These computers appear more "computer-like" than low-end machines. They are not designed to look like toys or fit in with toys: they are expensive pieces of equipment that look like serious tools. They come with very high-resolution monitors, either with cathode ray tubes (like televisions) or flat-screen panels. Holographic displays are also possible, but require far more tinkering. The storage and processing power of a high-end Navi is essentially unlimited, depending on how many supplementary boxes and add-in units the user cares to stack on.

High-end Navis allow users to make Computer-related Skill rolls with a -3 dice roll difficulty bonus (even if they do not possess the Skill). Software packages can provide a -1 or -2 dice roll bonus to appropriate knowledge-based Skills. Additionally, a high-end Navi can run the software necessary to operate external machinery like traffic lights or assembly-line tools.

A high-end Navi counts as two Minor Items of Personal Gear. The combination of software and hardware, including cables, proper plugs, sensors, and the like, to operate an external machine is a Minor Item. A holographic display is a Minor Item as well.

A high-end Navi requires an Electronics Skill check to add the additional hardware and programs. A difficulty penalty of +6 is applied to each Skill check.



MECHA-GOGGLES

The men in black observing Lain wear sophisticated goggles that provide them with a number of augmented abilities.

These particular goggles may be the work of Tachibana General Laboratories researchers, but any major governmental spy service or private conspiracy could develop comparable devices.

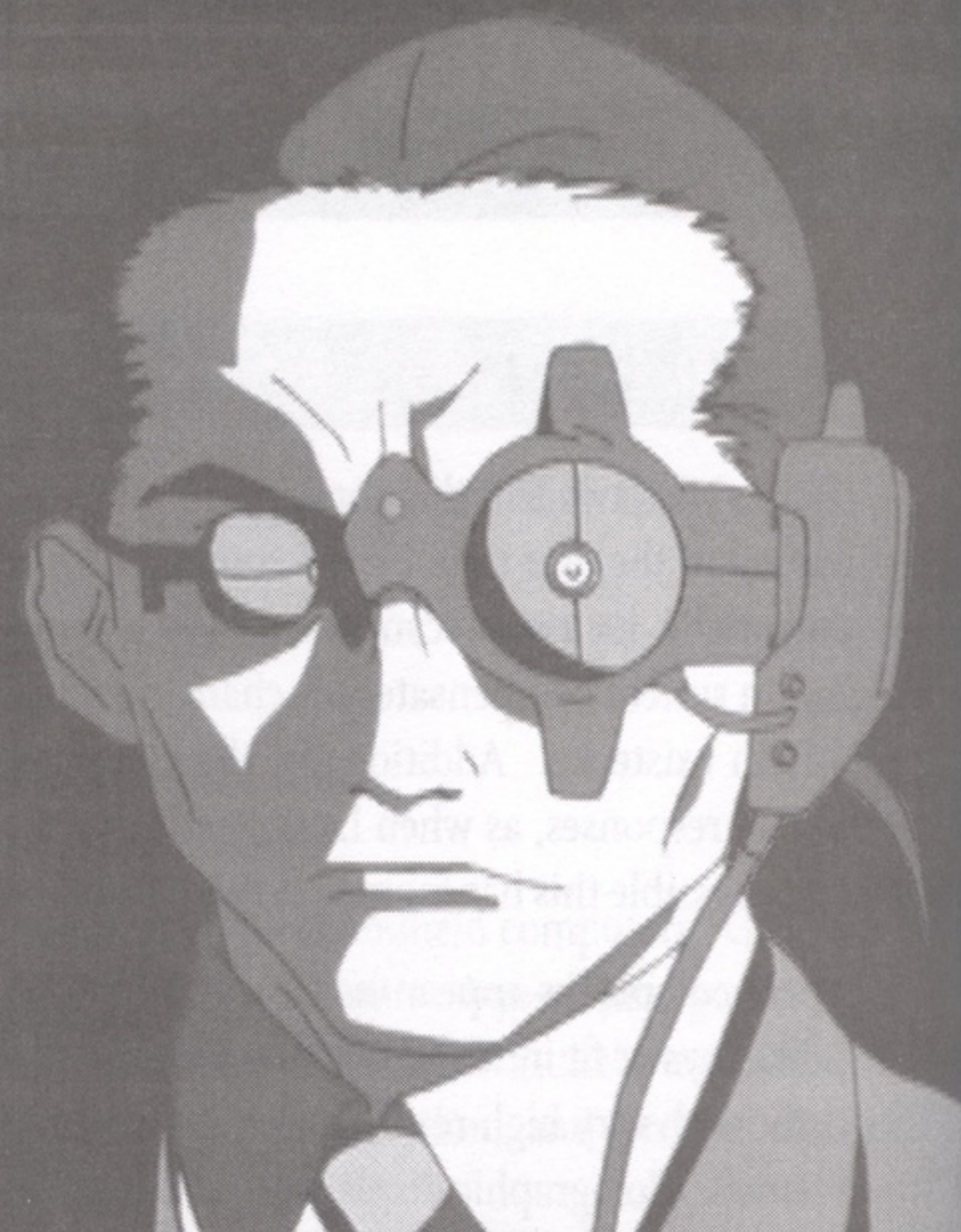
The goggles have built-in power supplies, whether they recharge from the user's own biological electricity or use powerful cells batteries.

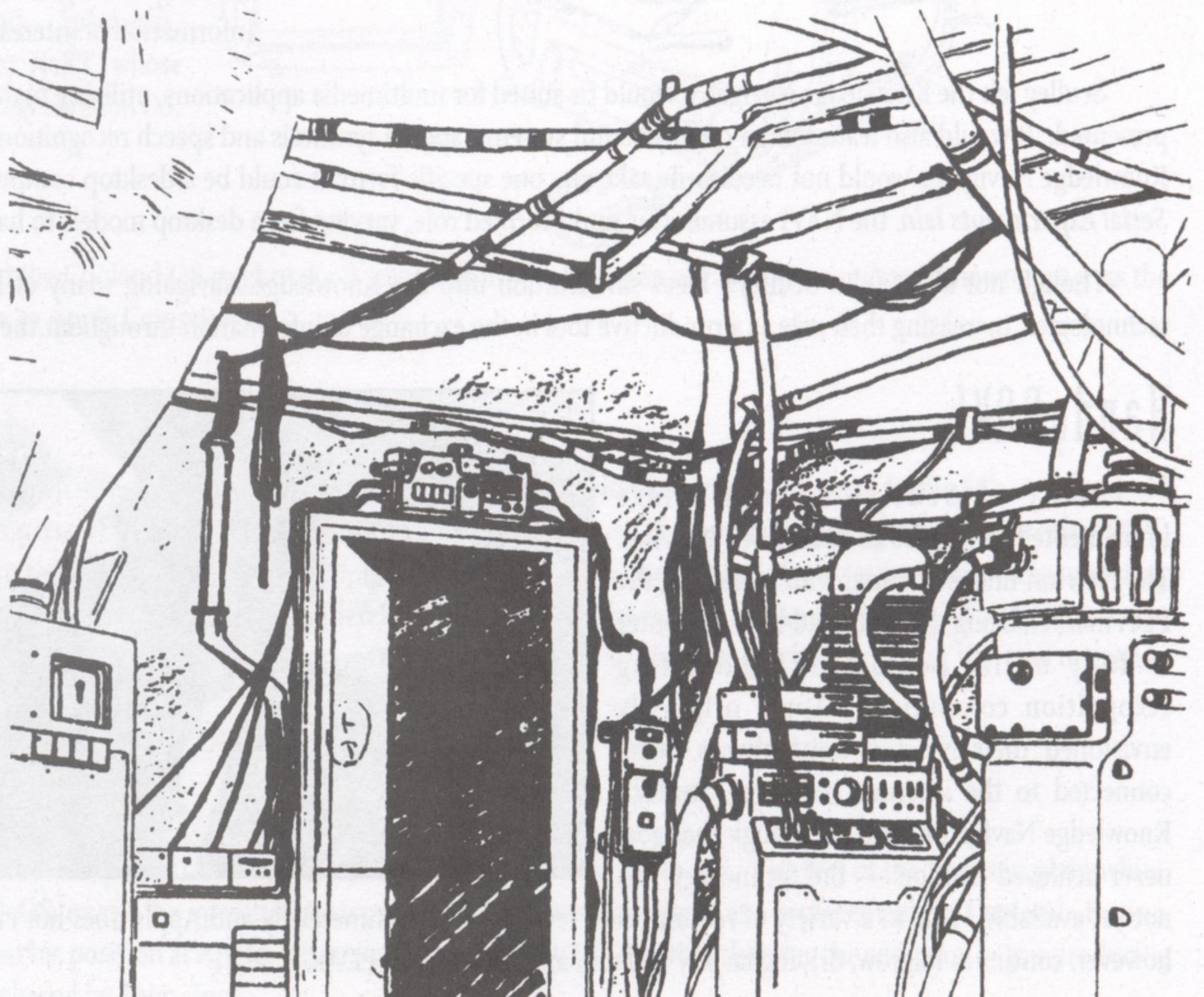
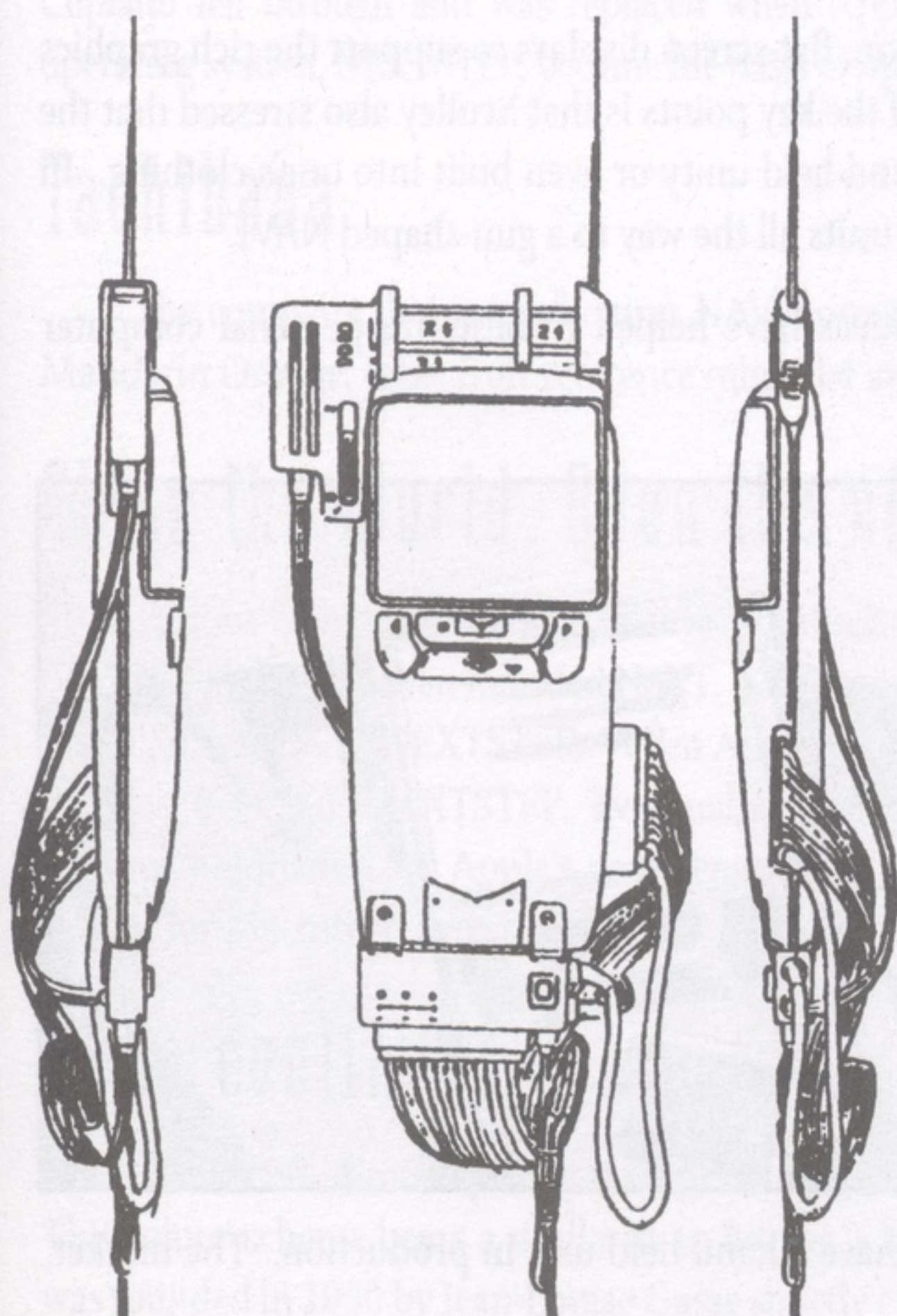
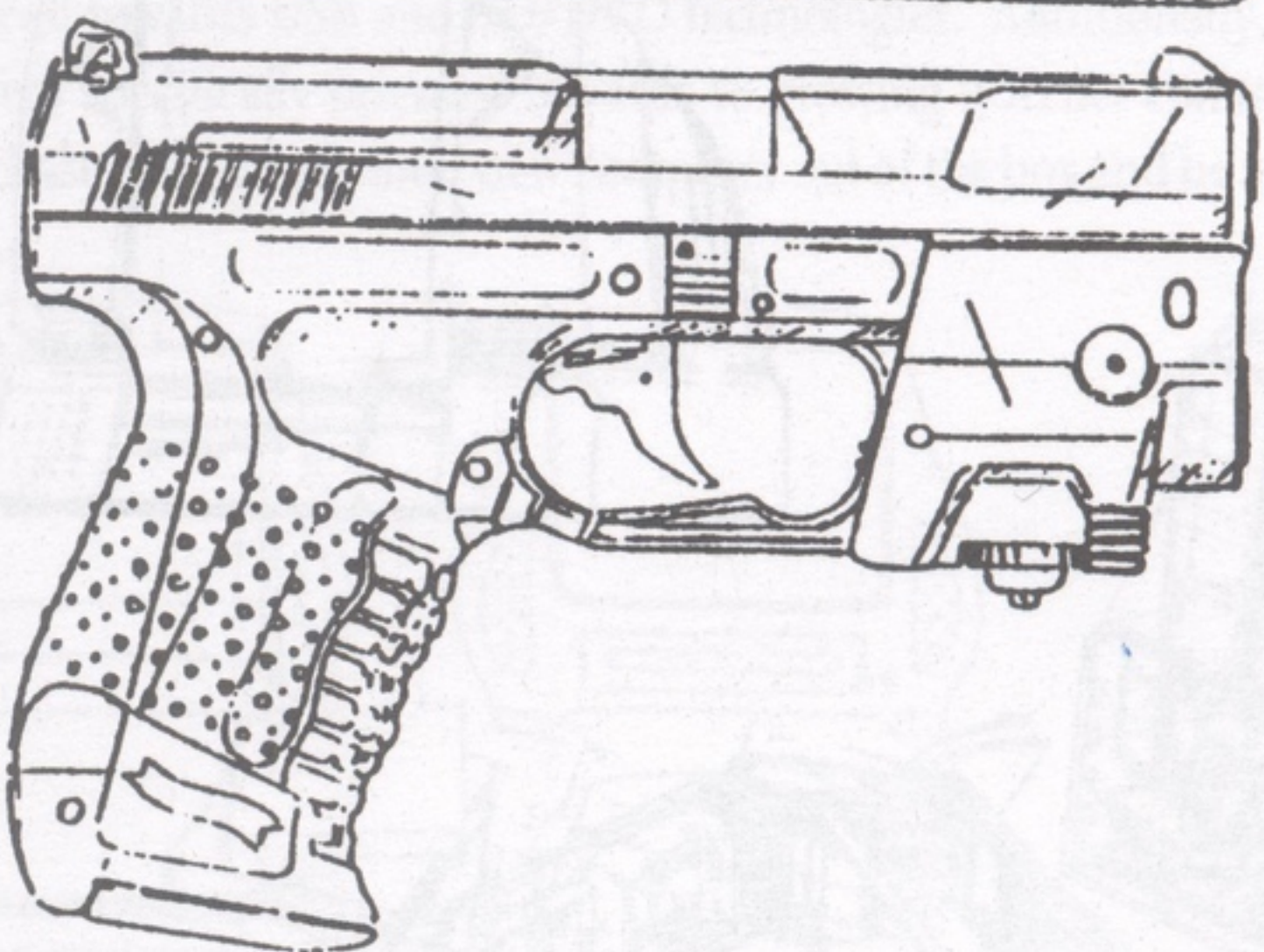
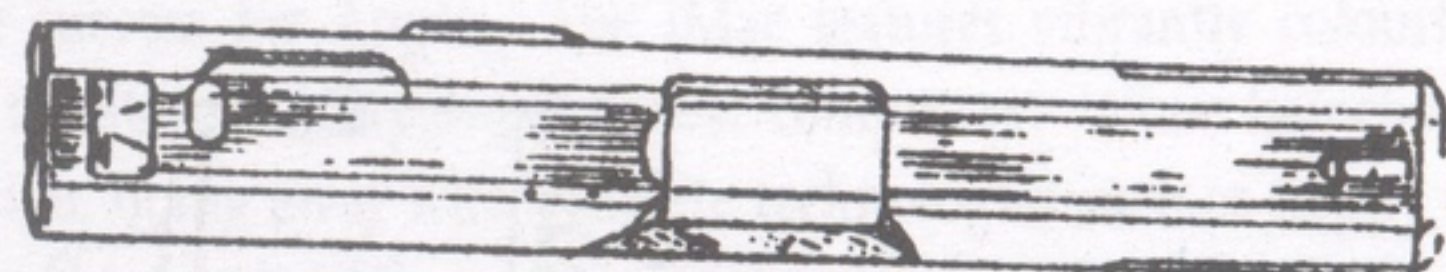
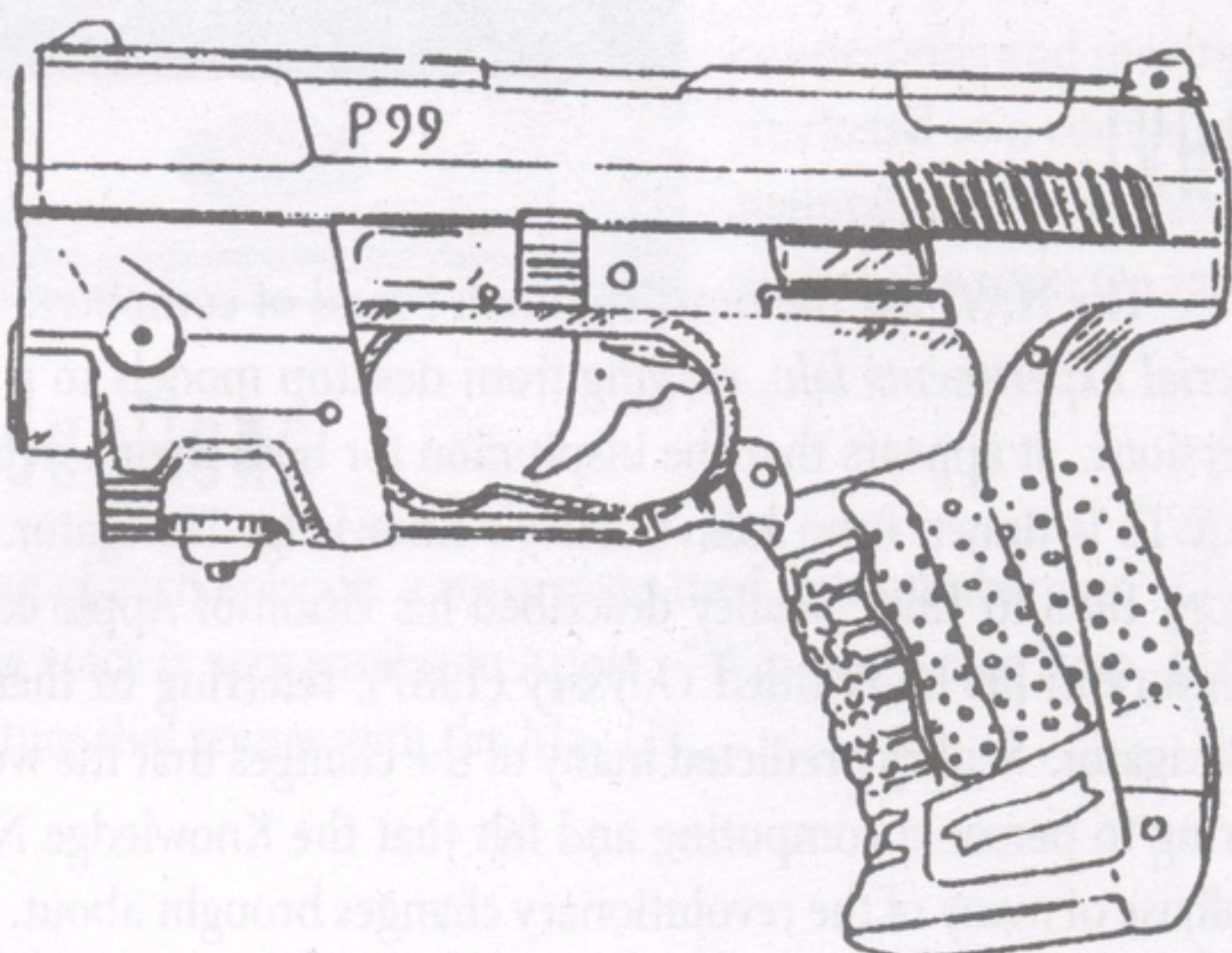
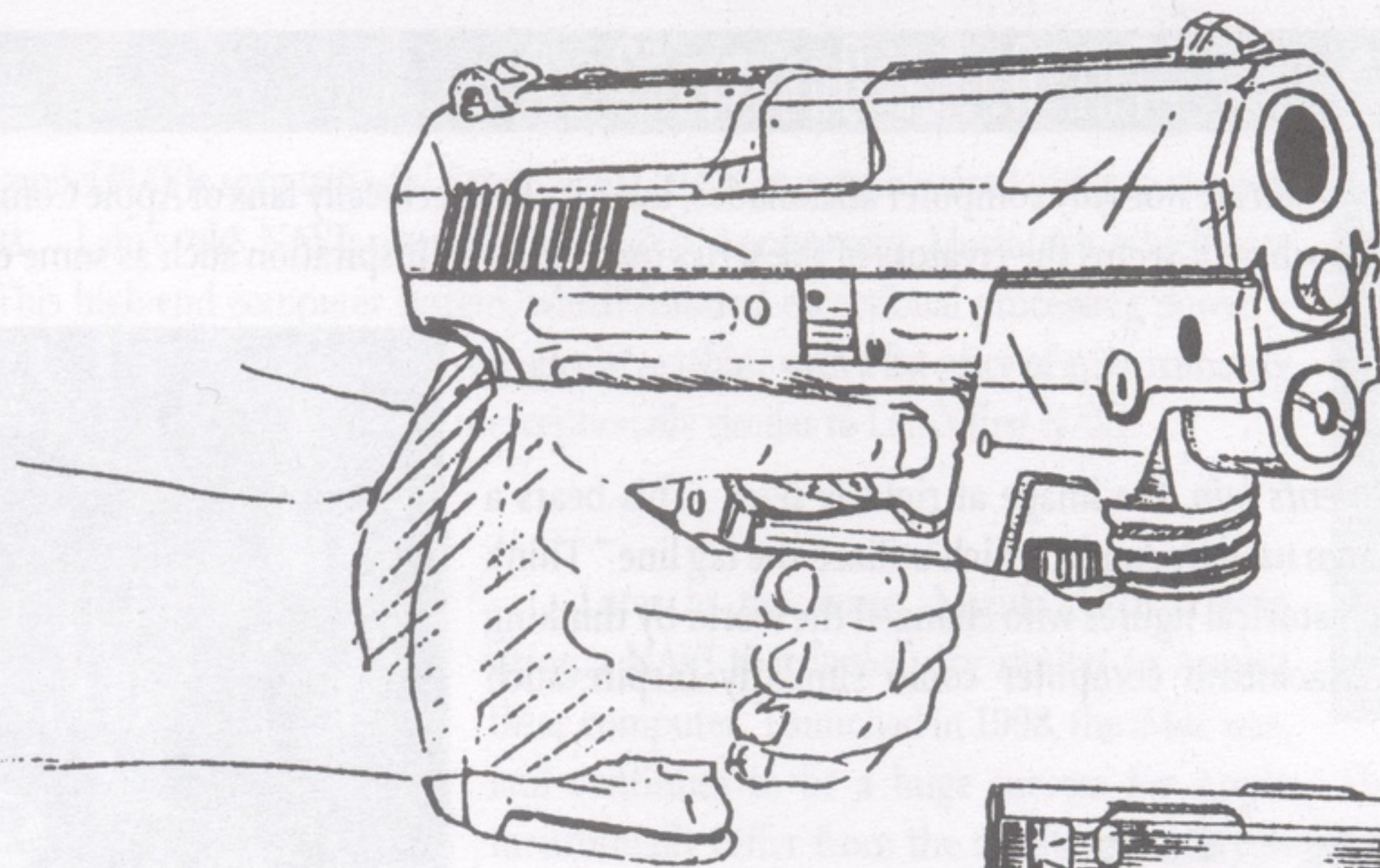
They provide the following Attributes: Gun Bunny Level 2 (Dead Eye, Steady Hand) and Heightened Awareness Level 1.

While the user wears them, the Marked Defect also applies.

Mecha goggles count as a Major Item, and are not available to someone without suitable Organizational Ties, in contact with the manufacturers, or working for an agency.

Independent geniuses can also make them, but these scratch-built versions will require more power and break down more easily.



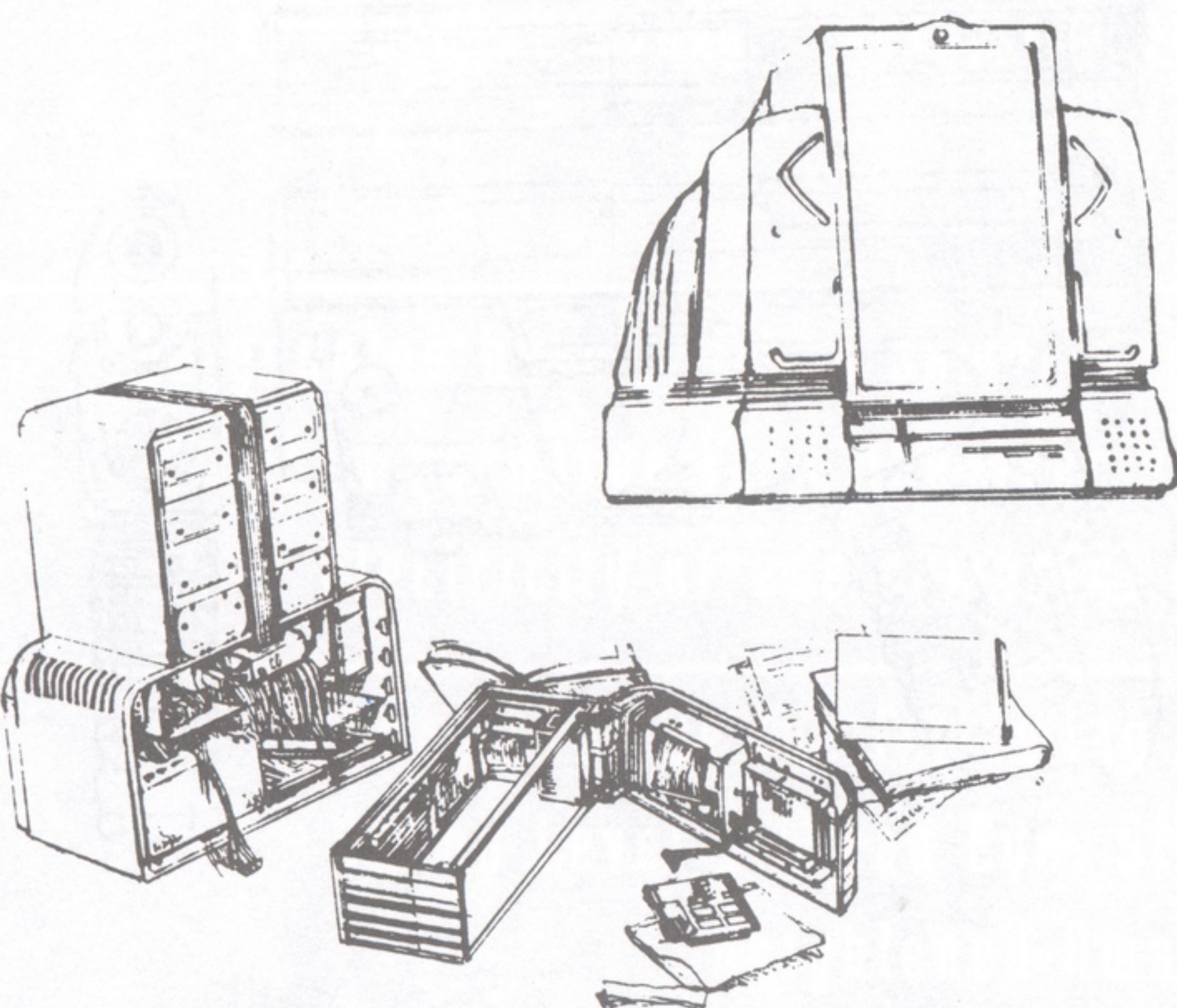


THE APPLE QUESTION?

It appears that the creators of *Serial Experiments lain* are not only computer aficionados, but may be specifically fans of Apple Computers, Inc. While viewing the *lain* series, one will spot several notable instances where it seems the creators of the series used Apple as inspiration such as some of the following:

Think Different

Briefly, during episode #11 of *Serial Experiments lain*, the image at right is seen. This bears a striking resemblance to a recent advertising campaign used by Apple, which utilized the tag line "Think Different." The theme of the campaign focused on historical figures who changed the world by thinking differently, suggesting that the use of Apple's Macintosh computer could similarly inspire such innovative thought.



NAVI

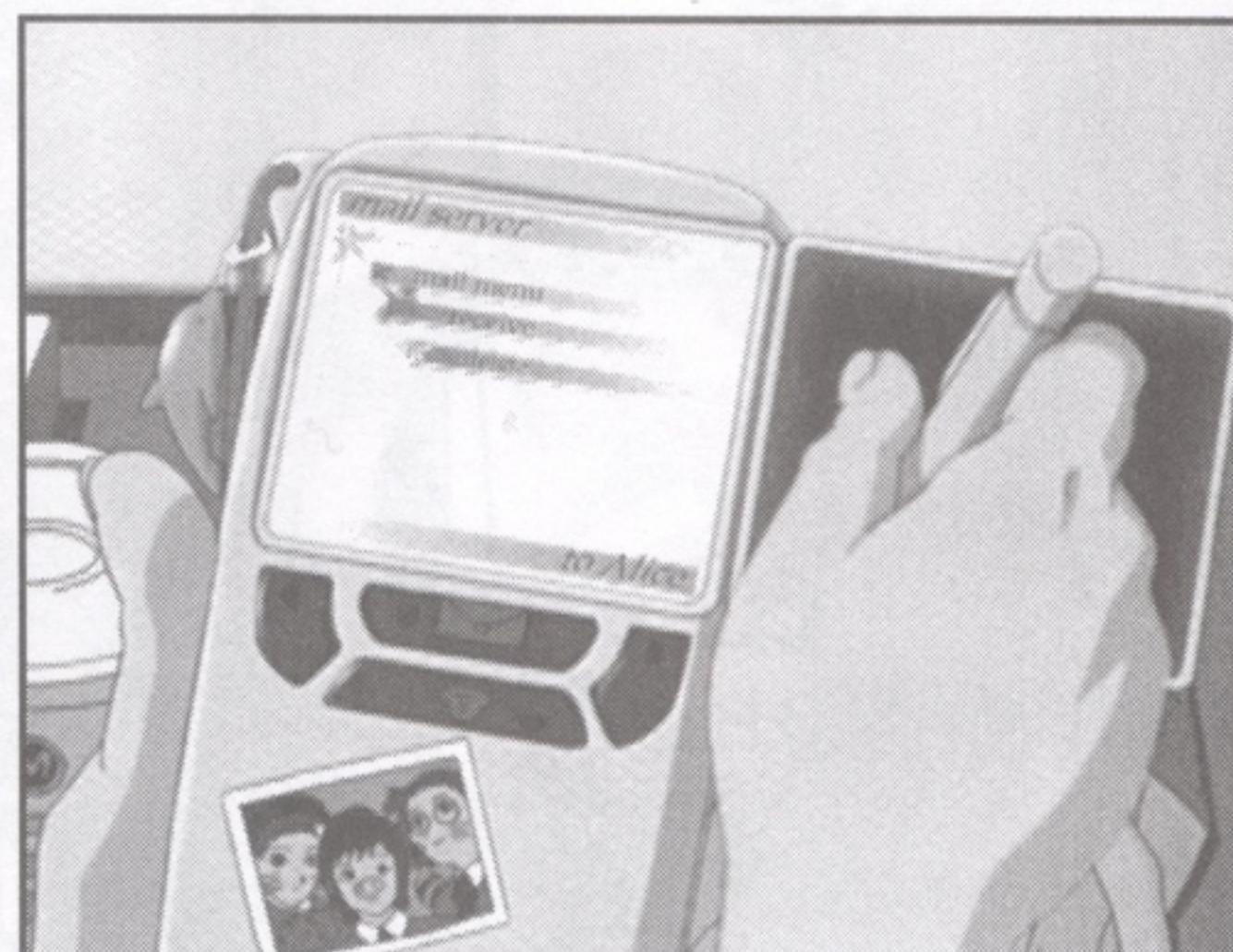
The NAVI are the most common brand of computers used in the world of *Serial Experiments lain*, ranging from desktop models to a variety of hand-held versions. It appears that the inspiration for both the name and the utility of the NAVI's is drawn from John Sculley's Knowledge Navigator. The CEO of Apple from 1983 to 1993, Sculley described his vision of Apple computers in the 21st century in his book titled *Odyssey* (1987), referring to them as the Knowledge Navigator. Sculley predicted many of the changes that the world wide web would bring to personal computing and felt that the Knowledge Navigator would take full use of many of the revolutionary changes brought about. He believed that the computer would allow people to communicate with each other from anywhere in the world, connect to vast, shared hypertext information, and would be capable of utilizing intelligent agents (or artificial intelligences) to actively search out information of interest.

Sculley felt the Knowledge Navigator would be suited for multimedia applications, utilizing high-definition, flat-screen displays to support the rich graphics presented. It would also feature high-quality sound systems, speech synthesis and speech recognition. One of the key points is that Sculley also stressed that the Knowledge Navigator would not necessarily take any one specific form; it could be a desktop computer, a hand-held unit or even built into one's clothing. In *Serial Experiments lain*, the NAVI assumes this multi-formed role, varying from desktop models to hand held units all the way to a gun-shaped NAVI.

Though not all of John Sculley's ideas saw fruition into the Knowledge Navigator, many of his key ideas have helped revolutionize personal computer technologies, increasing their role as a productive tool in the exchange of information throughout the world.

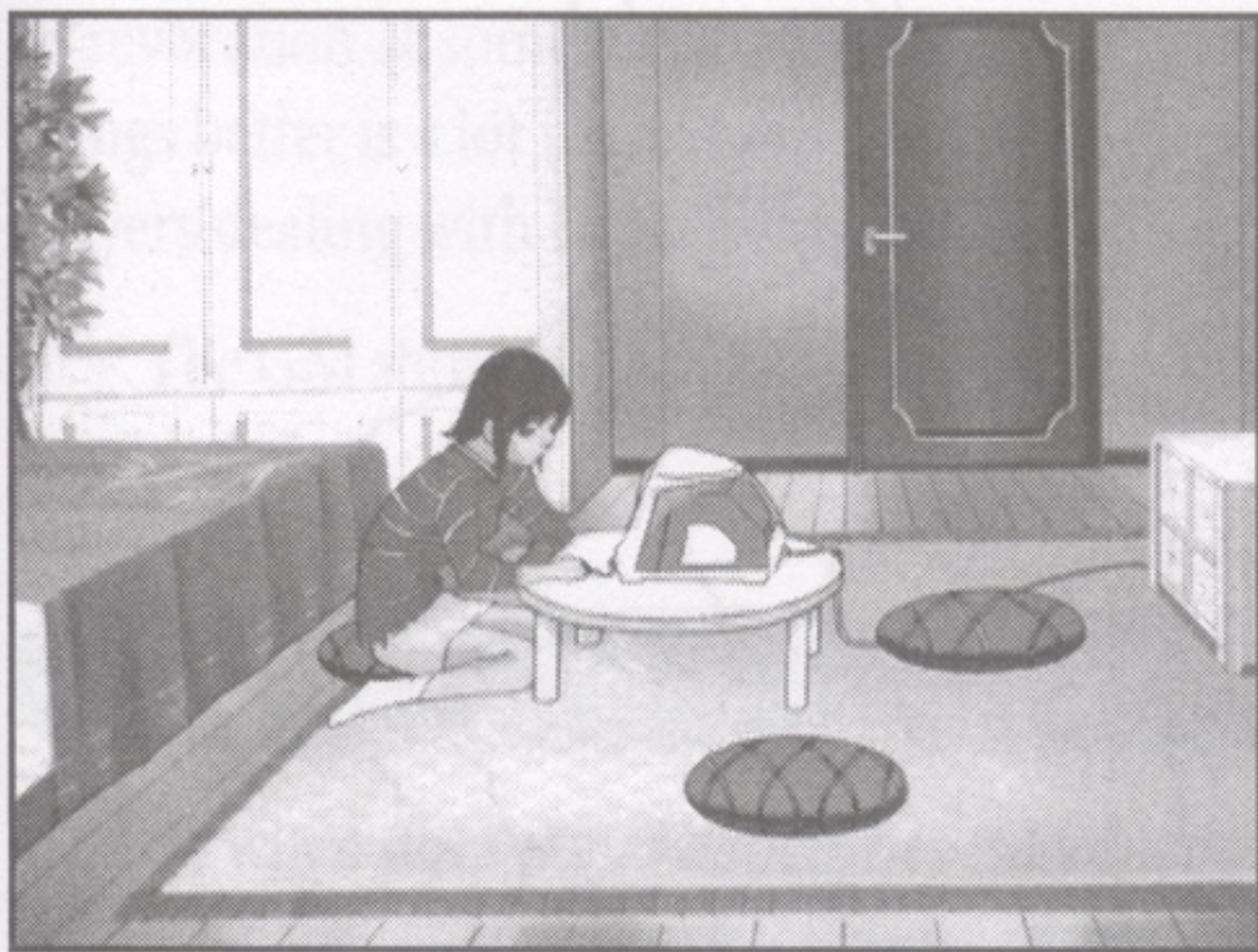
HandyNAVI

Many of Sculley's ideas were implemented in Apple's ill-fated PDA, Newton. The Newton line is credited with launching the PDA market, being the first hand-held computer to fully utilize pen-based, handwriting recognition computing. Apple originally envisioned their Newton units always being connected to the internet, matching Sculley's Knowledge Navigator concept, though that goal never achieved fruition — the technology was not yet available. Due to a variety of reasons, the Newton failed commercially and Apple does not currently have a hand-held unit in production. The market, however, continues to grow, driving largely by Palm and their line of PDAs.

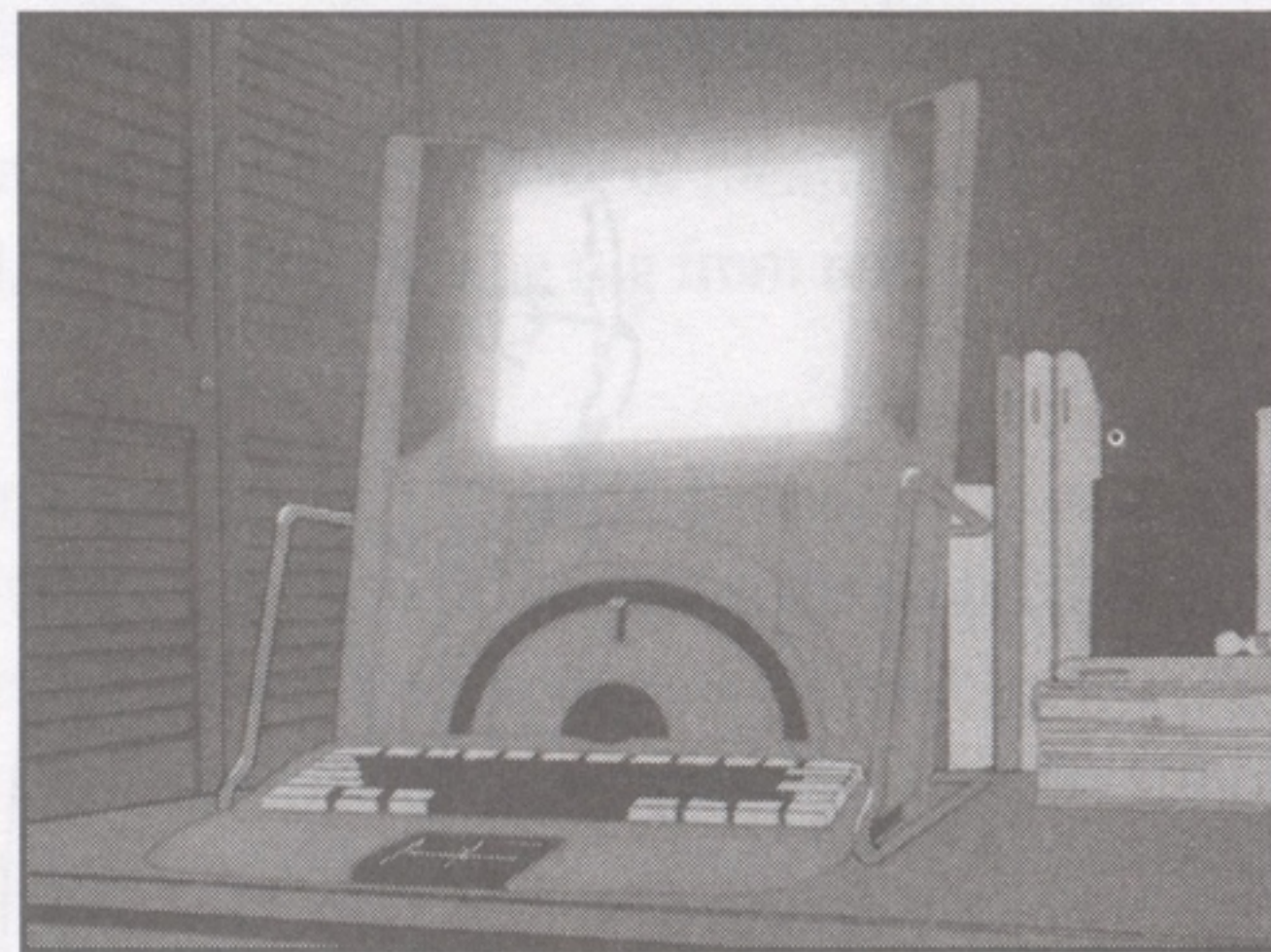


Desktop NAVIs

Many of the desktop model NAVIs seen in *Serial Experiments lain* bear notable similarities to some of Apple's computer products. Lain's old Navi resembles the 20th Anniversary Macintosh which was codenamed "Spartacus." This high-end computer system, which featured exceptional processing power, a flat-screen LCD display, and a Bose sound system was a truly special machine with a list price of approximately \$10,000 (USD). Its design, though more sophisticated, is exceptionally similar to Lain's first Navi.



Later in the series, Mizuki Alice is seen using a Navi that looks very similar to Apple's iMac computer. Launched in 1998, the iMac was, and continues to be a huge success for Apple. The iMac features vibrantly colourful designs that intentionally differ from the traditional, boxy look of most computers. When launched, the iMac was clearly a forward-looking design, doing away with obsolete technologies such as floppy drives and SCSI connections and moving instead towards USB and CD/DVD technologies. Additionally, the iMacs were marketed as a computer system specifically oriented towards to growing internet community — Apple maintained that an iMac purchaser could have their new computer out of the box and be surfing the world wide web within ten minutes.

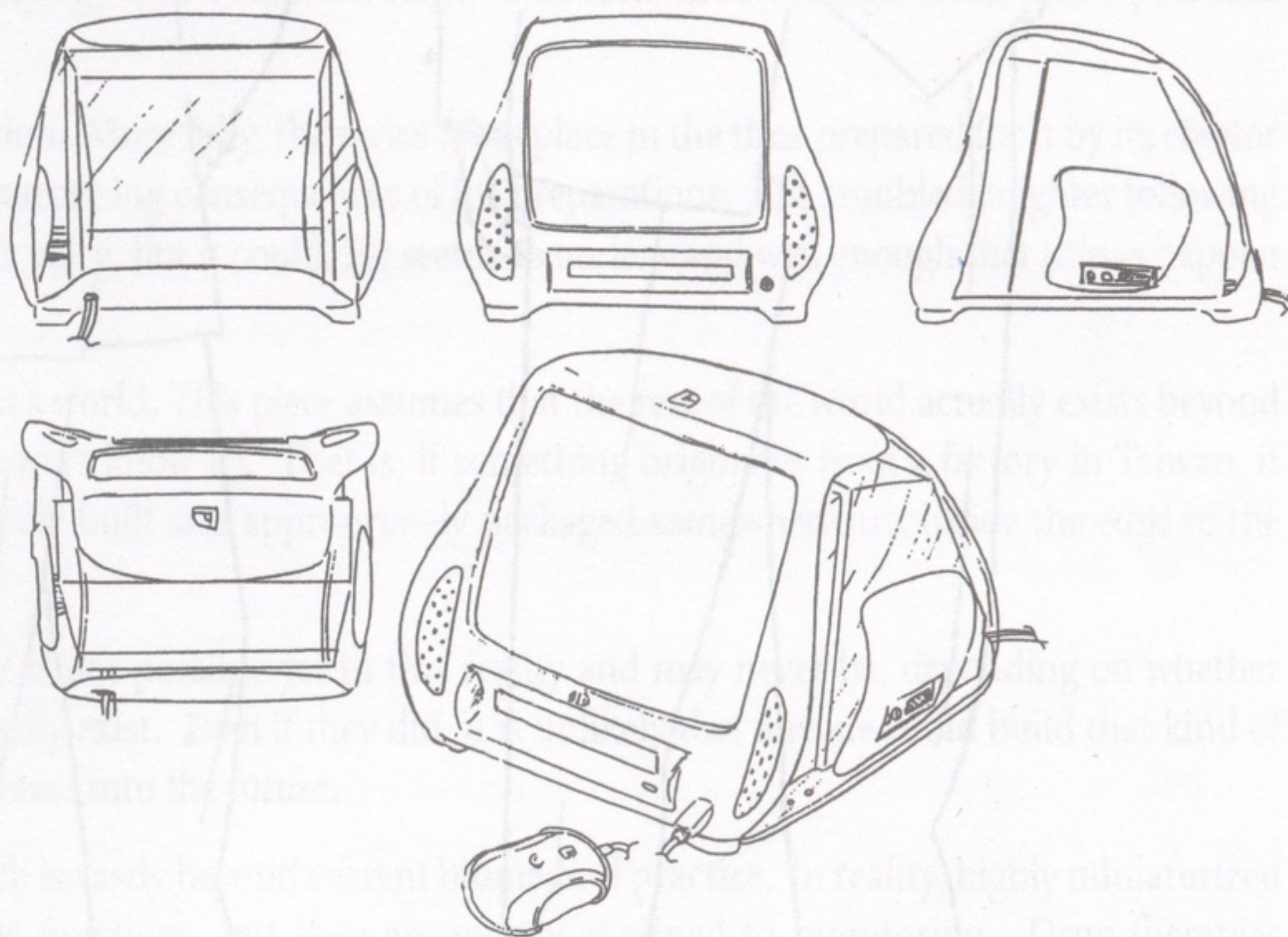


Layer Introductions

At the beginning of each episode, a voice gives the Layer number and the episode title. The voice is very similar to Apple's "Whisper" voice from its text-to-speech feature that comes with the Mac OS.

Copland OS

The operating system used by the NAVIs in *Serial Experiments lain* is identified as Copland OS. Apple spent several years developing a next-generation operating system that was codenamed Copland. Eventually, Copland fell through and was replaced when Apple bought NeXT, whose operating system, NEXTSTEP, became the basis of Apple's next generation OS.



Tachibana

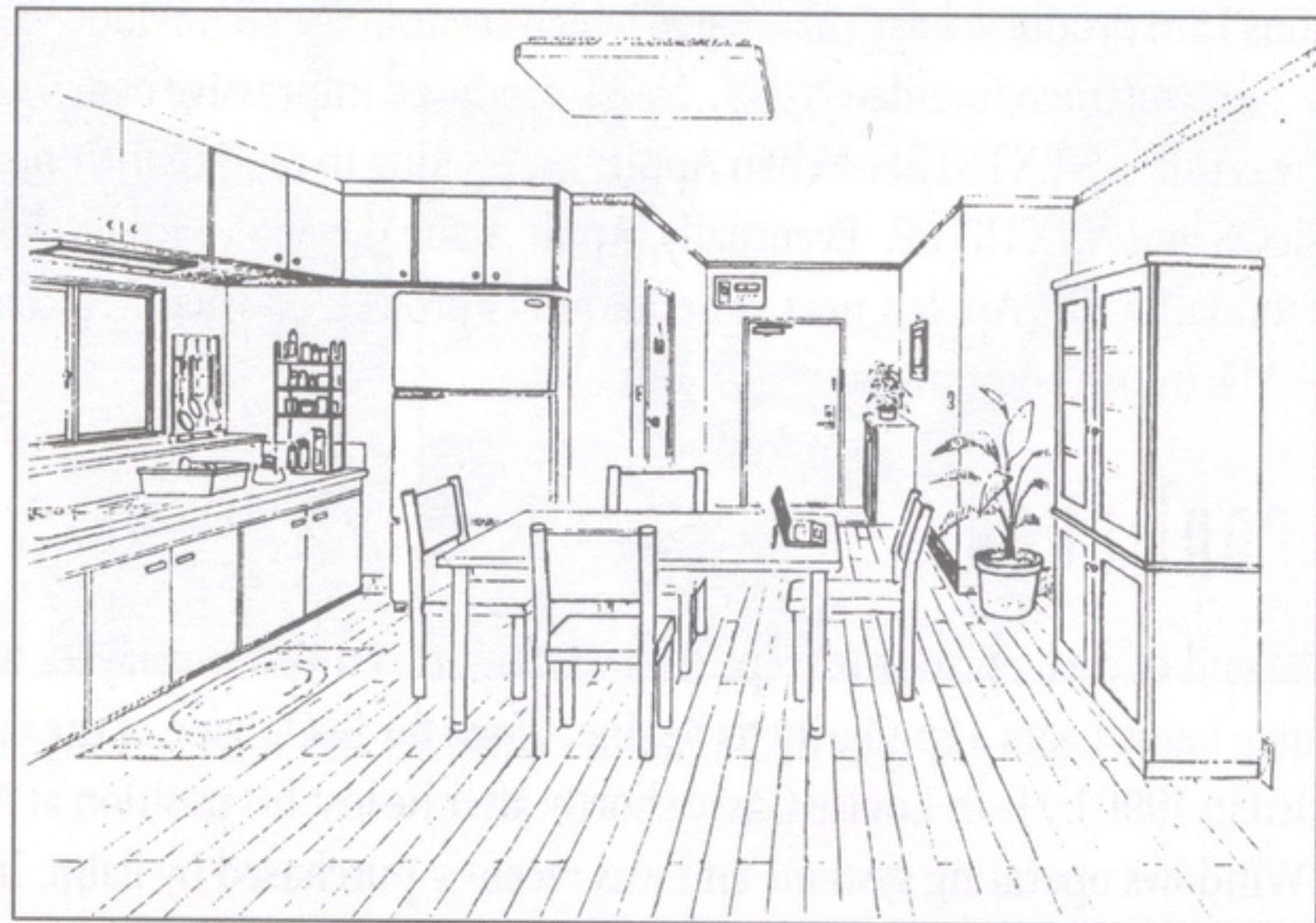
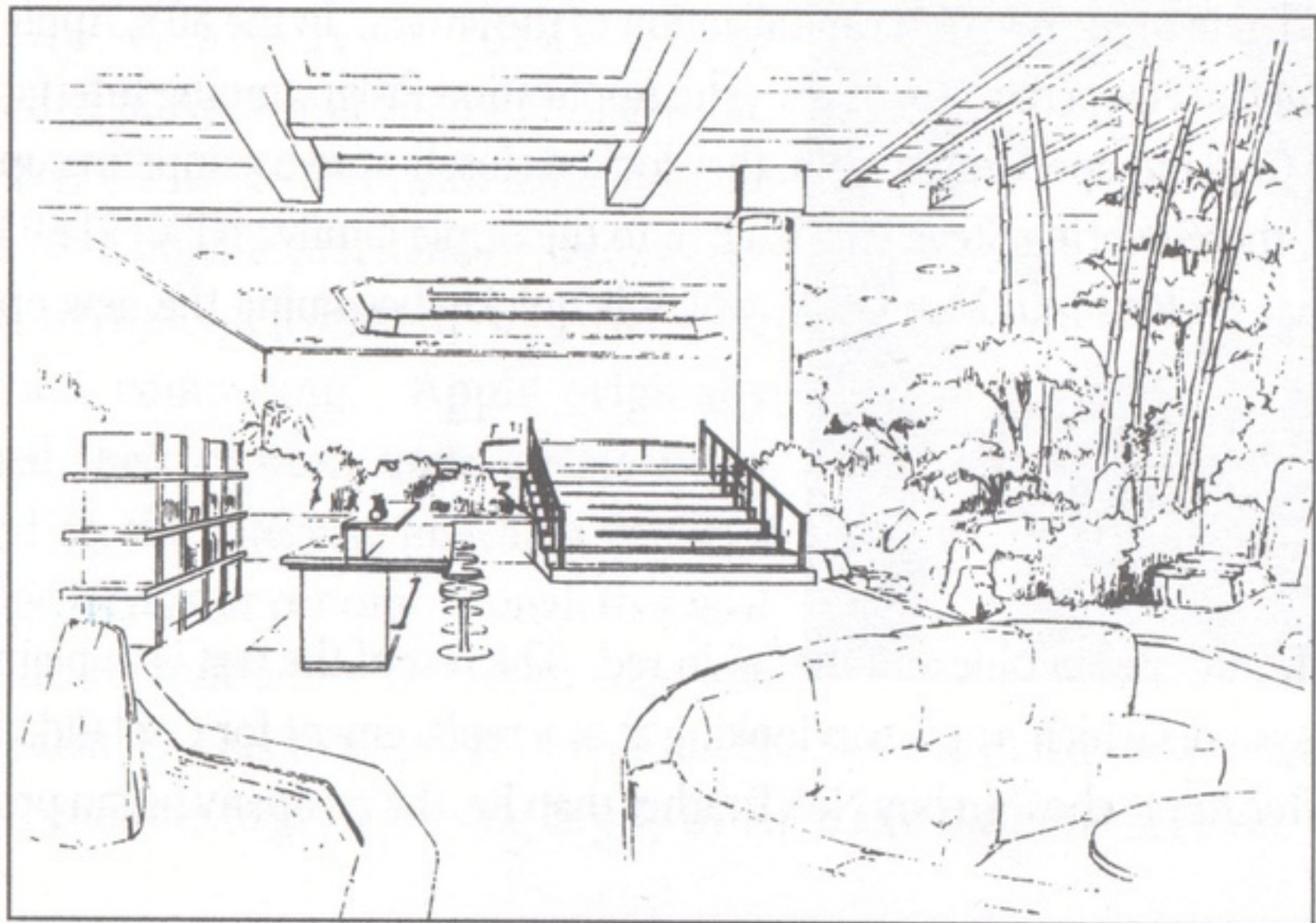
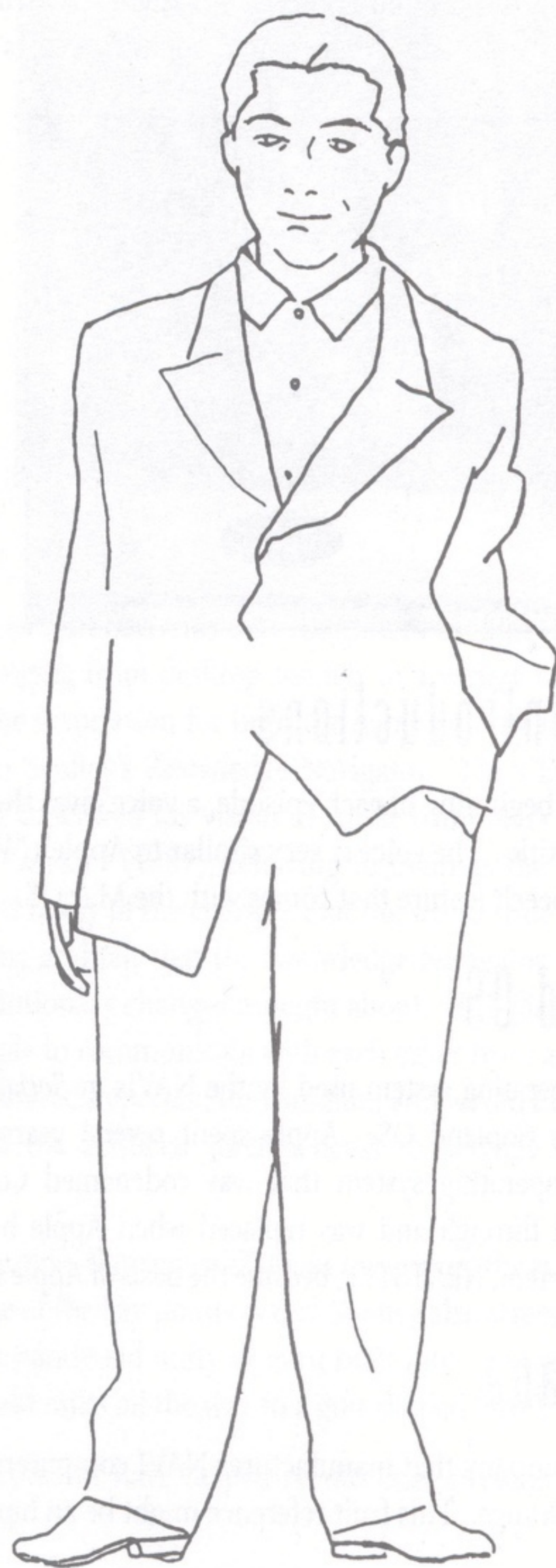
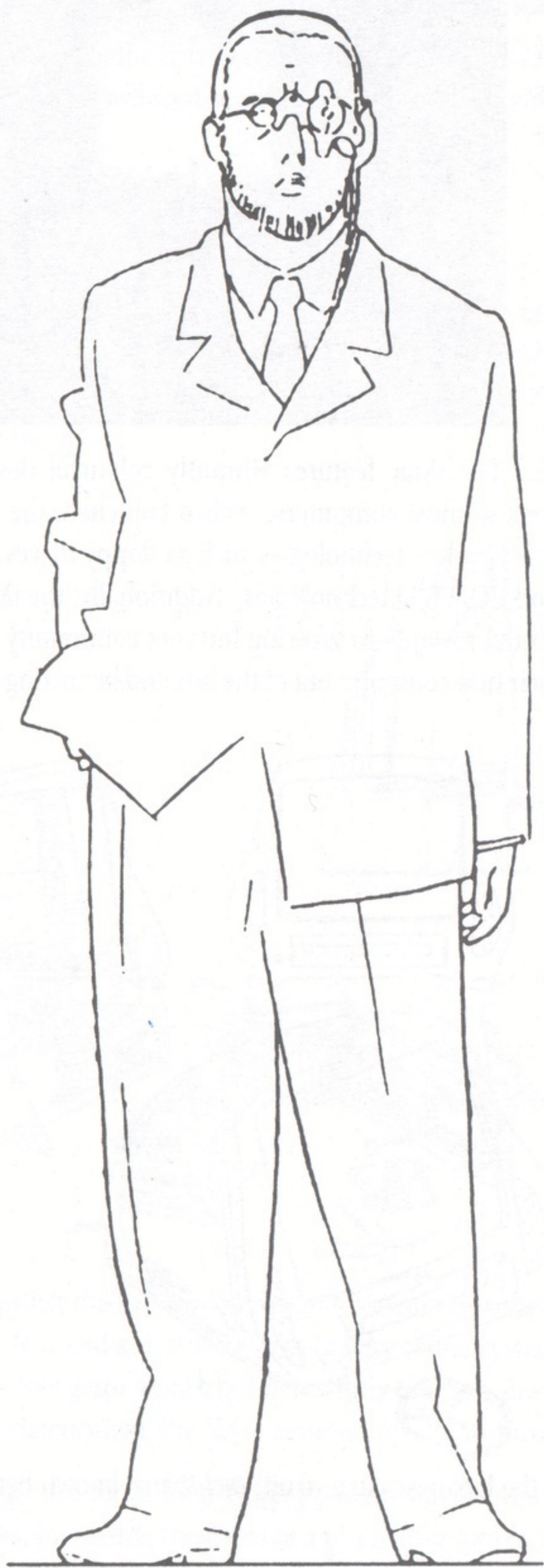
The company that manufactures Navi computers and the Copland OS might take its name from the Japanese citrus fruit, *tachibana*, known better as the Mandarin Orange. This fruit reference might be an homage to Apple Computers.

Close the World, Open the nExt

Various Lain products have this slogan which seems to be an obvious play on NeXT due to the reversed capitalization of the letters. In the 80's, Apple ousted CEO Steve Jobs who then founded NeXT. NeXT produced impressive computers with advanced operating systems. The Application Programming Interface (API) for NeXT was called NEXTSTEP. When Apple was looking to replace their floundering Copland operating system, they looked closely at two competing operating systems, BeOS and NEXTSTEP. Eventually, Apple made the choice to purchase NeXT, thereby bring Steve Jobs back in to the Apple family. NEXTSTEP became the new foundation for Apple's next generation OS project, codenamed Rhapsody that evolved into Mac OS X, which is quickly becoming the new operating system for Macintosh computers.

to Be continued

At the end of each episode (except the last one), this text is displayed, with the "B" for "Be" in blue and the "e" in red. The rest of the text is in plain white. This colour-scheme bears a similarity to Be, Inc.'s logo for BeOS, one of the operating systems which Apple was looking at as a replacement for Copland. Be, Inc. was founded in 1990 by Jean-Louis Gasse shortly after he lost his position at Apple. After Apple chose to buy NeXT rather than Be, the company began producing powerful Windows operating systems and was recently purchased by Palm, Inc.



YOUR SECRET SELF

In fiction, there's no necessary problem with the main characters discovering that important parts of their history or identity are fakes. The viewer is outside all that. In role-playing, however, the player is much more intimately involved, and pulling out the rug from under a character concept requires the GM to exercise a little planning and tact.

"This isn't true" works much more satisfyingly when it's immediately followed "but that other neat thing is." Lain's self-discovery is an excellent example of this. A player who had one of the other Iwakuras as a character would be in for massive disappointment: being a software prop subject to revocation at someone else's whim is not very interesting. Being one of the unsuspected shapers of the world with power to at least try to make things better is a lot more interesting. Even though there would be dislocation and disorientation during play at the point the GM reveals the truth, players dealing with Lain-like revelations can settle in to enjoying the brand-new horizons now open to their characters.

The GM should not take away anything of importance to the player's sense of a character without giving back something worthwhile in its place.

PRESENT DAY, PRESENT TIME, HA HA HA

So when does *Serial Experiments lain* take place? The assumption ignores the predisposition that Lain's story unfolds in an alternate reality of this world, where history took one or two different turns and technology is at a different stage. This assumption of logic treats it as a potential future of reality.

The simplest answer is "when it does," but that dodges the question. More fully, the series takes place in the time prepared for it by its creator Masami Eiri, when he feels ready to act ... and when he runs into the surprising consequences of his preparations. The troubled laughter following the opening declaration "present day, present time" does not use Eiri's voice, but it could. He seems to understand well enough that things happen when they do.

See "The Dome" (page 76), for a look at a different aspect of Lain's world. This piece assumes that the rest of the world actually exists beyond the city, albeit perhaps very unlike its counterpart in "reality" (as viewers know it). That is, if something originates from a factory in Taiwan, it actually does come from a factory in Taiwan rather than appearing fully built and appropriately packaged somewhere just inside the edge of the dome or drifting in out of the void.

The K.I.D.S. system built by Professor Hodgson 15 years earlier is not possible yet in this reality and may never be, depending on whether anything like the alien crash or the psi phenomena he described actually exist. Even if they did, it is unlikely that anyone could build that kind of collection system yet. That limit pushes the series a minimum of 15 years into the future.

This fits with the sophistication in design of the Accela unit, which is vastly beyond current biomedical practice. In reality, highly miniaturized systems, approaching nano-technological scale, can perform simple functions, but they are mostly confined to monitoring. Drug therapies continue relying on using chemicals to catalyze the creation of others, possibly through several steps. Accela stimulates the manufacturing of neurology-altering hormones directly. In a way, the ability of digestive enzymes to break up the Accela unit and dispose of it is just as impressive, though most viewers would not realize it. Most electronics contain toxic components, rendered inert by the combinations that bind them. Disposing of old computer parts requires very careful work lest large quantities of lasting, poisonous gunk pollute the area. Accela must have been engineered with that in mind or it would kill its users outright.

The computer interfaces we see in *Serial Experiments lain* show advances beyond what is now possible. They do not imply fundamental revolutions in computing potential aside from Eiri's addition to IPv7 and the mass of hardware in Lain's room, but then that is part of the world redefinition rather than part of the situation as initially given. The routine march of progress in consumer electronics can account for the sophisticated voice-driven interfaces and other features over the span of 15 years.

Cyberia plays modern music. It may be hip and unfamiliar to the kids listening to it, but it is nothing earthshaking or revolutionary when compared to the avant garde scene of New York, London, or Berlin. The furnishings of the Iwakura home and the restaurant where Lain's friends gather and where Mika finds herself transplanted are sufficiently nondescript that they could exist 15 years ago or 15 years in the future. While fads change overnight, some aspects of popular culture remain largely firm once introduced.

We know only that Lain's story begins near enough the present that many things remain familiar.

THE CHANGING WORLD

The presence of beings like Lain and Eiri, who can rewrite the world, opens the question, "Who am I when everything about me might change?" The series offers no definite answer, but it raises at least two possibilities in ways that show they are not the whole story.

Mika's tragic experiences show one response to a world in which what seems inanimate and fixed becomes active and alive in some way. She shatters. Caught on the edges of messages intended to stir Lain into deeper awareness and the escalating conflict of passions within the Wired, Mika seemingly loses herself entirely. Fear or a rebellious streak overwhelms her, to the point where she can no longer discharge the role assigned her. It appears Eiri sends in a replacement for her, and the last vestige of Mika's soul is a fading cloud of lights expressing sorrow or horror. The second Mika, perhaps because she is rushed into service, quickly fails as well, acting like broken software. A whole, functioning version of Mika appears again only after Lain rewrites the world.

The series never explicitly states, "See, this is the advantage of genuine humanity." Nevertheless, Alice's responses contrast sharply with Mika's. Alice also falls prey to mind-numbing, consuming fear, but her friendship sustains her right up to the final confrontation between Lain and Eiri. Only the most direct manifestation of an entire world beyond her existence, the strength and pettiness of an unsuspected creator and the equally incomprehensible power of her friend, blasts Alice into shock. She hates and fears the changes happening up to that point, but endures them long enough to pay a crucial part in drawing out Lain's "humanity" at the climax.

Because the audience experiences Alice's responses to the changing world, they see most clearly in her, that yes, something endures even as the past and present change. There is a spark of self that struggles to preserve itself, and that can succeed when nurtured by love. Emotion and intellect combine to hold together. The manifestation in the form of Lain's father points out that the Wired might be more than electrical activity even though it was created by such activity; the same seems true of humanity. Biology shapes the human essence, but that essence surpasses the physical.

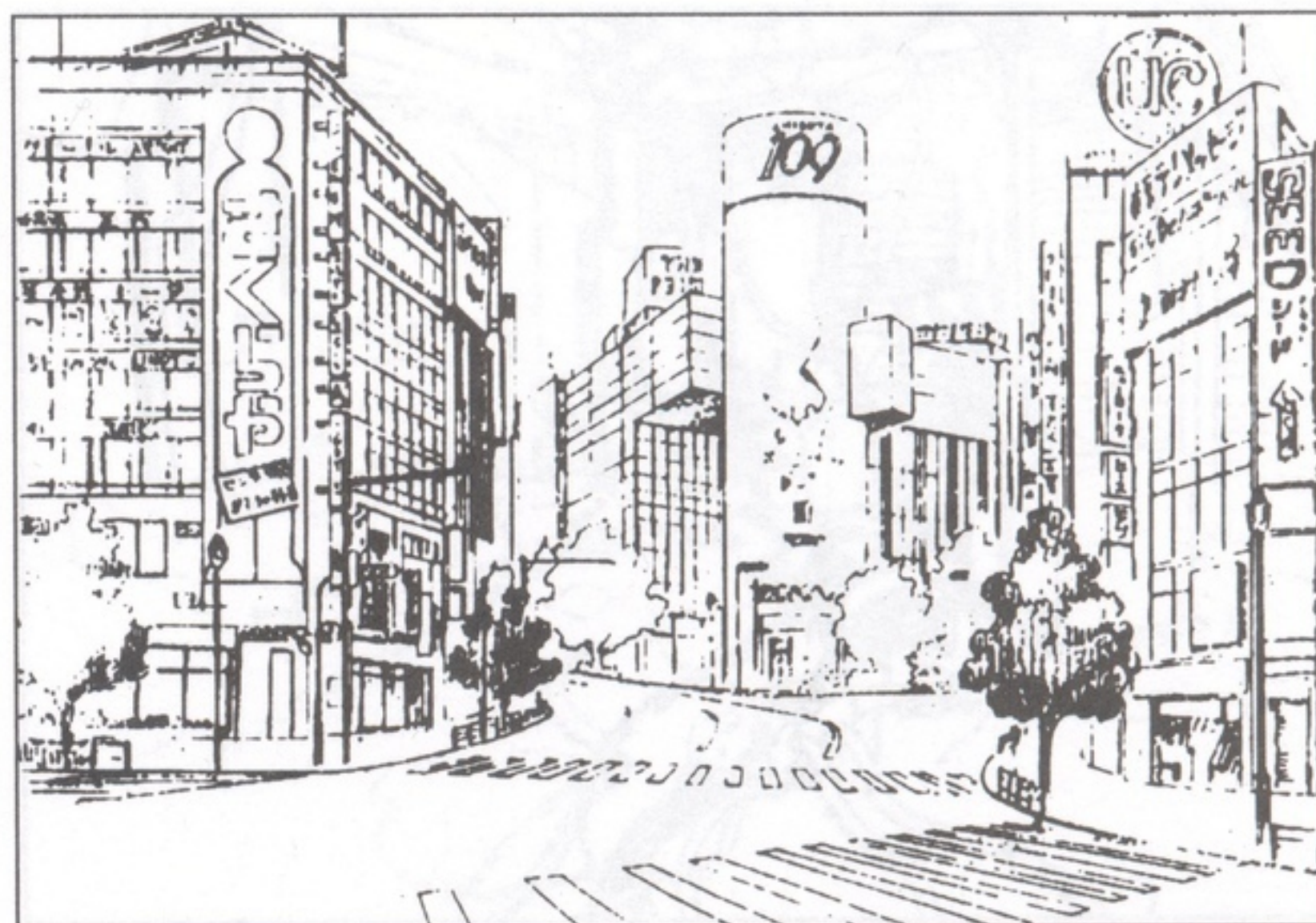
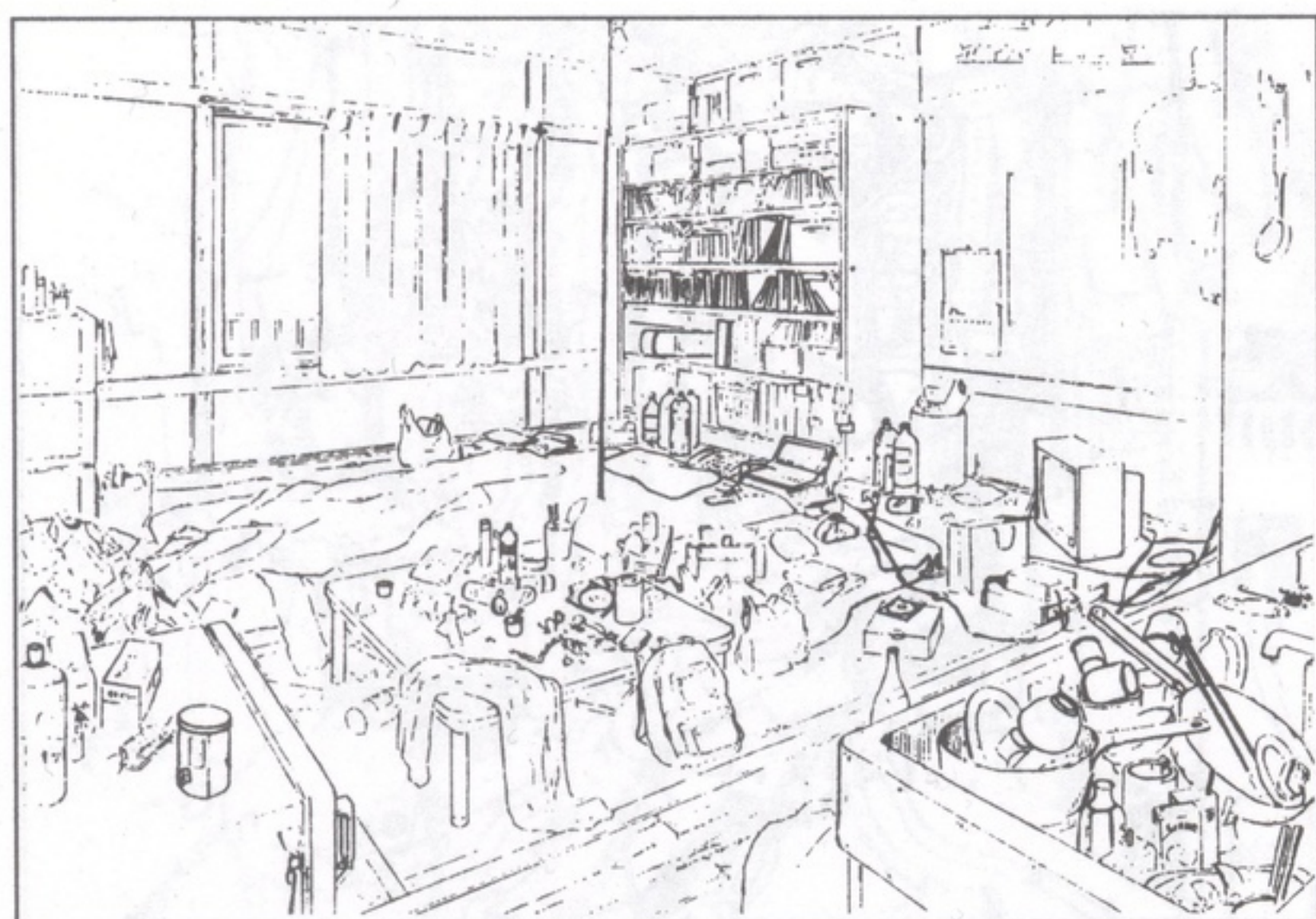
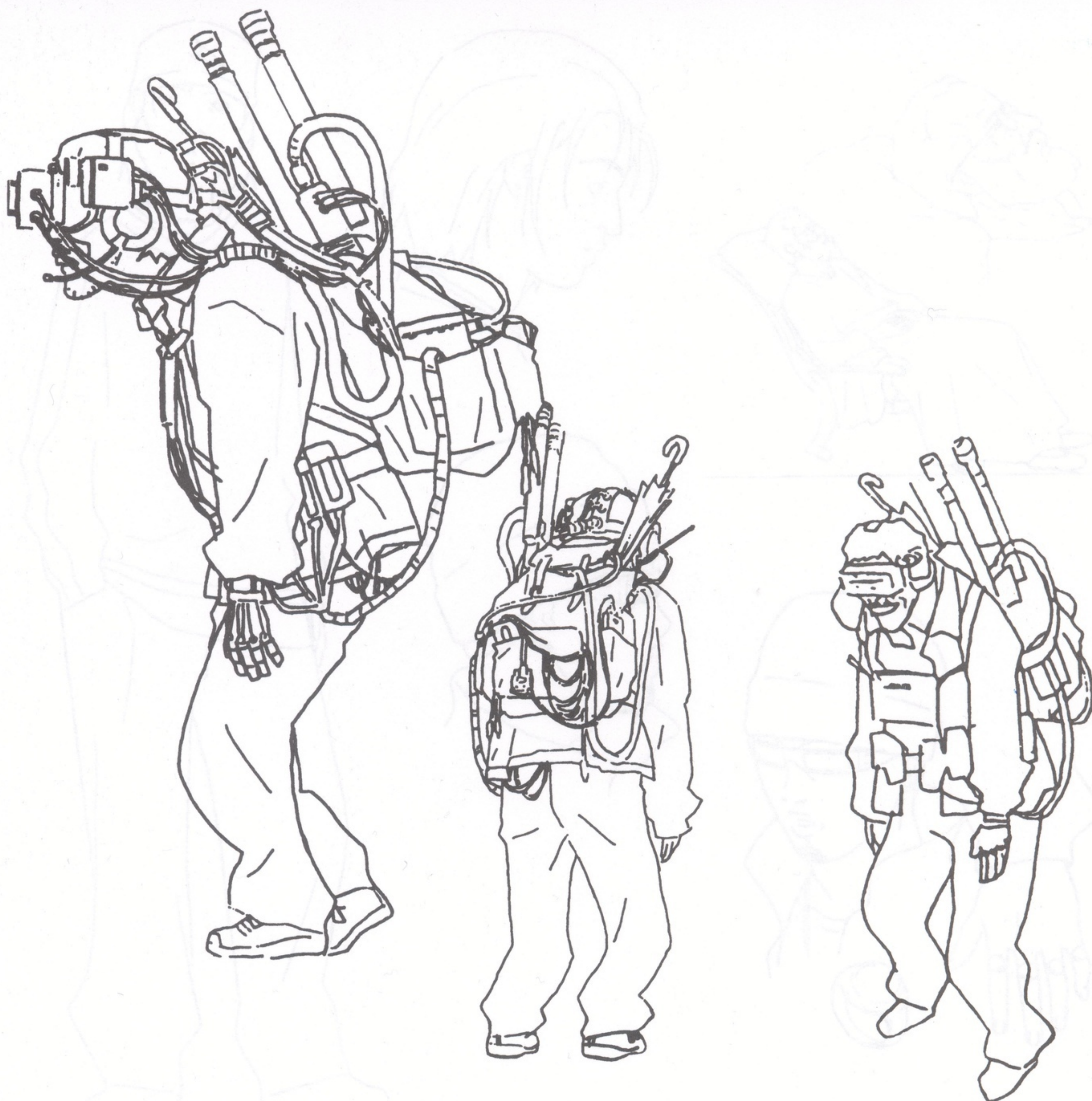
Eiri is partially aware of this, seeing the crucial role of change and fresh possibility in evolution. His egotism prevents him from tracing out the full consequences of the connections he venerates, however. They do not allow him to simply impose his will on others: rather, the act of connection strengthens each participant, making them more distinctly themselves even as it unites them.

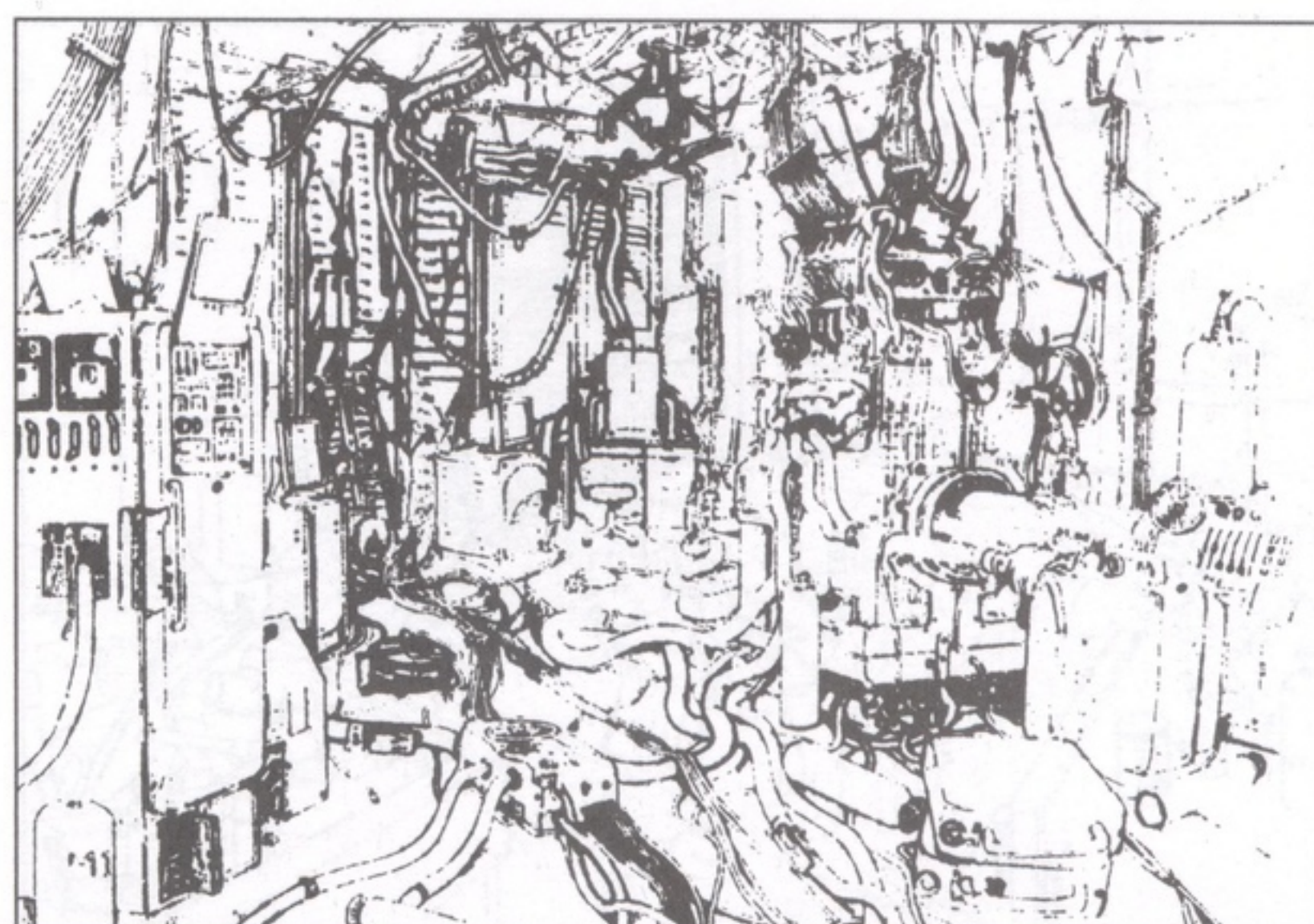
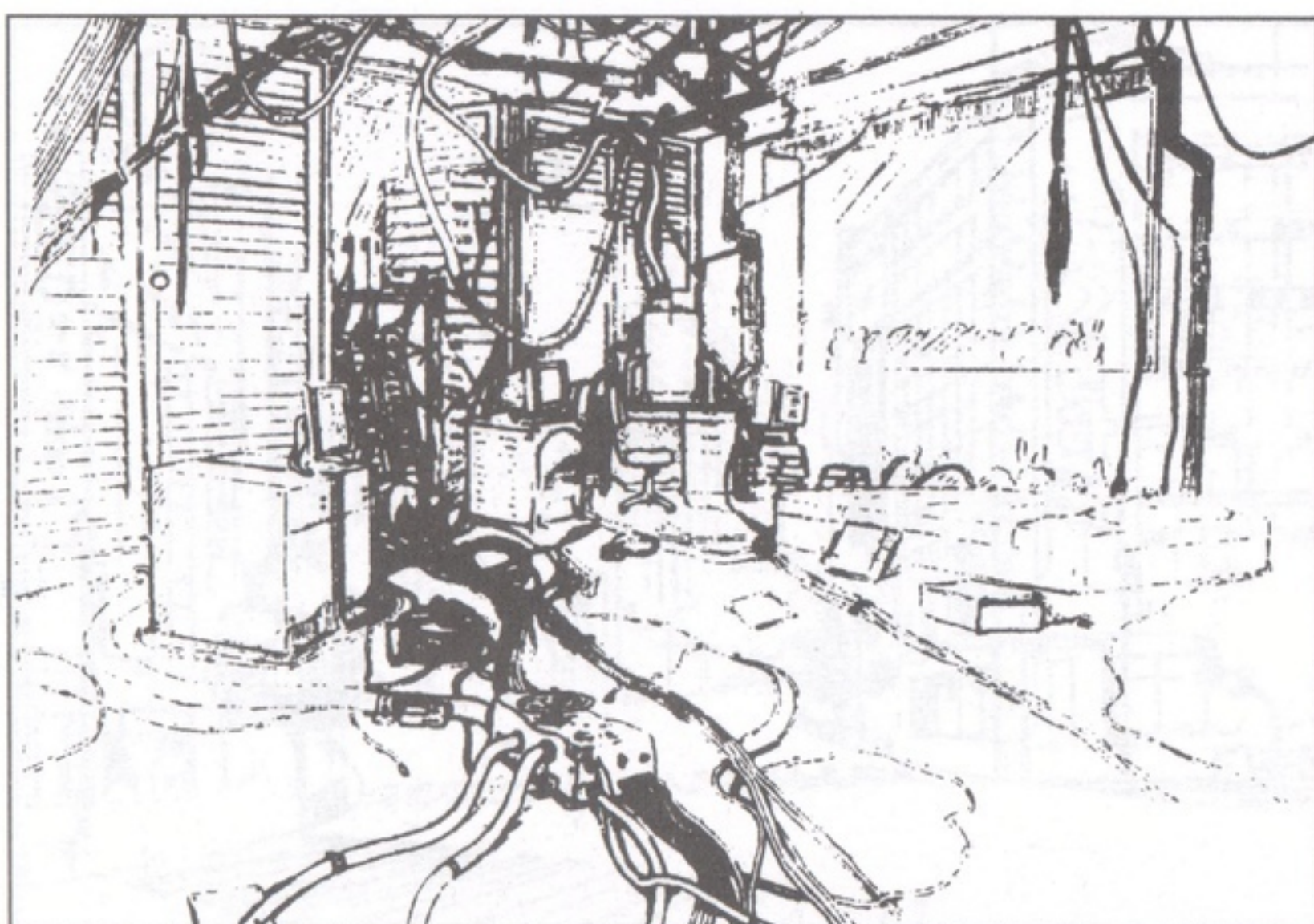
THE ART OF AMBIGUITY

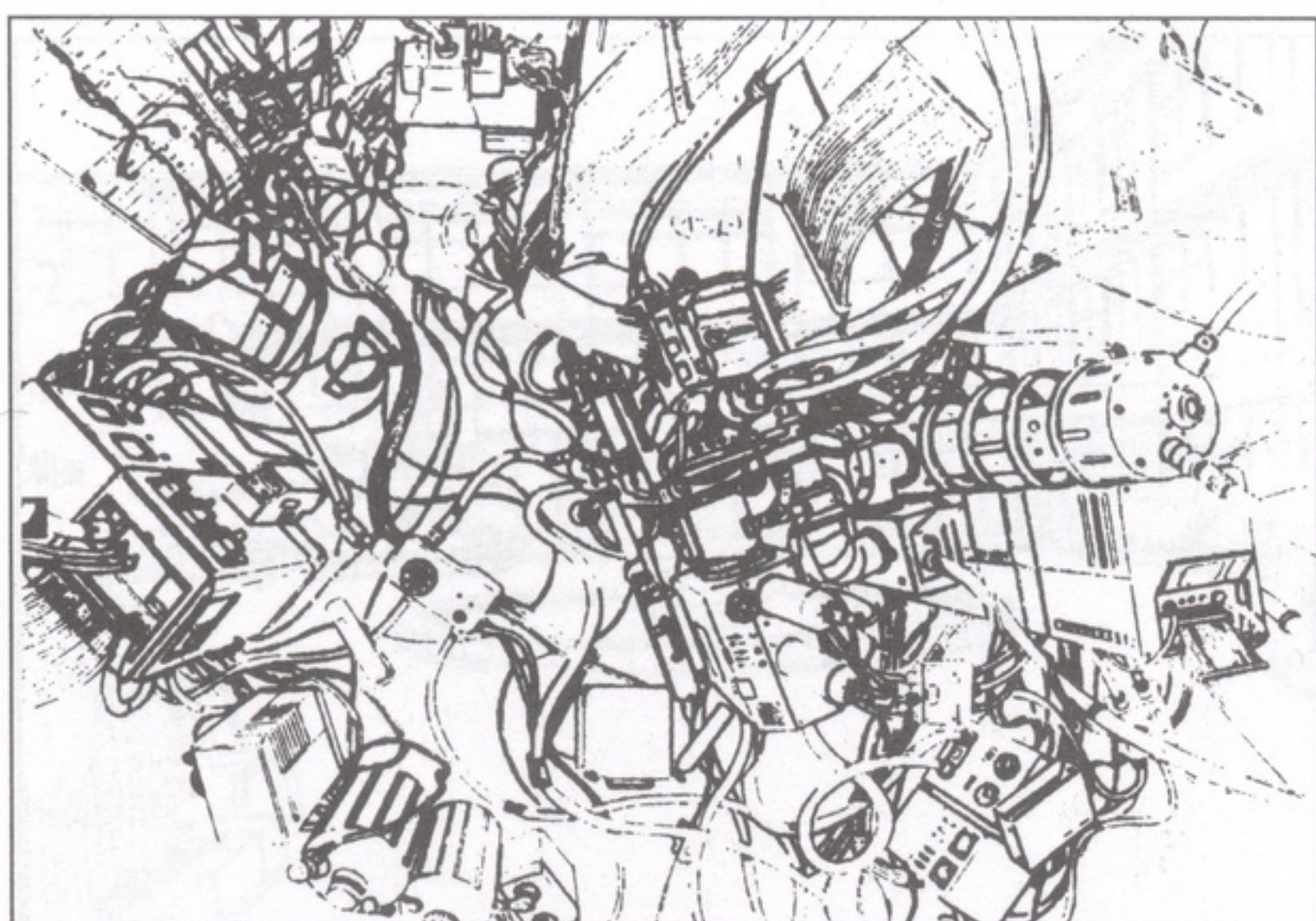
One feature that makes a series like this fun to watch can also make for very frustrating game play if the GM does not approach it with sensitivity: the role of allusion, evocation, and general ambiguity.

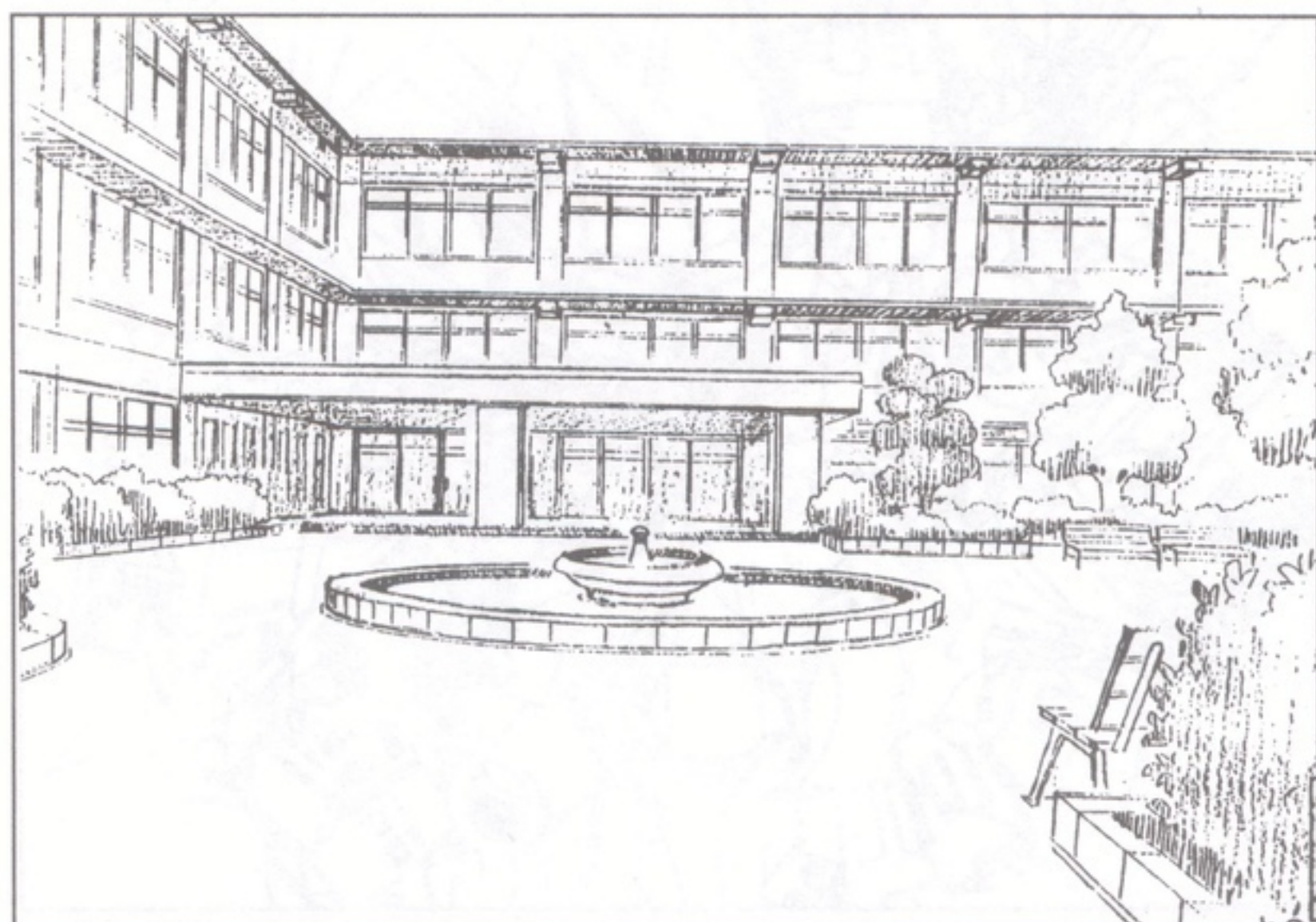
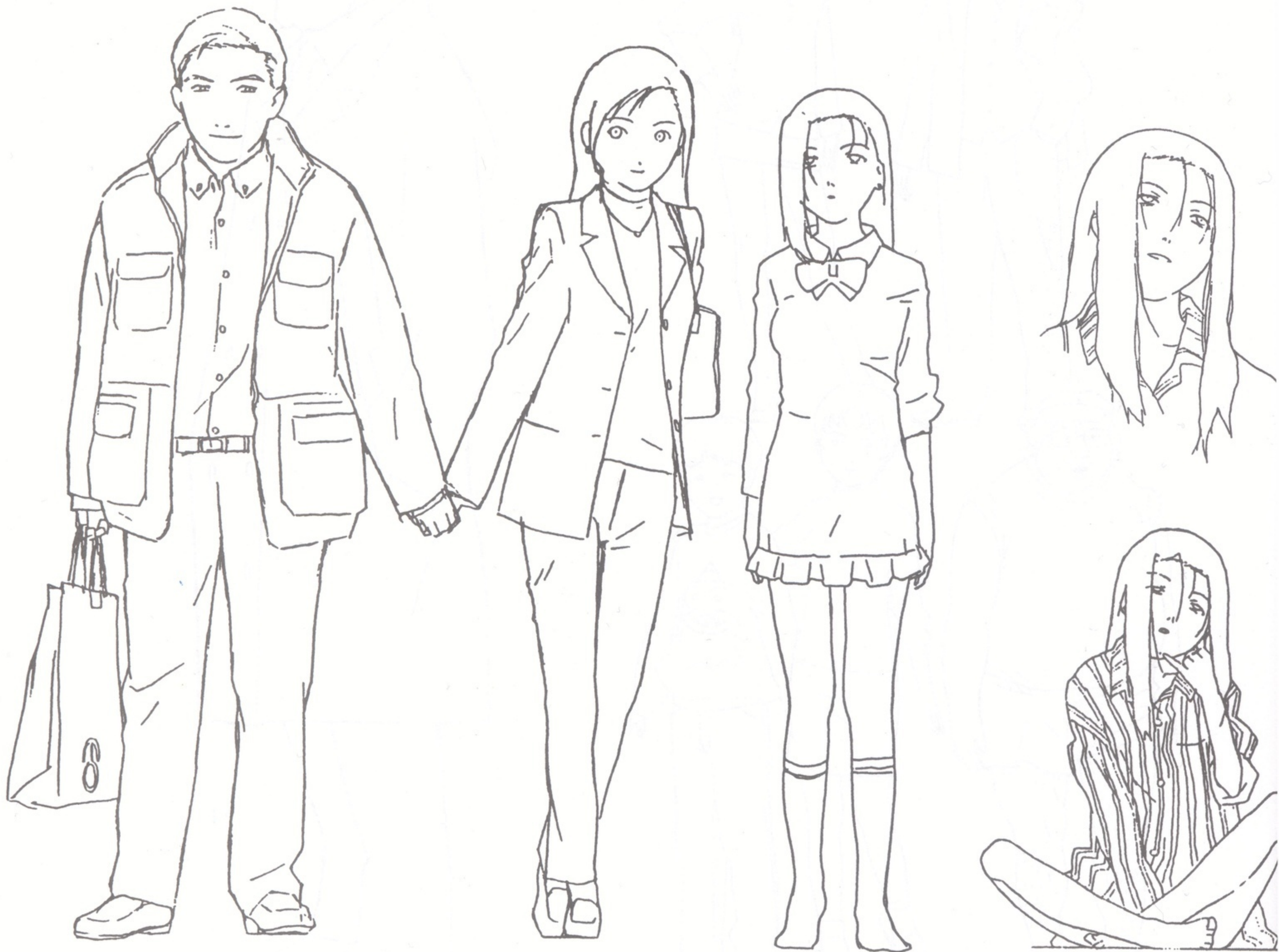
The audience never learns, for instance, just who the Tachibana man is or the circumstances under which he employs the men in black. Are they freelancers, part of a community of roving super-spies who move through the world's trouble spots? Are they government agents on assignment to Tachibana, or also accountable to superiors in the Ministry of Information Control or some other agency? Are they simply software constructs given fake histories because it amuses Eiri to do so? The show does not have to answer any of these questions, but if a Game Master is running a campaign in this genre style, his or her players will probably feel cheated if they do not uncover some answers.

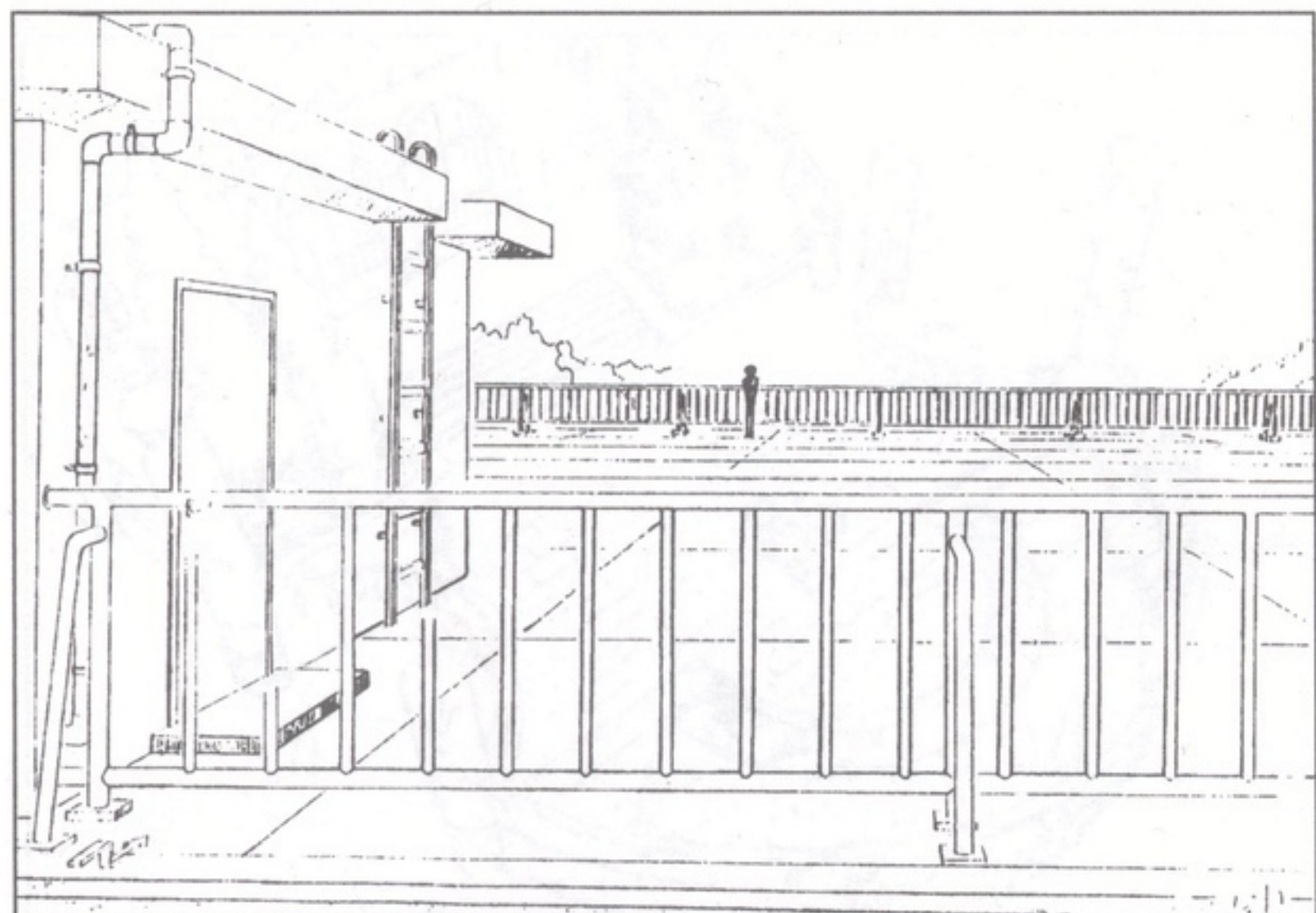
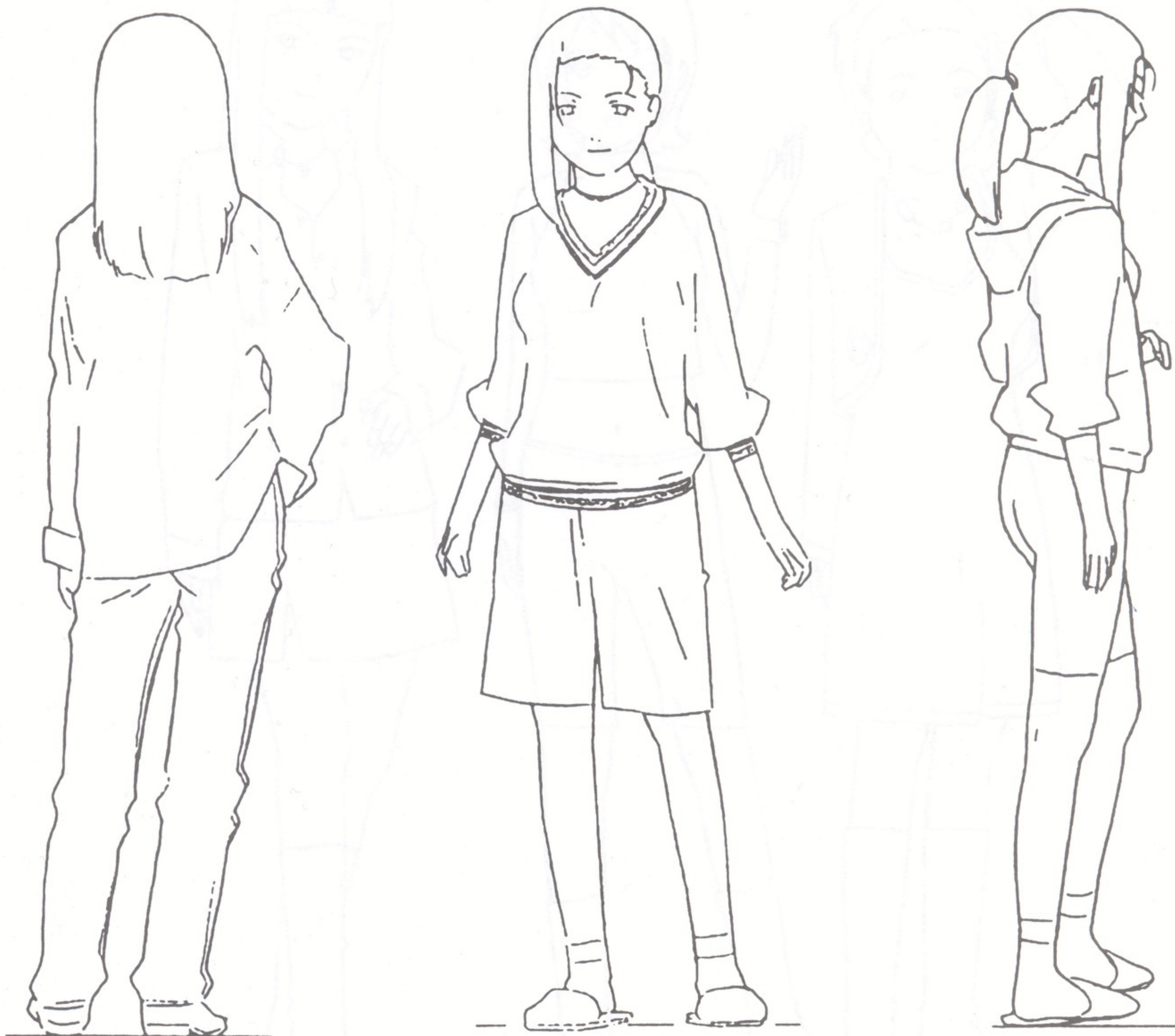
Rather than provide no resolution at all, it usually works better when GMs offer one primary answer wrapped in a few clues pointing in multiple directions. If the players work hard to uncover information and role-play out the process of interpretation and analysis well, they deserve the reward of learning something by the end. The GM should bear in mind with this sort of adventure that he or she does not have to stick with the original plan just because it was the original plan. There are (in most cases) more players than there are of you, and players sometimes come up with explanations that make much better dramatic sense than yours, or which are just plain cool. You should always feel free to change your mind about explanations as long as you don't invalidate the experiences of characters in play. It's okay to explain later that a piece of evidence was faked to mislead them, but not (most of the time) to just dismiss it as never having happened. Mingling player theories with your own often leaves players feeling particularly clever and perceptive, as they find their ideas vindicated by later discoveries. This is fun for everyone involved. And it works, most of the time, even when players know you're doing it: detached analysis crumbles in the face of entertaining play.

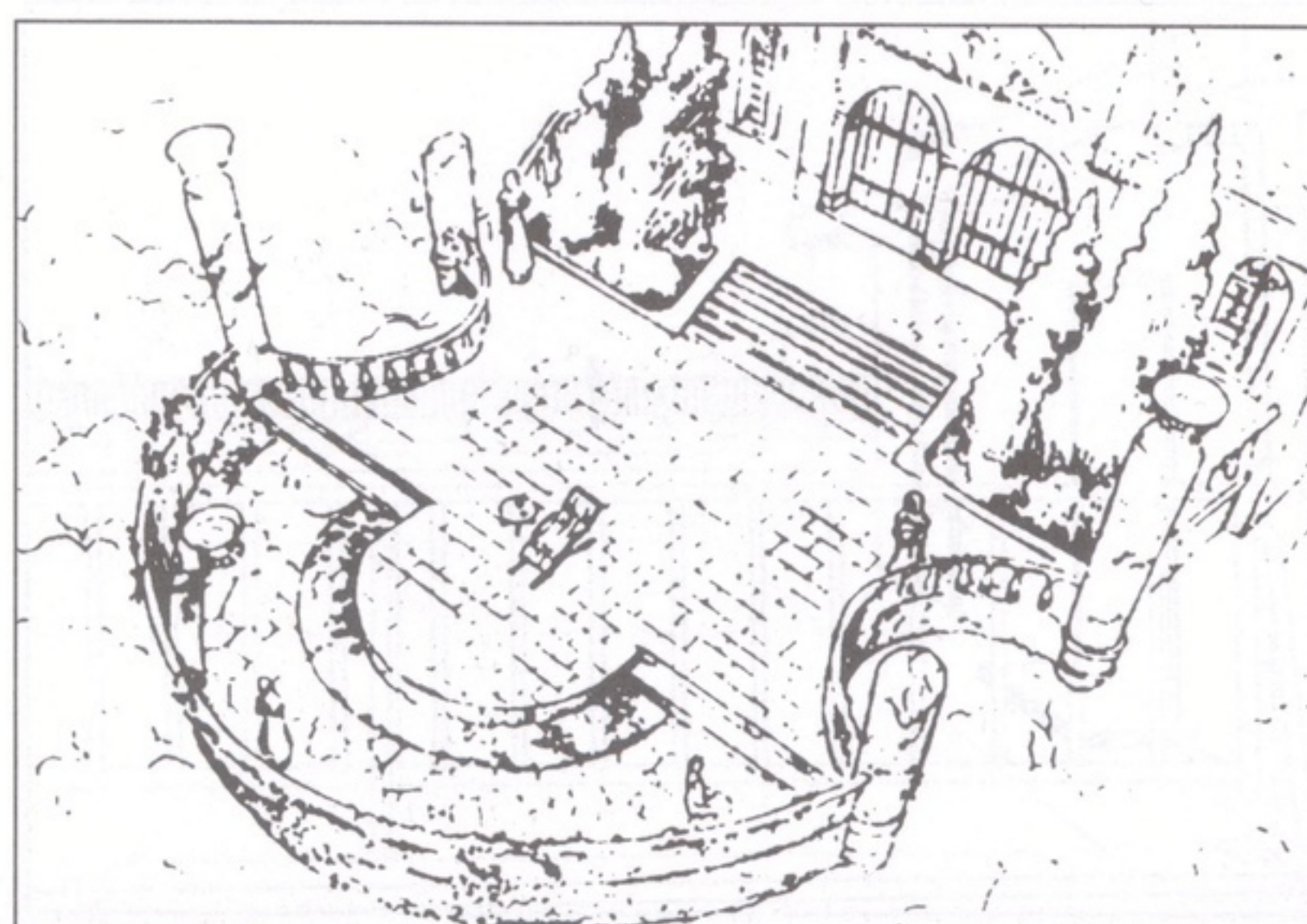
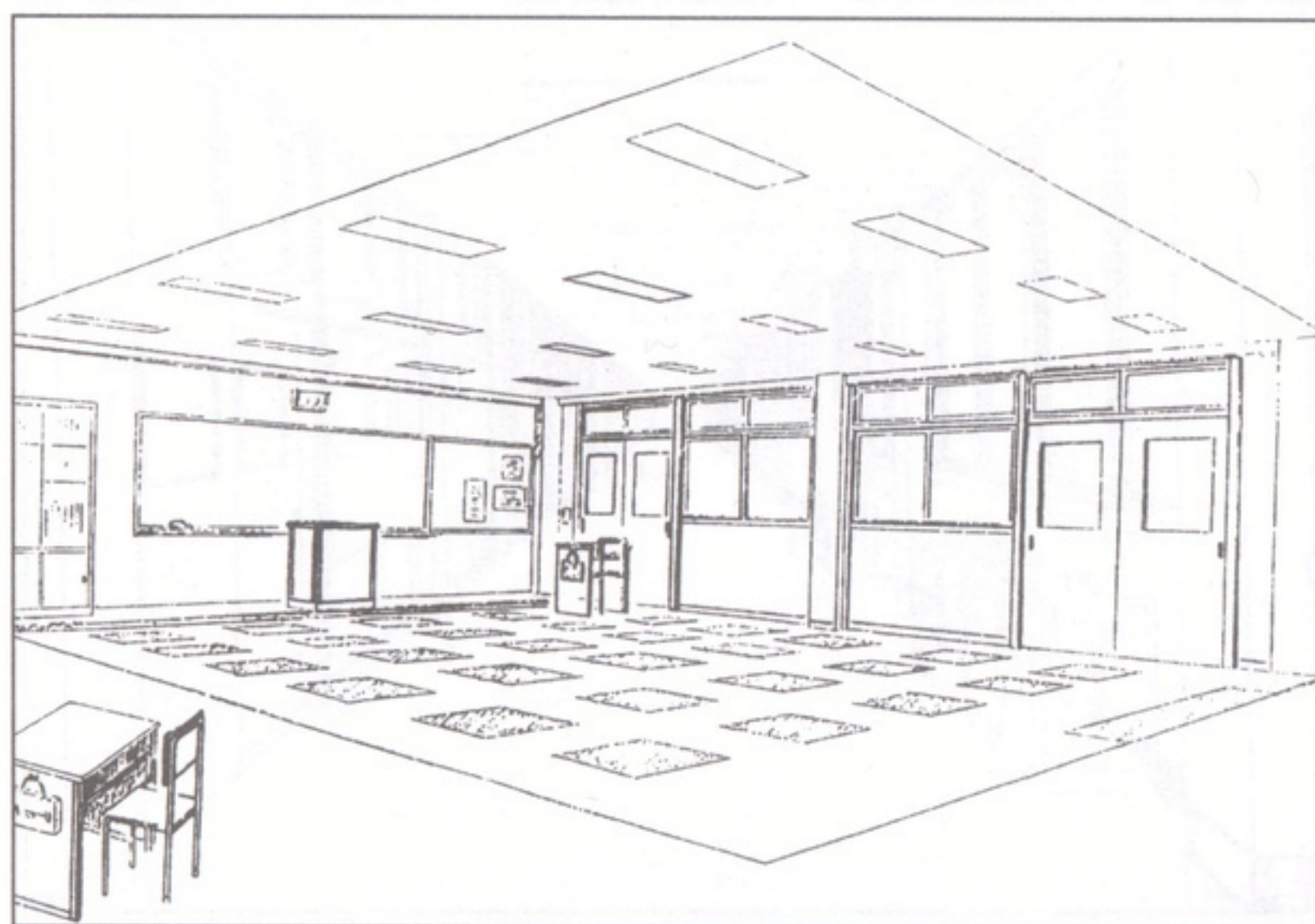
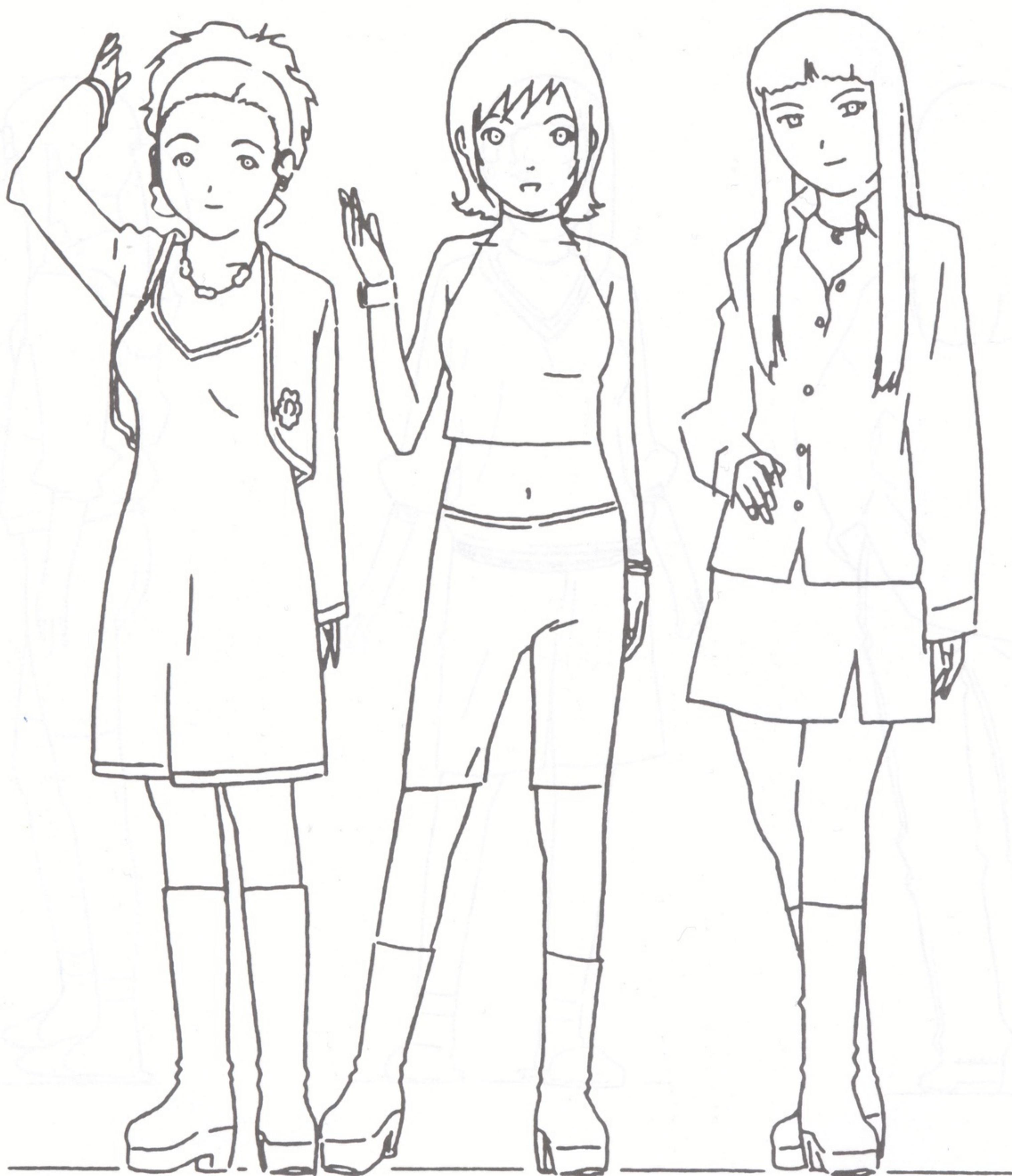


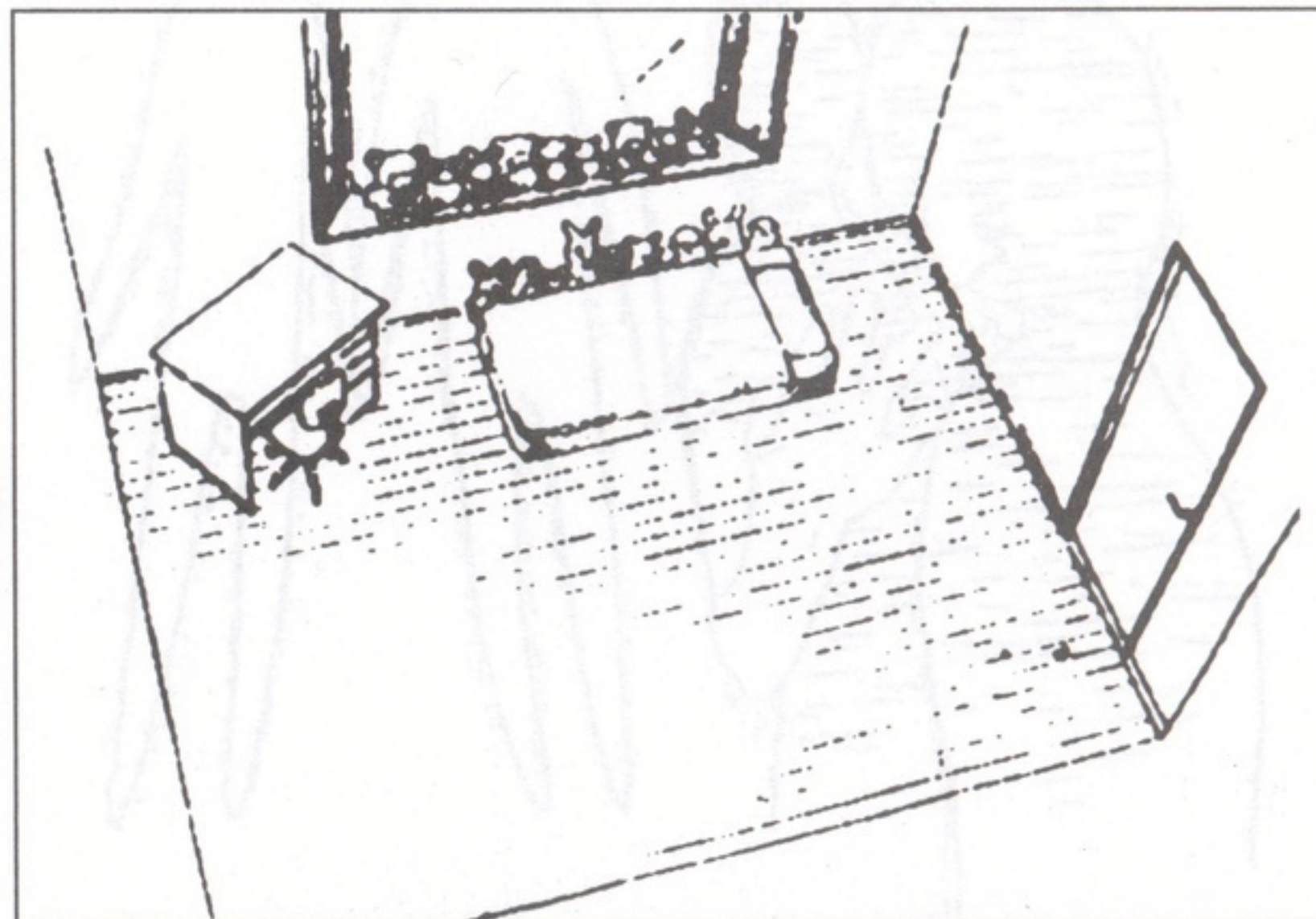
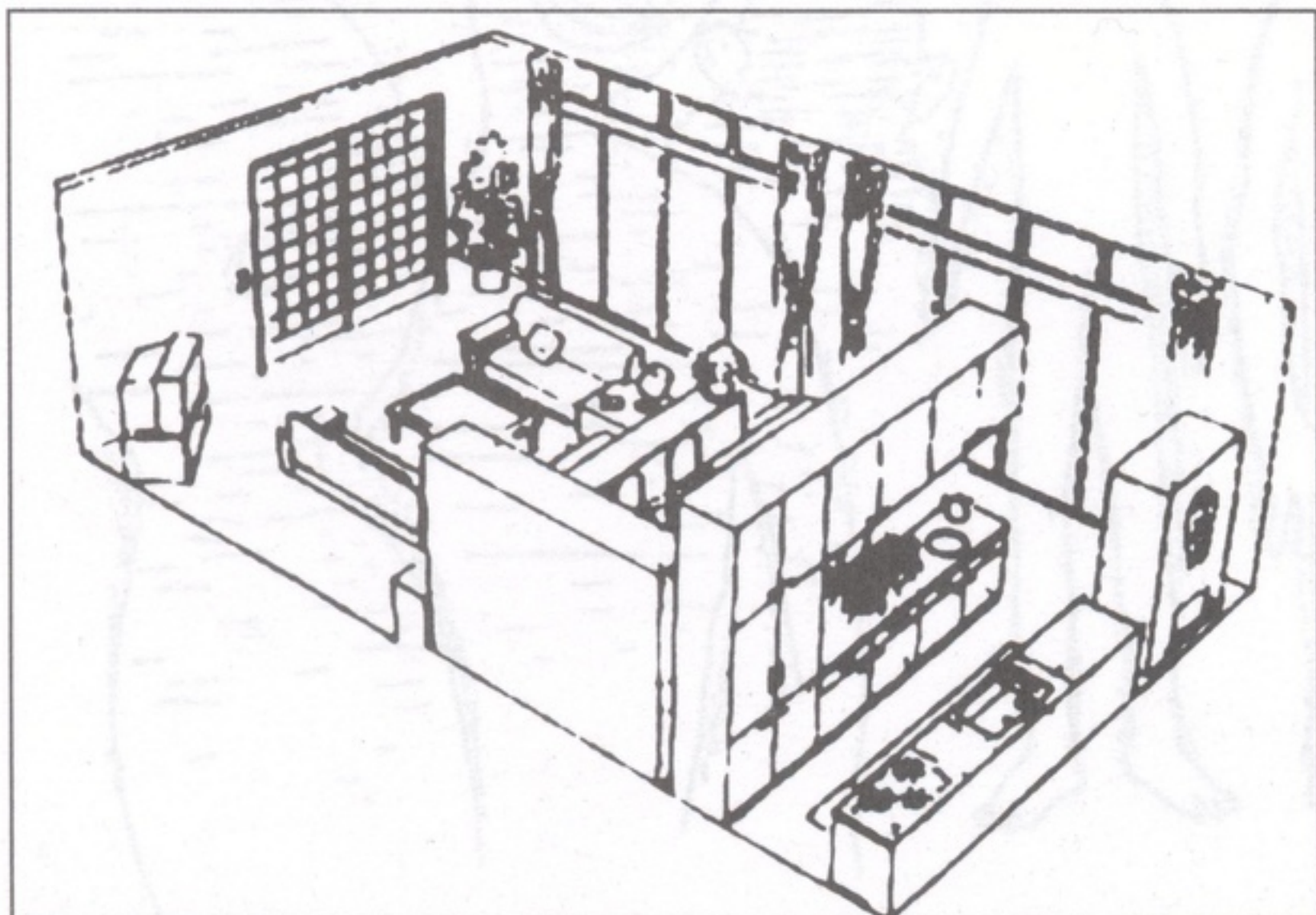
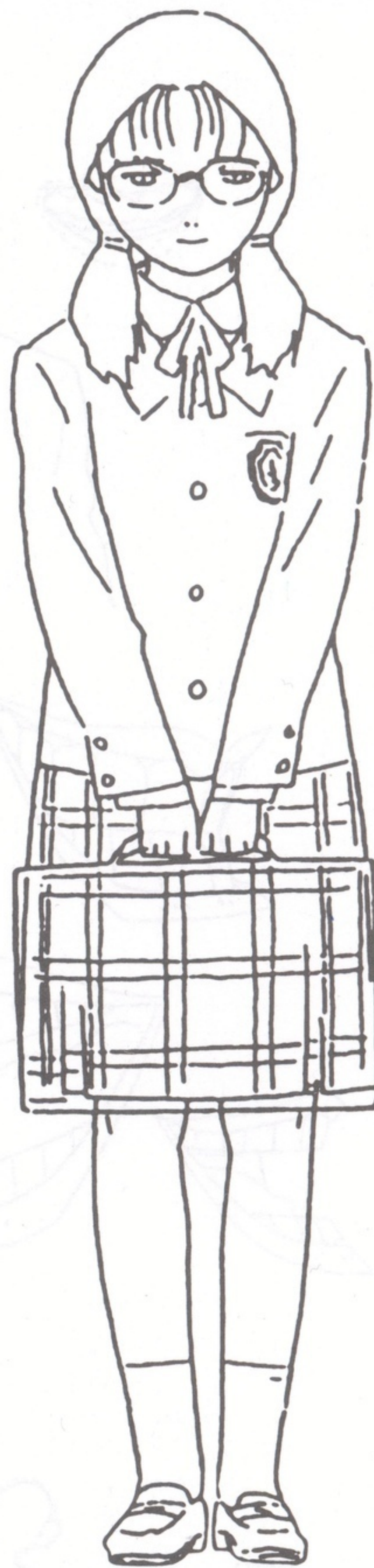
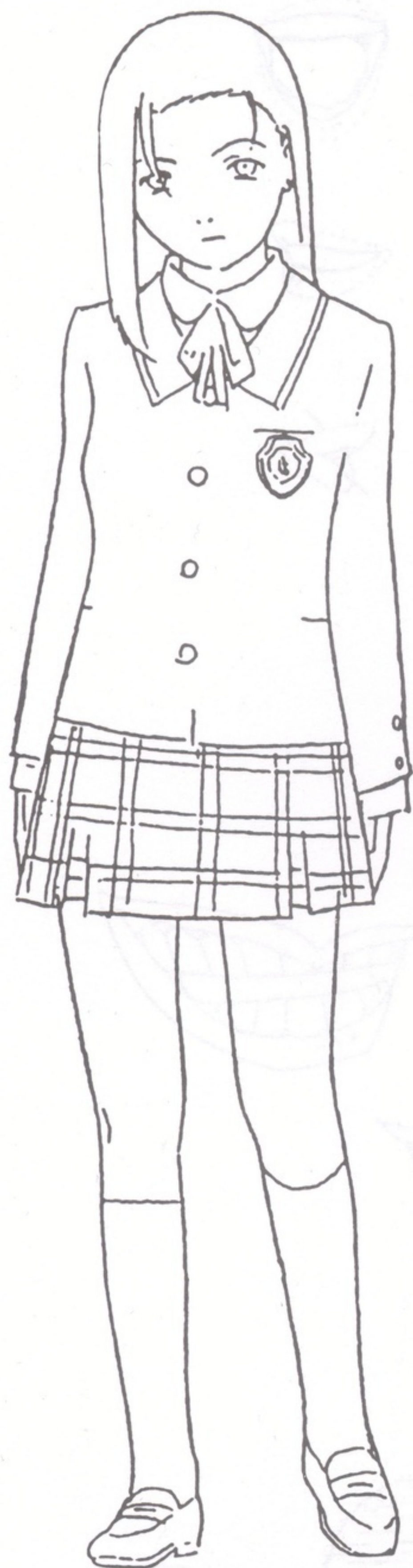


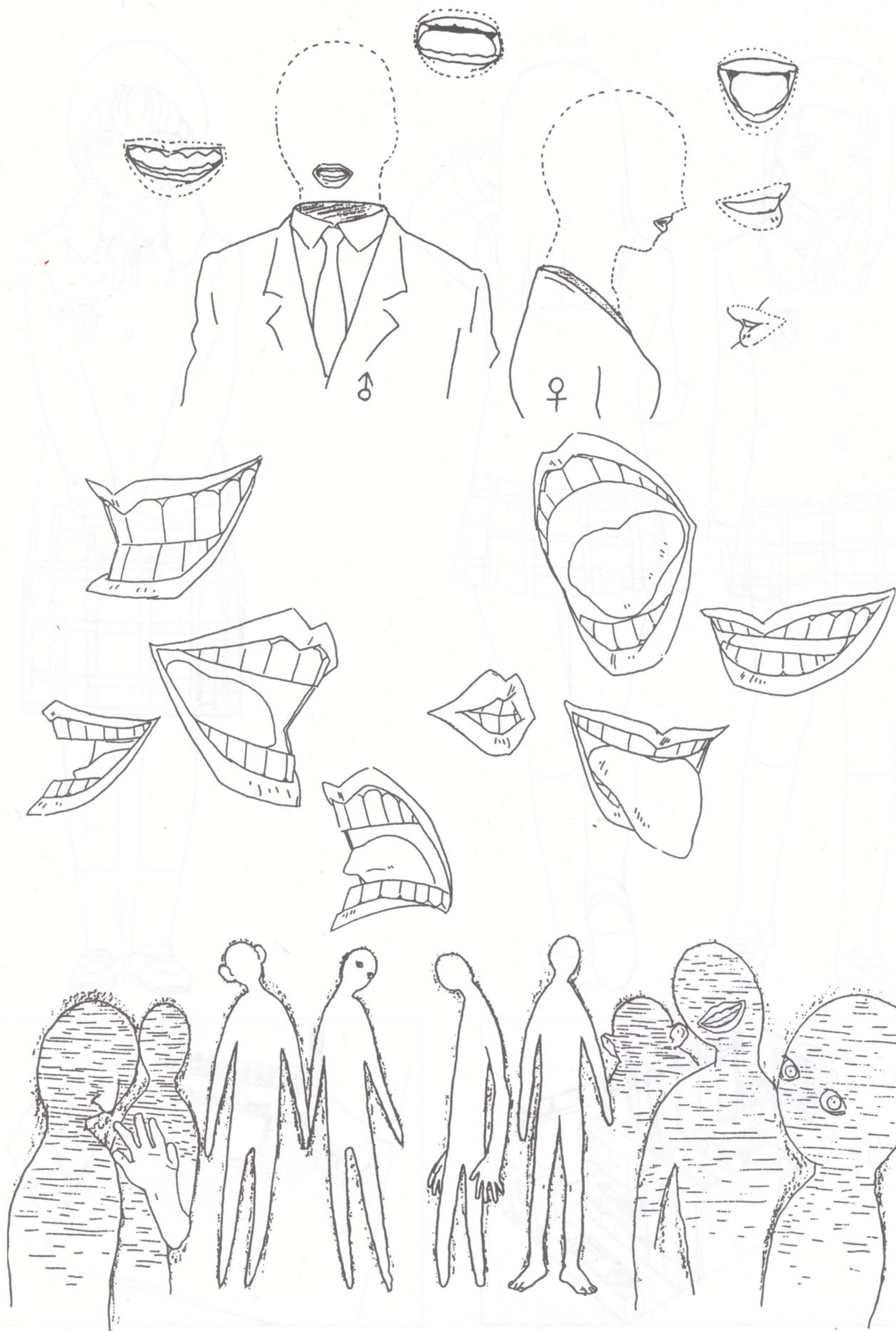


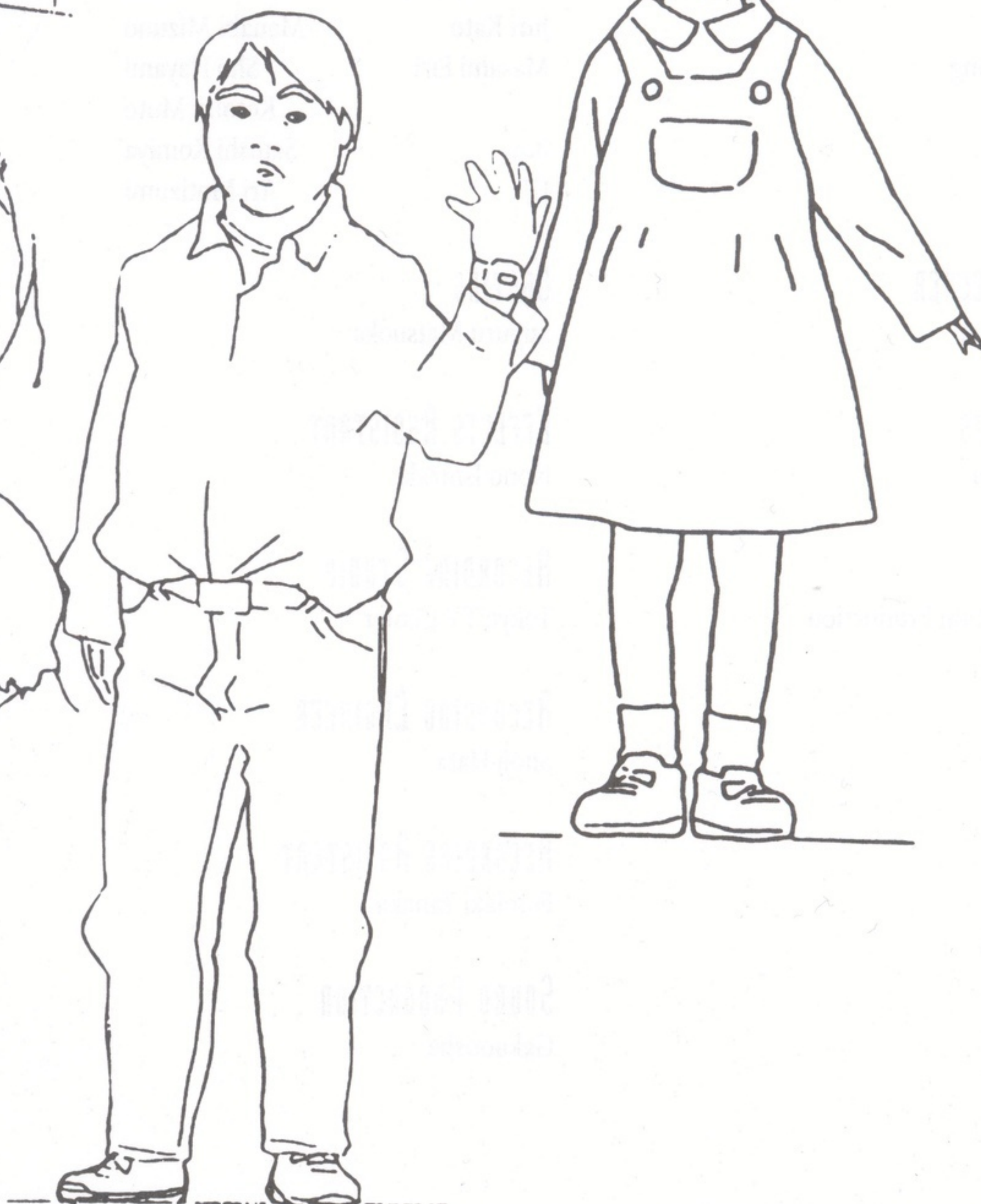
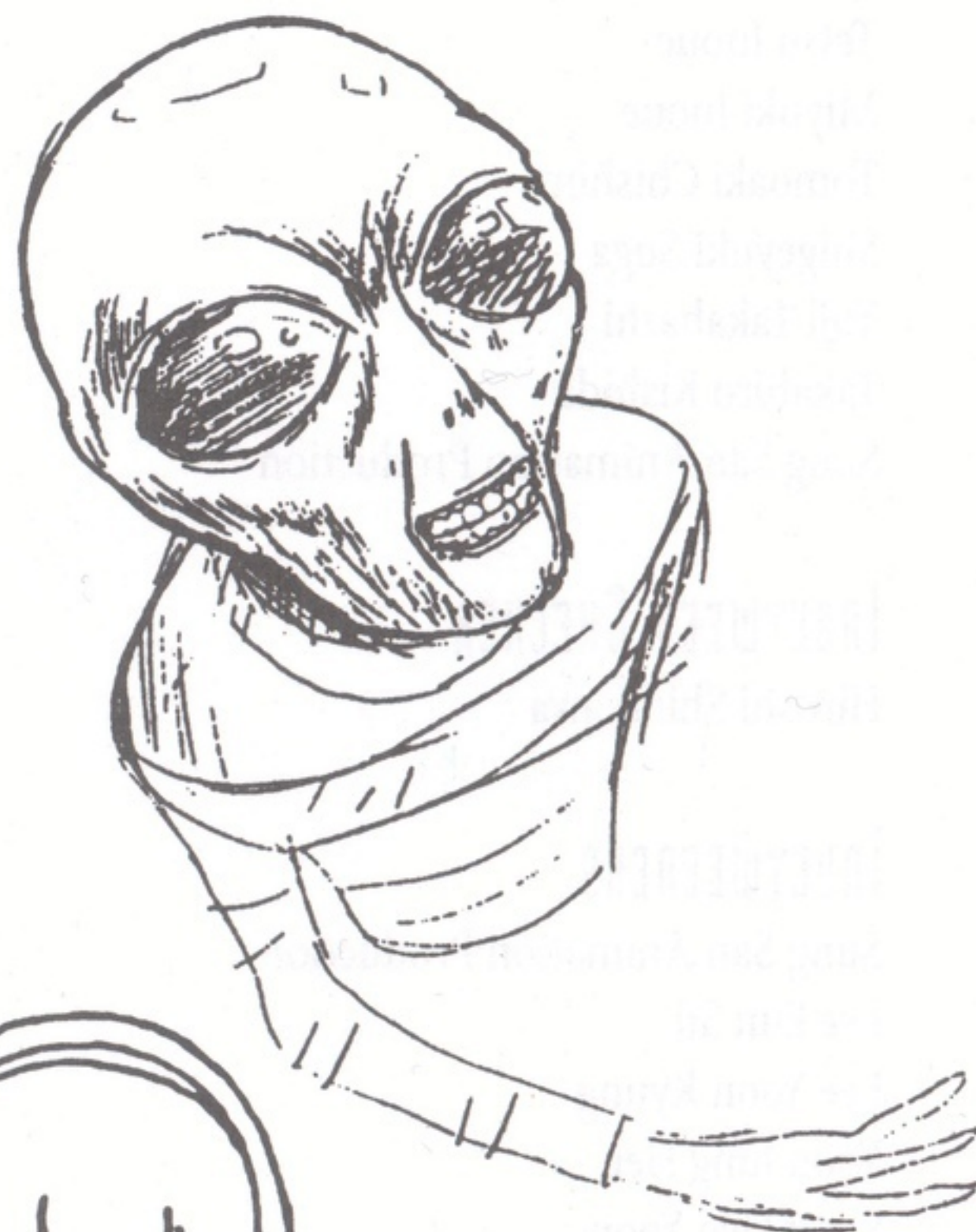
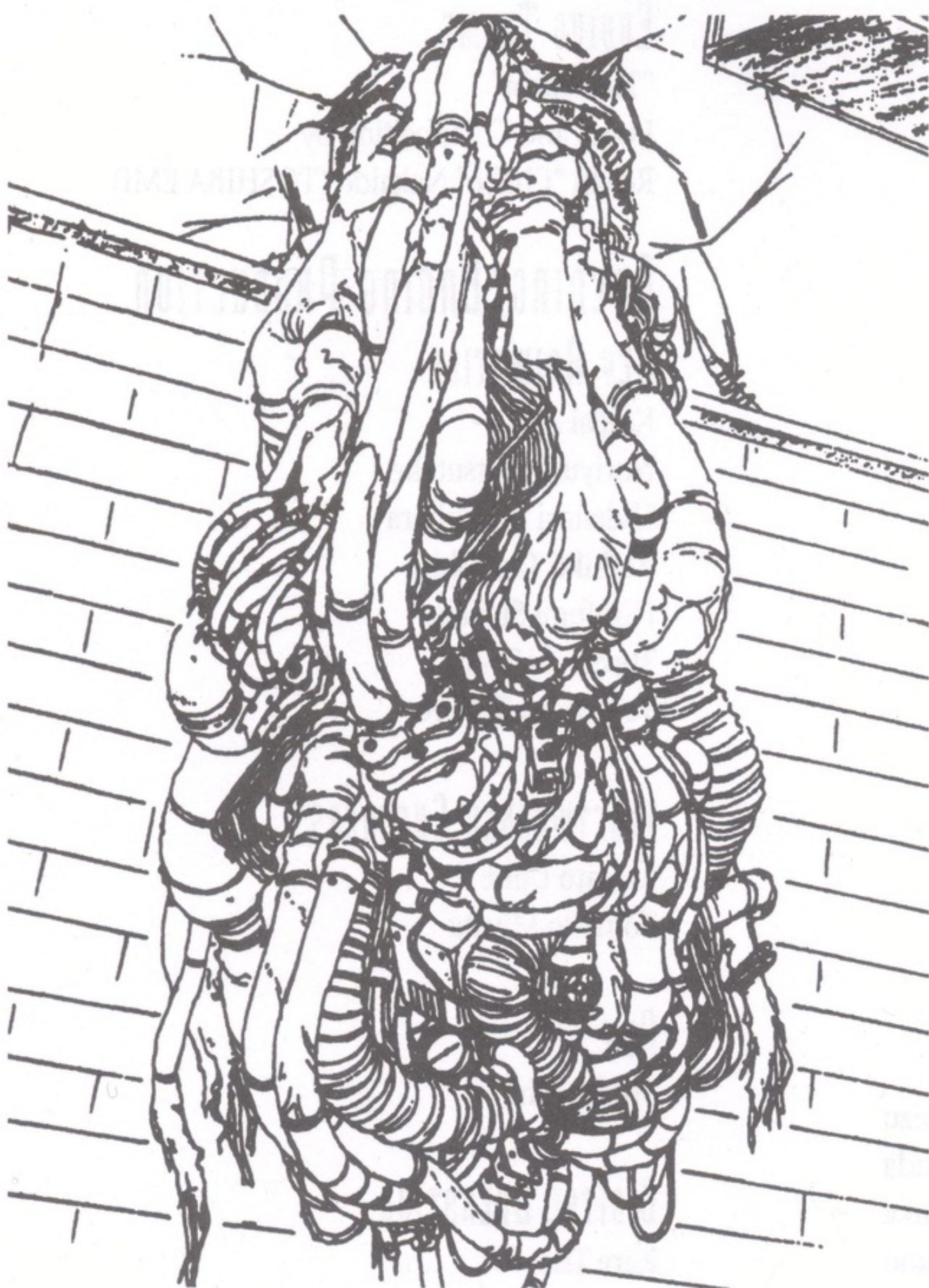












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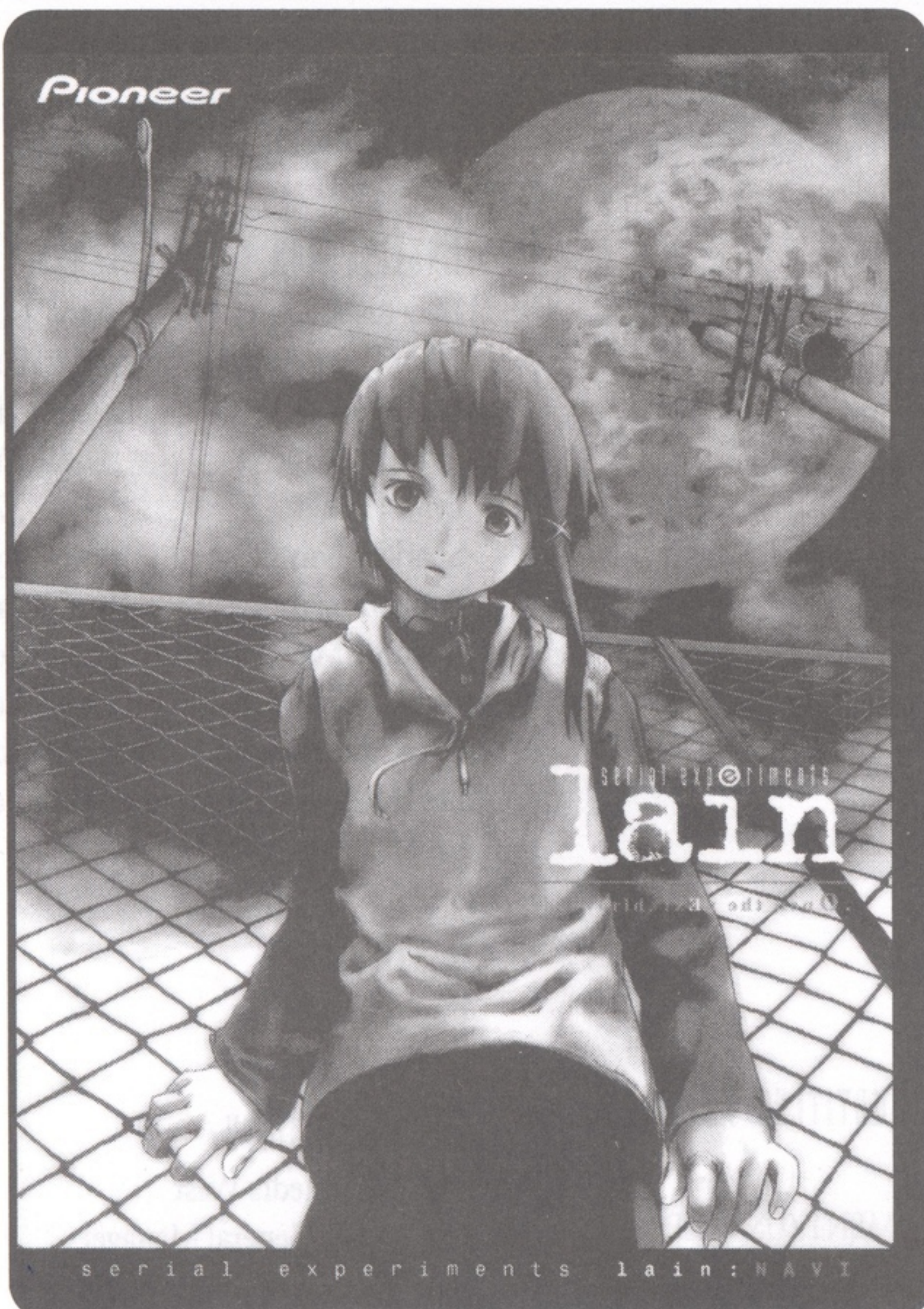
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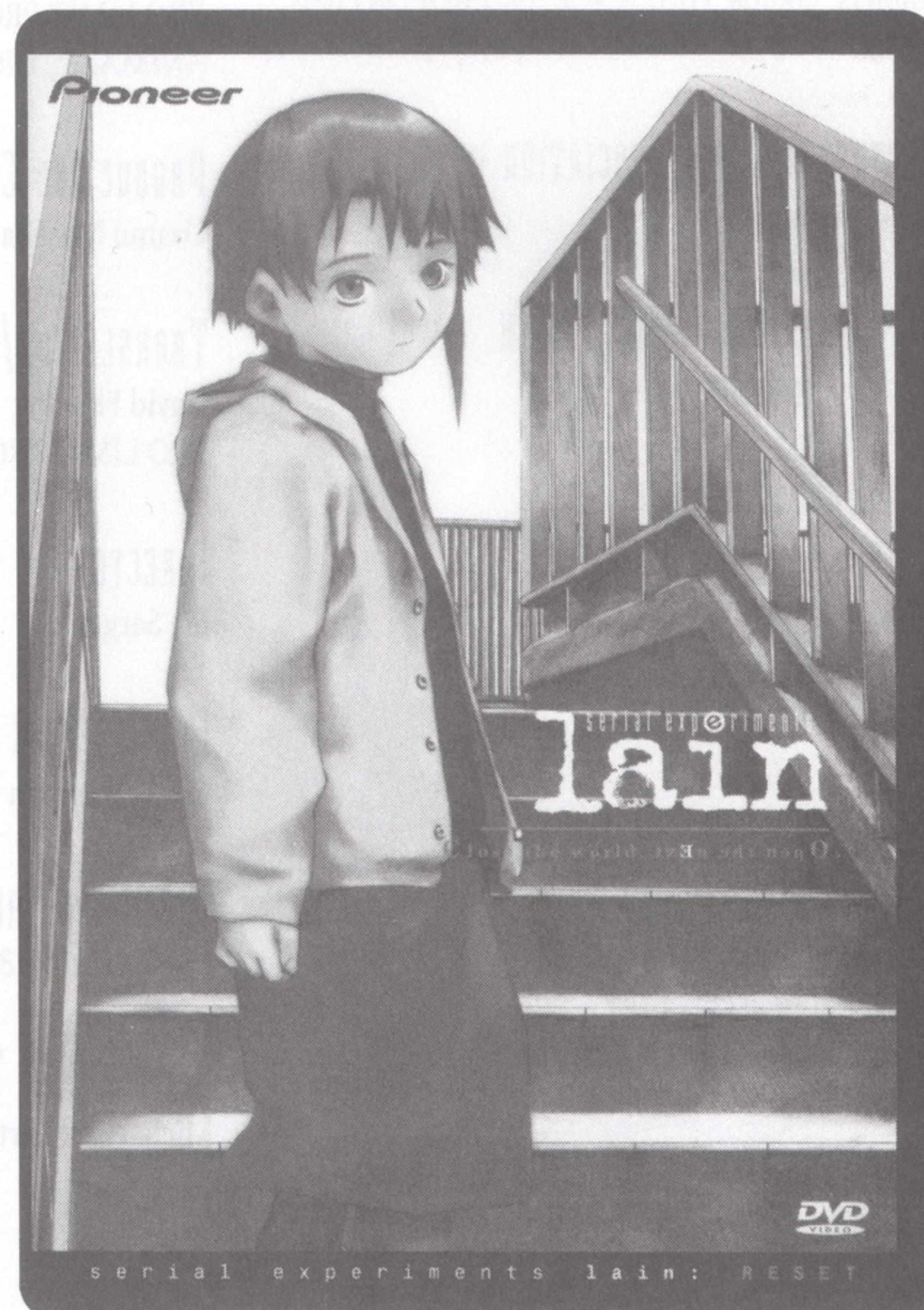
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▲ Serial Experiments lain DVD Volume 2

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