

1.

The lake was an accident – faulty drainage from an early section of bitplantation⁷ slowly accumulating in a basin, drowning units from the old grid². The pool became home to illegal flora⁴, and a sign was erected:

WARNING

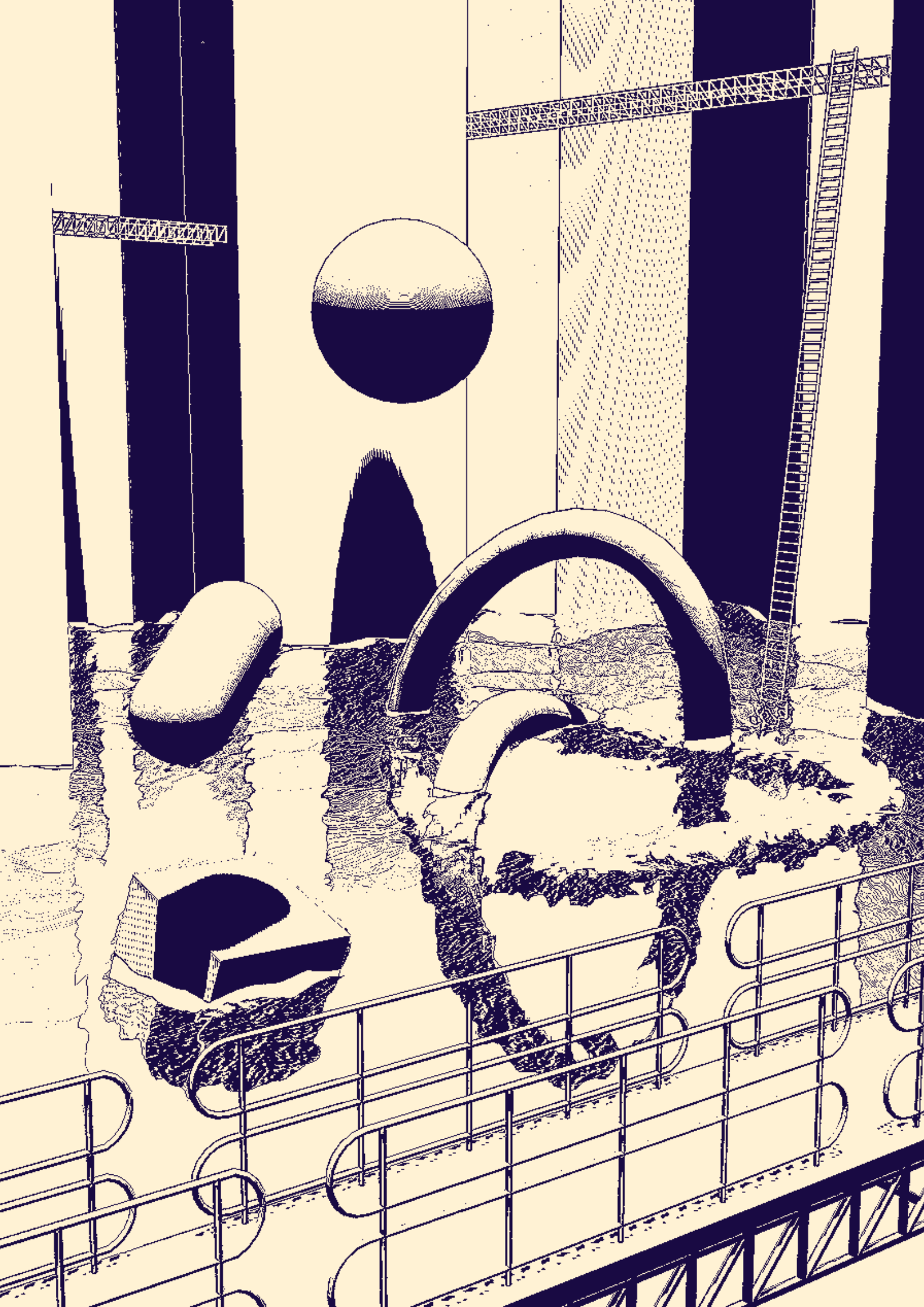
UNTAME BIOPROGRAMS, DO NOT ENTER
INTRUDERS WILL BE PROSECUTED
FOR INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY THEFT

It took them years to clean it up. Now the water runs preternaturally clear around submerged modernist sculptures⁸.

2.

The grid spilled out in every direction, newer machines constantly grafted onto the network, older computers turned into bricks. Technological advancement outpaced the growth of the megastructure, and entire city blocks became energy liabilities, obsolete with age. The grid was decaying from the inside out.

In the heart of this lattice, above a sprawl of abandoned hardware, workers⁶ made their homes: office shanties, crudely renovated control centres, mansions made of broken parts.



3.

Disconcertingly straight lines fracture the sky like a glitch in reality, converging at the moon.

There is no way to read the information that is being etched onto its surface, but it doesn't matter. Untouched by the elements, the lunar engravings will outlast humans. The promise of eternal data storage, coupled with the scarcity of available write-space, is enough. No government could resist the mythic allure, no trillionaire could pass up the chance for immortality, and no tech entrepreneur could ignore the business opportunity.

The lasers are a fixture now, engraving diegeses, diagrams, and data with clockwork precision. The celestial orb, suspended by beams of meticulous destruction, glides over a world growing in lightness.

4.

Thick swaths of water hyacinth humming with data, corrupted algae endlessly entangling bits, plankton replicating like rogue programs.

"Purposeless computation." They tried to patch it all, of course. The bioprogrammers introduced bromeliads loaded with viral code coursing through mottled mahogany leaves, a bold attempt to harness the wild processing power.

When that didn't work, they poisoned the lake and turned it into a liquid cooling system.



5.

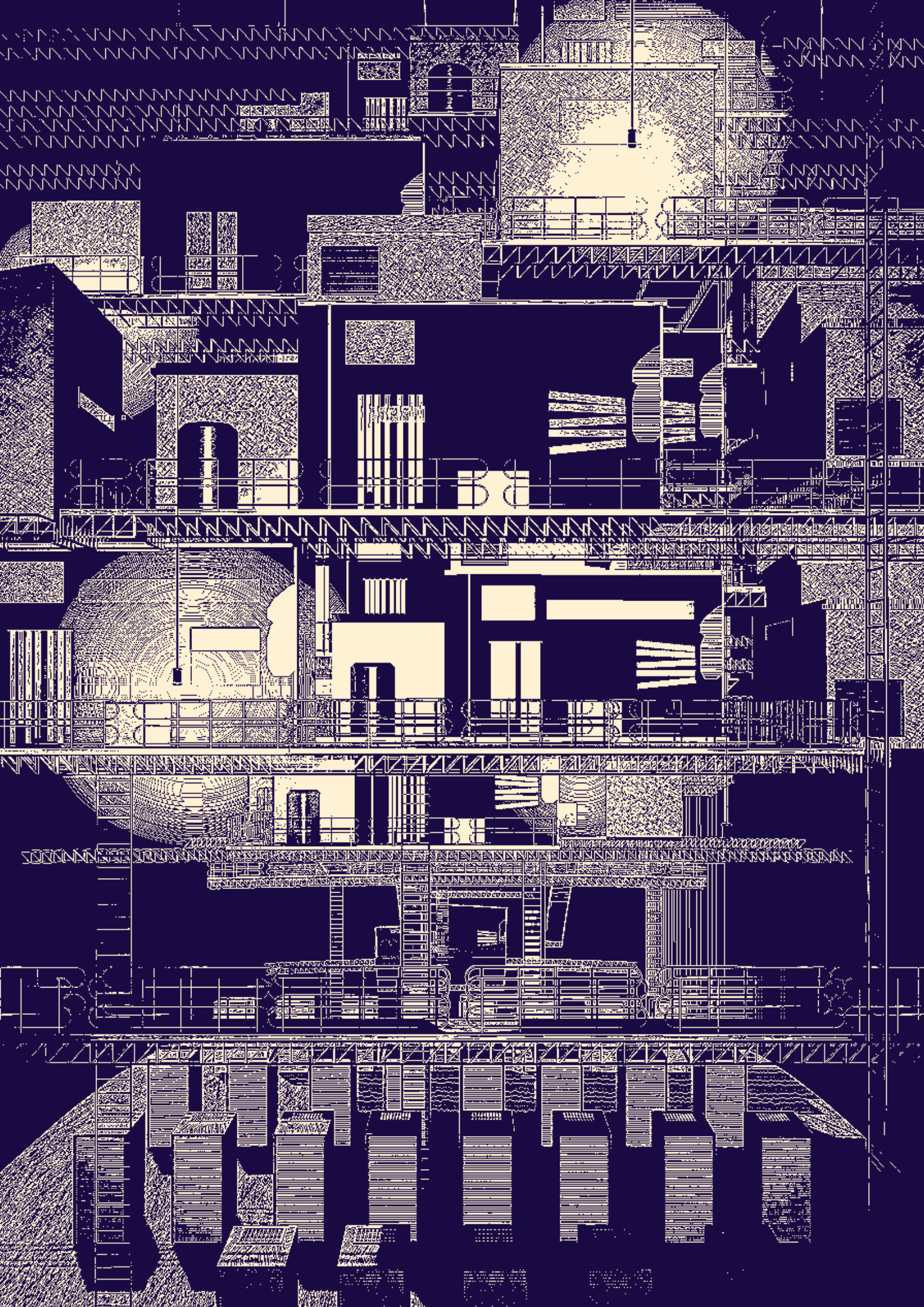
A young girl is lost, but she doesn't mind. The hot air smells of burnt circuitry and clings to her skin. She feels curiously untethered, unsolid enough to pass through walls. It gives her a strange power.

6.

The citizens of the Xingfu Computing Grid are highly educated, coming mostly from a computer science background, and the majority are unmarried white Australian men. Roughly one in nine are Chinese, serving as managers and translators. Most have been here for years, choosing to avoid a long daily commute.

Everyday existence amongst the industrial detritus is like the electrical murmur that vibrates through the structure: inaudible, invisible, but full of hidden energy that permeates a space. Here there is community, beyond never-ending tasks, found in the running jokes, shared triumph, growing tension.

Digital cartography had captured the minutiae of the buildings sitting atop the land, but maps speak nothing of the ephemeral past¹⁰, nor of the lively present – of the people who work in this forest of metal and data, who build and maintain and live inside it, who infect the space with their history and moods and relationships and dreams and sorrow.



7.

Crypto markets shift based on the cost of production. As computing becomes cheaper and more powerful, it remains profitable to mine. The old grid was too inefficient – running the machines started to cost more than the value they provided.

So they turned to plant-based quantum processing⁹. Towers of silicon were replaced by repurposed vertical agriculture systems, resplendent with red-blue light reflecting off the waxy leaves of genetically engineered biological supercomputers.

8.

She skips along the bridge, watching laser-shadows³ cast by strange stone shapes play across the rippling water. A plaque catches her eye:

Monument 2050

designed by AI
shaped by humans
built by nature

She laughs and continues further into the dark night.



9.

Initially, plants were proposed as a solution for data storage: use reverse transcriptase to modify the DNA with extra information, which is then copied with endless redundancy. Then some bright spark realised that plants are much better at processing information than storing it.

As sunlight hits the leaves of a plant, photons excite light-harvesting macromolecules, transforming them into usable energy. This energy travels multiple pathways simultaneously but only ever arrives via the shortest route – a feat of complex biological quantum computing that ensures maximal photosynthetic efficiency.

But because the system entangles with incoming light, you can hijack the chromophores to process your own polarised photons – qubits for mining cryptocurrency⁷, for example.

10.

She remembers her grandmother telling her about the old places and the songlines that connected them, erased and still living.