

If I Were: Ending Cutscene

written by

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EXT. LA BINH (BEEN) - DUSK

Amidst the weeping rain, dimming the GARISH NEON SIGNS and VENDORS grappling for our attention, VAN rests with her motorbike by the BANYAN TREE MURAL. Its colors are partially severed by silver tracks brought about by the endless deluge.

She traces her fingers along the branches-- all the way to the letters spelling out "JOIN STRENGTH. JOIN HEARTS."

Her hand lingers over the words with a long-drawn sigh... but in another heartbeat, she parts, mounting her motorbike to put her helmet on and set out and onto the road.

The sun trickles through the clouds, intensifying as she goes through the metal skyscrapers entangling the city, their roofs parading GALLIA'S FLAGS that clog the skies.

Further down the road, Van passes through--

EXT. TRUNG XUAN (CHUHM SUAN) - DAWN

-- the rice paddy fields, where FEMALE ANNGOAIN FARMERS are gathering crops amidst the ashes... briefly, we see the THUAN THIEN (Toat Tien) emblem adorning a farmer's hair. Then...

EXT. GIA VANG - SUNRISE

.. onto the dirtied and ashen roads. She passes by a HOLOGRAPHIC POSTER with her mug and clips of ELODIE presenting her latest PUPPET MODEL to the press on every other screen...

And finally, as the sun reaches its zenith, Van arrives at...

EXT. RURAL GALLIAN NAN-CHI VILLAGE - DAY

KIEM's HOMETOWN. She parks her bike, then walks past the bustling VILLAGERS offloading supplies from a HOVERCRAFT. A WOMAN (26) offers her bread-- which Van gratefully bites.

At the garden, PHONG (Faong) and the VILLAGE ELDER are setting offerings and a flower vase down at the memorial.

When Van walks further in, she finds two MEN (mid-40's) and HAO (How) making SWINGS for the CHILDREN excitedly bouncing.

Before long, her visor lights up with a call from "NHAT QUANG" (Nhut Kwang) on the screen. She picks up... but her words are suffocated behind a mouthful of bread.

QUANG (V.O.)

A most riveting greeting for an old friend you have there. Your show of affection touches me so, really.

VAN

Give me a break, anh. Good bread's been hard to come by again.

QUANG (V.O.)

Oh? Well, not for long. Flour should arrive at the border soon.

Van promptly scarfs down the rest of the bread, snapping her fingers all the while.

VAN

I knew you'd work your magic on those damned penny-pinchers again!

QUANG (V.O.)

Just a bit of luck. Same as usual.

Her eyes narrow at the word 'luck,' drawing into silence.

QUANG (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Okay, fine. More guile than luck.

That has Van breaking into a small smile. By now, Hao tries waving Van over, though Van taps at her visor.

VAN

Say! You want to catch up with chi Hao and Phong? They're here too.

QUANG (V.O.)

A shame. I'm almost at the clinic.

VAN

What? Are you sick? Injured? Or-

Van's eyes brighten as the light bulb goes off in her head.

VAN (CONT'D)

Your cybernetics. Here's to a smooth recovery after then, anh.

QUANG (V.O.)

Thanks. Stay safe out there, okay?

The connection ends with a *click!* as Hao draws near.

HAO

Yen (Ien)? Kiem? Or Quang?

VAN

Anh. He's quite the busybody now.

HAO

That's unfortunate. He and your friends would be invaluable to our current operations.

VAN

As keen as I am on upping our manpower, those three... if they were to choose, they'd be something outside of a Reaper these days.

Van and Hao's visors both flash red. The two exchange a nod and walk over towards Phong as the scene fades to...

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Quang, seated on the examination table. A large scar floods the space once occupied by his core. Then, he glances down at his SENIOR'S PENDANT in his still-mechanical hand.

Curling his fingers in. Out. And in again as the DOCTOR (50s, male) struts in with a clipboard.

VAN (V.O.)

Perhaps they have become a cloud, carrying years and years of bravery on the wind.

The doctor's brows are furrowed deeply against his features. He angrily waves his pen at Quang, who laughs with dew-laden eyes. Then, we find ourselves in...

INT. STUDIO ROOM - DAY

A room of paint supplies scattered across the floor around a single easel. Further framing the area are paintings of the tender green patches of rural An Ngoai; the sunny smiles of KIEM'S SIBLINGS AND PARENTS; and one of a younger KIEM, PHONG, and NGA playing by the river bank.

Further up, where KIEM is currently working, is a nearly complete painting of him and the MAIN PARTY. Tam is in the center, fully rendered, holding a lotus flower in their arms.

VAN (V.O.)

Or maybe... they have become a flower, making every heart drunk with peace and blossom with love.

He steps back to admires his work, but... seeing the time, he jumps to grab his coat and head out the door.

EXT. OUTSIDE WORLD'S STREETS - DAY

Now, in the heart of a CROWD, we see YEN, eyes wildly darting like a startled school of fish. Her shaky hands reach for a vial of MIDNIGHT TEARS--

VAN (V.O.)
Or they could even be a bird,
their once-broken wings now
uplifting tales across all of
time.

-- but stops when she sees Kiem in the audience to wave to him, exchanging smiles. Then, she brings her SAO (Saow) to her lips and skips to the SPRING FESTIVAL SONG as...

EXT. RURAL GALLIAN NAN-CHI VILLAGE - DAY

We return to Van at the village gate with Hao and Phong. The three are exchanging words while Phong hands Van her cape.

VAN (V.O.)
And still, they work towards a
brighter tomorrow.

With another nod, Van pulls the cape on and regroups with the THUAN THIEN MEMBERS waiting for her off to the side.

VAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Just as I am. Just as all of us
had been doing. So until we see
our flags pitched high in the sky
and everyone can choose what it is
they might be...

Van throws her cape behind her, treading through the lotus-filled waters with a gaze aimed towards the RADIANT SKIES, the MEMBERS marching behind her.

VAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
We'll keep carrying the legacy of
you and our people forward.

End.