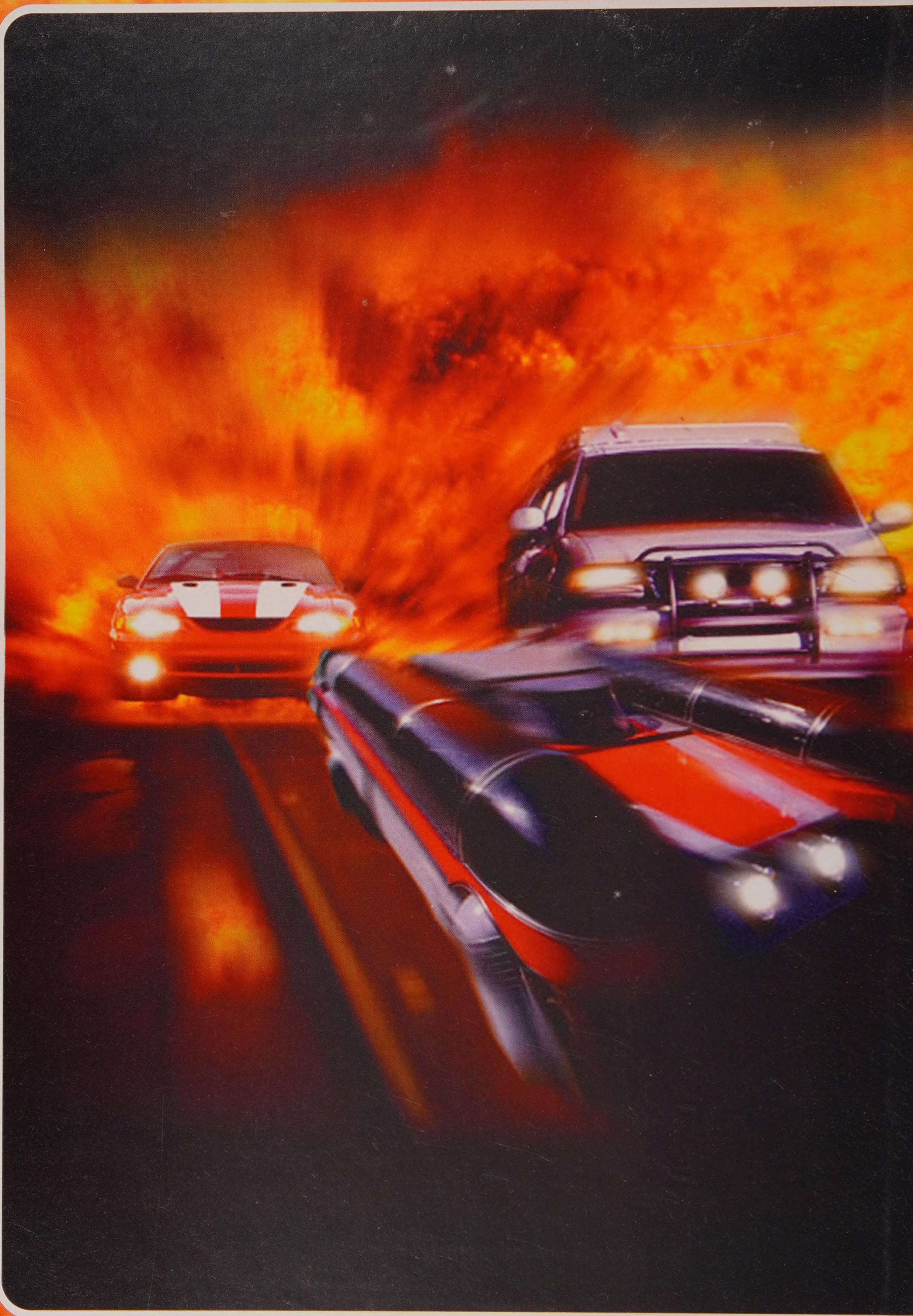
TEAM KNIGHT RIDER™



the official annual





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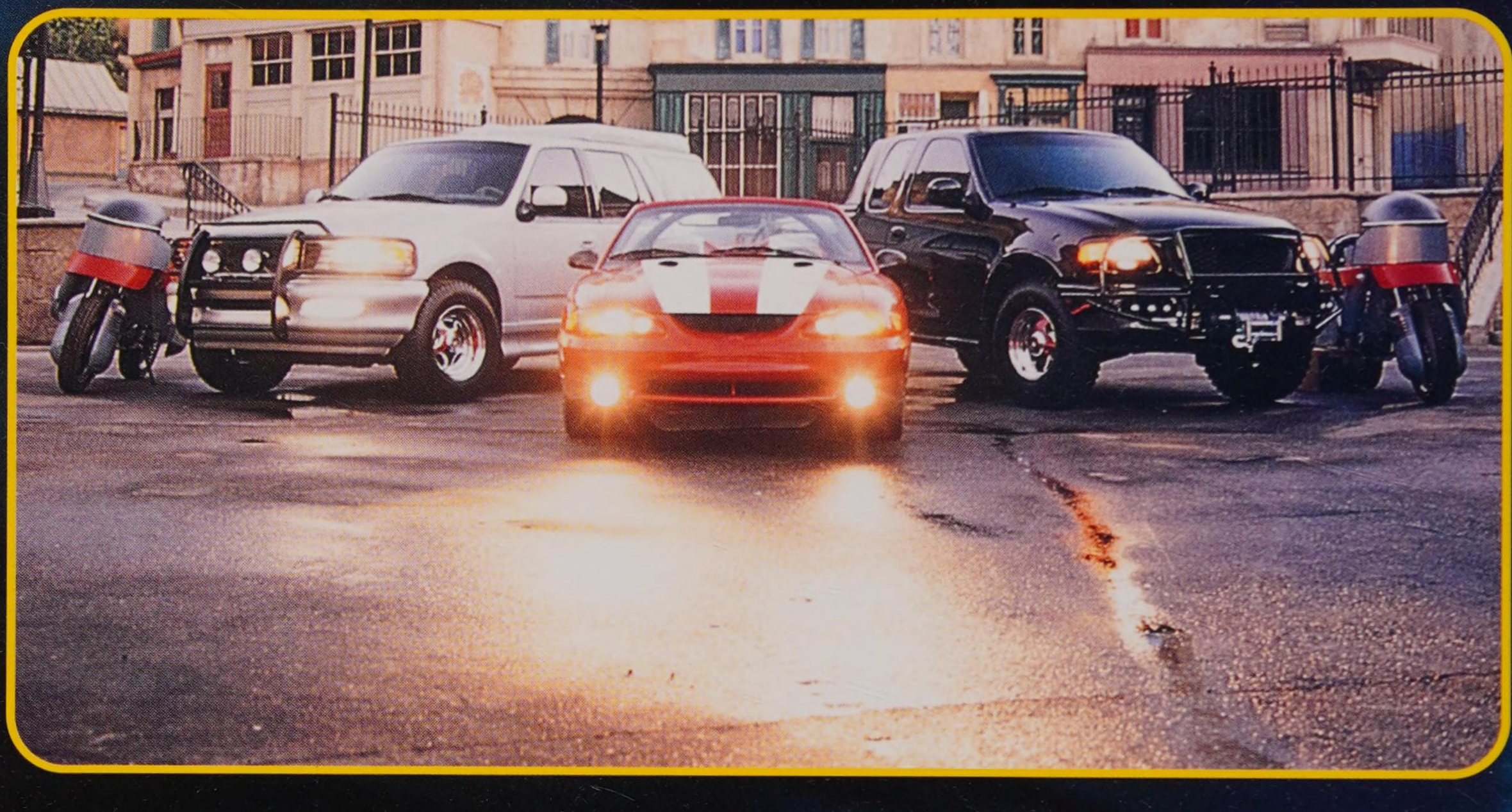
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MEET TEAM KNIGHT RIDER



Ten years ago the sleek black car code-named Kitt, and its driver, Michael Knight, were backed by the Foundation for Law and Government (FLAG). Together they had taken on the world's injustices, from common street thugs to the most sophisticated criminals and their underworld organisations.

Technology that had previously only appeared in science fiction novels and movies supported Knight's tireless crusade. More often than not it gave him the critical edge over those who had believed themselves invincible. Those who believed themselves above and beyond the law.

But that technology, incredible as it was, was little more than just one of Knight's most effective hunting tools. He would probably have succeeded without it anyway, one way or another. It would have been a little harder, perhaps, and taken a little longer, but the odds would have been in his favour.

Michael Knight never claimed to be a god or a saint. Nor was he immortal. But the commitment to what he believed in, what he and Kitt stood for, was as powerful as any futuristic weapon he had at his disposal.

That commitment gave him a true edge. It served him well.

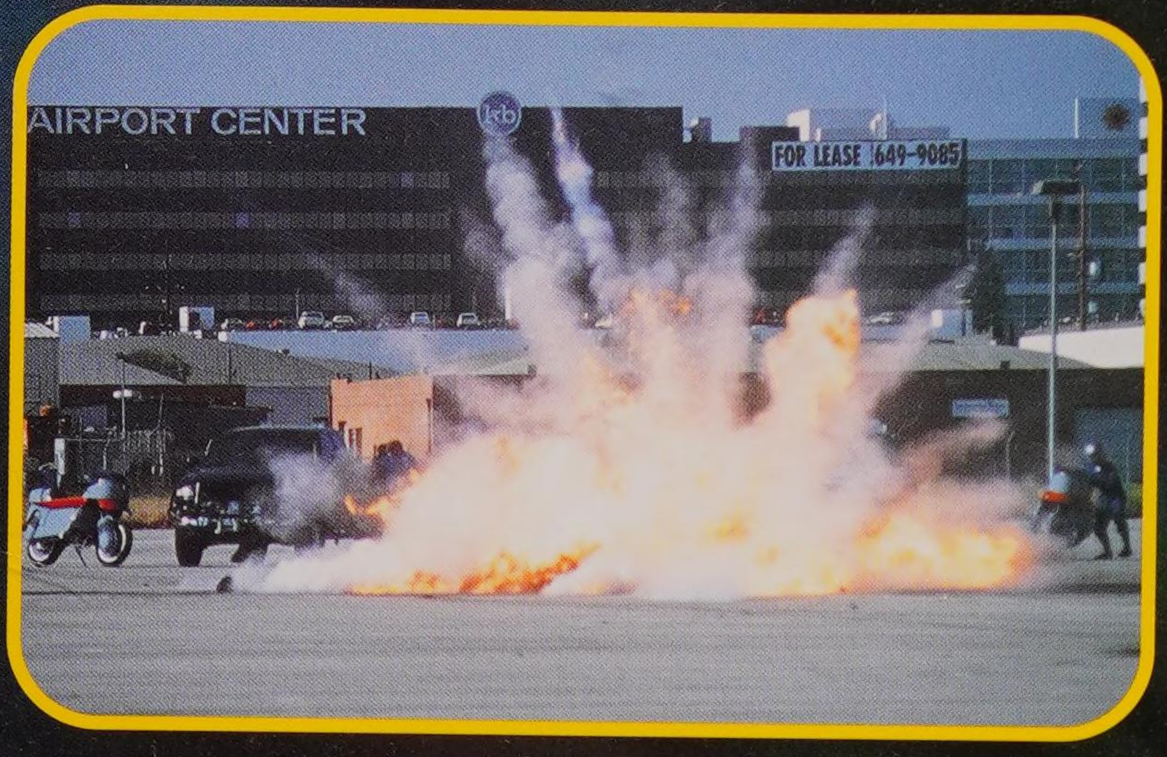
Ten years ago.

Then, as suddenly as it began, the crusade ended. Without warning Michael Knight was gone, and so was the remarkable Kitt.

A decade passed before FLAG stepped back into the vacuum left by Knight's departure, bringing



MEET TEAM KNIGHT RIDER



with it resources that the original Rider could only have dreamed of. Resources of such profound sophistication and imagination that few outside the Foundation's walls even know they exist.

There were other changes too. Instead of Knight's lumbering eighteen-wheeler laden with repair equipment and electronic devices, now there is the Skybase – code named Sky One – an immense flying fortress that serves the same purpose, but with far more manoeuvrability and speed.

Now there are high-tech wrist-worn telecommunication devices...powerful weapons that cover the entire laser spectrum...and sources of information the original Rider never had.

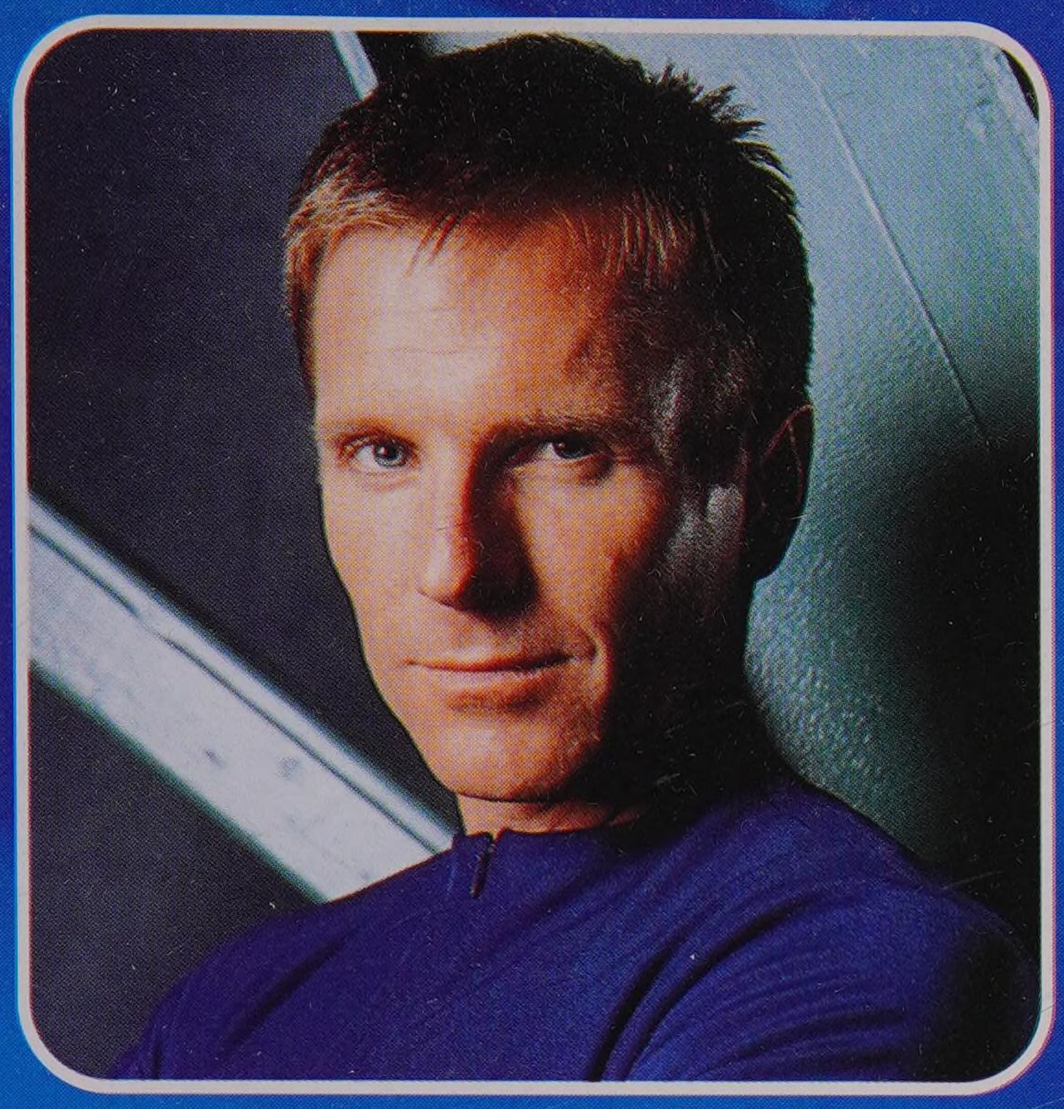
But the biggest change of all is the team itself. Now there are five instead of one.

Five because the enemy and the complexity of contemporary crime had multiplied. With no area of the world completely isolated, with global communications virtually instantaneous, the enemy has ready access to resources only dreamed of a mere decade ago.

Five. Three men and two women. Five fighters, five members of the new TEAM KNIGHT RIDER.

MEET TEAM KNIGHT RIDER... KYLE STEWART

BRIXTON KARNES stars as TKR leader KYLE STEWART. Kyle is a former undercover spy whose field experience and know-how make him the ideal team leader. Kyle is fair and honest, but ruthless when necessary.







TKR

PROFILE

Full Name:

Kyle Stewart

Speciality:

Leader of TKR

Background:

Former Deep Cover CIA Operative

Persona:

Fair, honest, relentless

TKR

VEHICLE

DNT-1 - DANTE

Fast, versatile, rugged - Kyle's persona to the extreme! A modified Sport Utility Vehicle large enough to hold the TKR Team and an arsenal of high-tech equipment. Dante is the TKR travelling command post, and speaks in a very proper, very smooth English accent.

MEET TEAM KNIGHT RIDER... JENNY ANDREWS

CHRISTINE STEEL plays JENNY ANDREWS, a disciplined gymnast and martial arts expert. Jenny is a gorgeous brunette who you'd never guess to be a tough ex-soldier.









TKR

PROFILE

Full Name:

Jenny Andrews

Speciality:

Disciplined gymnast, martial arts expert

Background:

An ex-marine with killer appeal

Persona:

Shy, petite - deadly! Thrives on speed, and is self-conscious of her incredible beauty

TKR

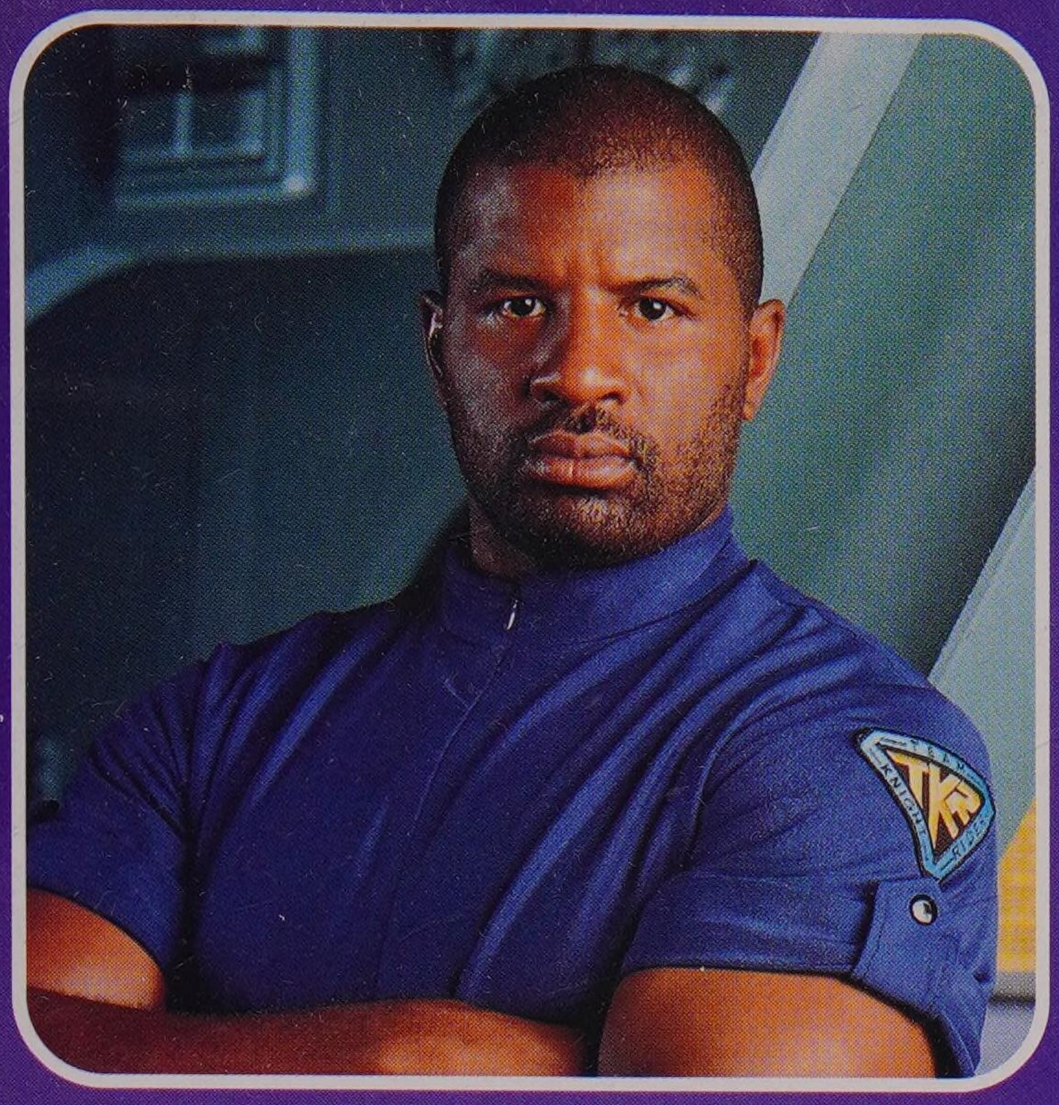
VEHICLE

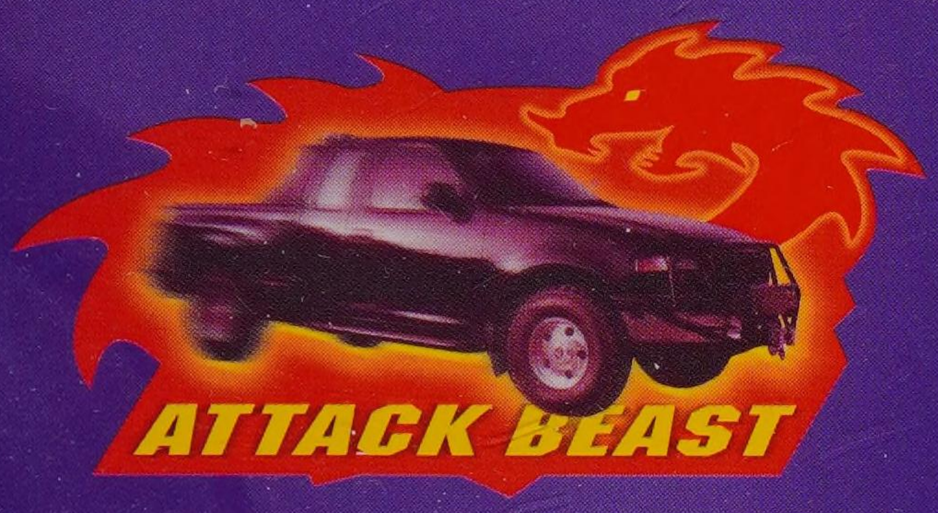
DMO1 - DOMINO

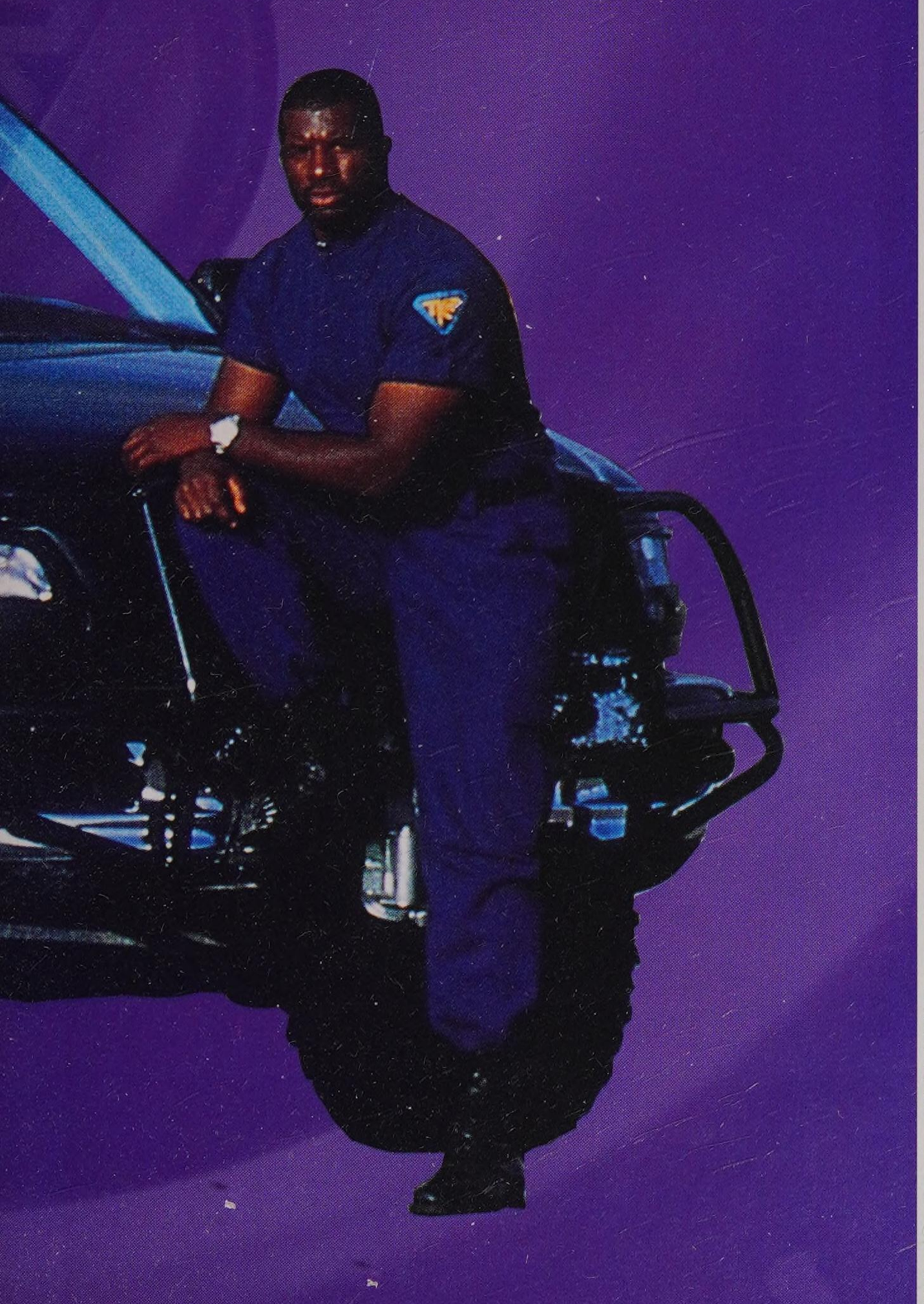
A modified Mustang with seductive power and an exotic voice of experience. Fast, sleek and sexy, Domino is Jenny's alter-ego who tempts her into taking risks.

MEET TEAM KNIGHT RIDER... DUKE DePALMA

DUANE DAVIS portrays DUKE DePALMA, an articulate ex-cop and former boxer. Now he is a no-nonsense heavy metal warrior with an unmatched expertise in weapons and surveillance. Duke is unstoppable, but what surprises people is how incredibly sensitive he can be.







PROFILE

Full Name:

Duke DePalma

Speciality:

Weapons and surveillance expert

Background:

Former small-time boxer with mob connections

Persona:

Tough, street smart, stoic - a total heavy metal warrior

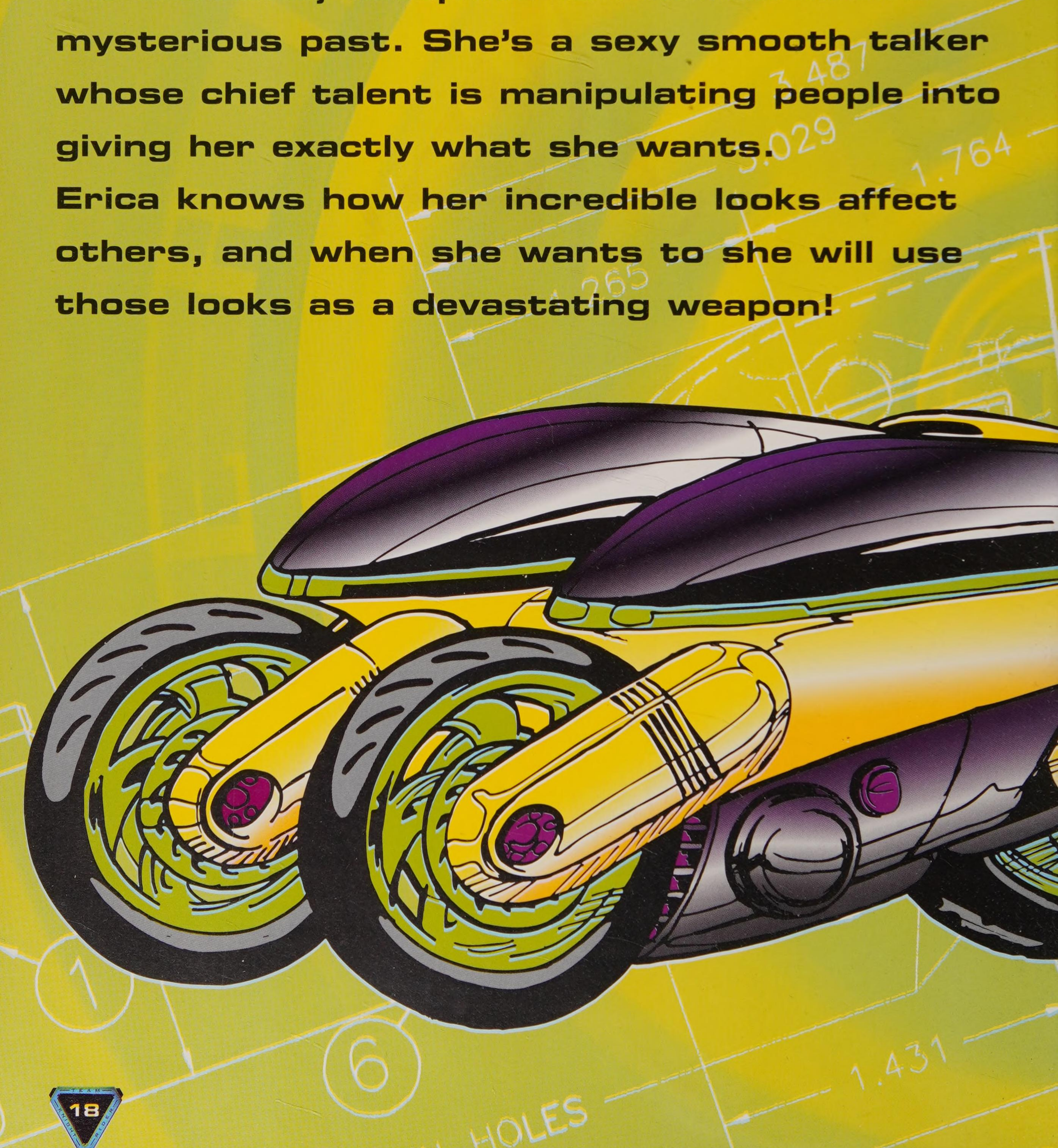
VEHICLE

ATTACK BEAST

Part all-terrain vehicle, part tank. Attack Beast is the full mobile control centre for TKR, with a succession of winches, cranes and high-tech weaponry. The Beast is loyal to Duke, but has a crush on Jenny Andrews.

MEET TEAM KNIGHT RIDER... ERICA WEST

KATHY TRAGESER plays ERICA WEST, the beautiful, deceptive con-woman with a mysterious past. She's a sexy smooth talker whose chief talent is manipulating people into giving her exactly what she wants. Erica knows how her incredible looks affect others, and when she wants to she will use those looks as a devastating weapon!





KAT™



PROFILE

Full Name:

Erica West

Speciality:

Technical expert,
security specialist

Background:

Deceptive
con-artist with a
mysterious past

Persona:

Highly imaginative
with the ability to
think around corners

VEHICLE

KAT

Kat is a hybrid
motorcycle and
sidecar that joins
with Trek's vehicle,
Plato, to form
a high-pursuit
vehicle. Kat is 'Miss
Manners', by-the-
book, and definitely
does not approve of
Erica's ways!

MEET TEAM KNIGHT RIDER... TREK SANDERS

NICK WECHSLER plays TREK SANDERS, a scientific genius. He's not far into his twenties and is sometimes known as 'The kid'. Trek is the gadget guy and the one who can make a bomb out of a couple of coins and a box of paper clips.



PLATO



PROFILE

Full Name:

Trek Sanders

Speciality:

Technical expert, wonder-kid

Background:

Former boy-genius turned hacker

Persona:

A linear thinker and an avid realist; an inventive mind with dangerous enthusiasm; 'twin' of Erica West

VEHICLE

PLATO

Trek's half of the high-pursuit vehicle he shares with Erica. Plato has the voice of a science nerd, a 'brainiac' who is totally consumed with facts, figures and data.

FALLEN NATION
PART ONE



TEAM KNIGHT RIDER 22

One warm Virginia afternoon, a team of gardeners were working on the shrubs outside General Stephen Butler's office window. A pool man scooped leaves from the calm surface of the swimming pool, while a uniformed maid cleaned the French door panes.

The only sign that the General was no ordinary citizen, or ordinary General, were the security guards walking the perimeter of the backyard. They wore suits that were obviously too warm for the day, and they glared disapprovingly whenever one of the gardeners shared a joke with his friends.

The General's office was large and comfortable, yet it reflected his military requirements for neatness and precision. Right now, his highly polished desk was clear of work.

The General, comfortably dressed in civilian clothes, was reading at a marble-topped table near the patio doors. He barely looked up from his book when James, the butler, entered the room and placed a tray on the table.

'What's this?' asked the General, unhappily.

'Dessert,' replied James, glancing down at the fruit, salad and vegetables attractively arranged on the tray.

Butler sighed and closed his book, keeping his place with a finger. 'I asked you to bring me a piece of pecan pie...and don't tell me we're out, I saw half a pan in the fridge this morning.'

James raised a disapproving eyebrow. 'I gave that to the new gardeners. You don't need it.'

'Then bring me that bag of Fig Newtons you have stashed in the pantry,' said the General. 'That's an order, James.'

James retrieved the tray and delivered a parting shot. 'You're the General,' he said, curtly. 'You keep this up and you'll end up as fat as Schwarzkopf.'

The General didn't bother to reply. Once James had closed the door behind him, he began to read again.

Outside, the security guards continued their patrol, watching the General through the French doors, and wondering why it was taking that maid so long to clean the windows.

As one guard passed a large shrub, a gardener suddenly straightened, flipped the large hedge clippers over in his hand and clubbed the man across the chest, sending him reeling off-balance.

It was the signal.

The pool man instantly swung his net over the head of the nearest guard, yanked it tight around the man's neck, and whipped him around until he flew into the pool and out of commission.

The second gardener aimed the handle of his clippers at a third guard, pressed a small trigger at the base and fired a tiny dart into the man's leg. The guard took one step and collapsed, unconscious.

A third gardener promptly opened the cuttings bag at the back of his mower and pulled out several handguns and machine pistols, tossing one to a nearby colleague before heading for the house.

The last security guard, seeing the others so swiftly put out of commission, raced for the French doors, gun in hand. The maid spun around and sprayed the ammonia mixture into his eyes. Before he could cry out, he was grabbed and dealt with by one of the attackers.

The maid checked to see that the General

hadn't noticed the commotion, then helped the others drag the guards out of sight. She said nothing to them, but the expression on her face told them she was pleased.

The entire operation had been conducted without a sound.

The intruders were out of sight when the General heard running footsteps outside the door. Then the door burst open.

'James?' he said.

There was no answer.

From behind, a gun barrel was pressed against his temple. Instinct made him turn to fight, but a second man strode across the room and clubbed him with a pistol. The General collapsed, blood smeared across his brow just above his left eye.

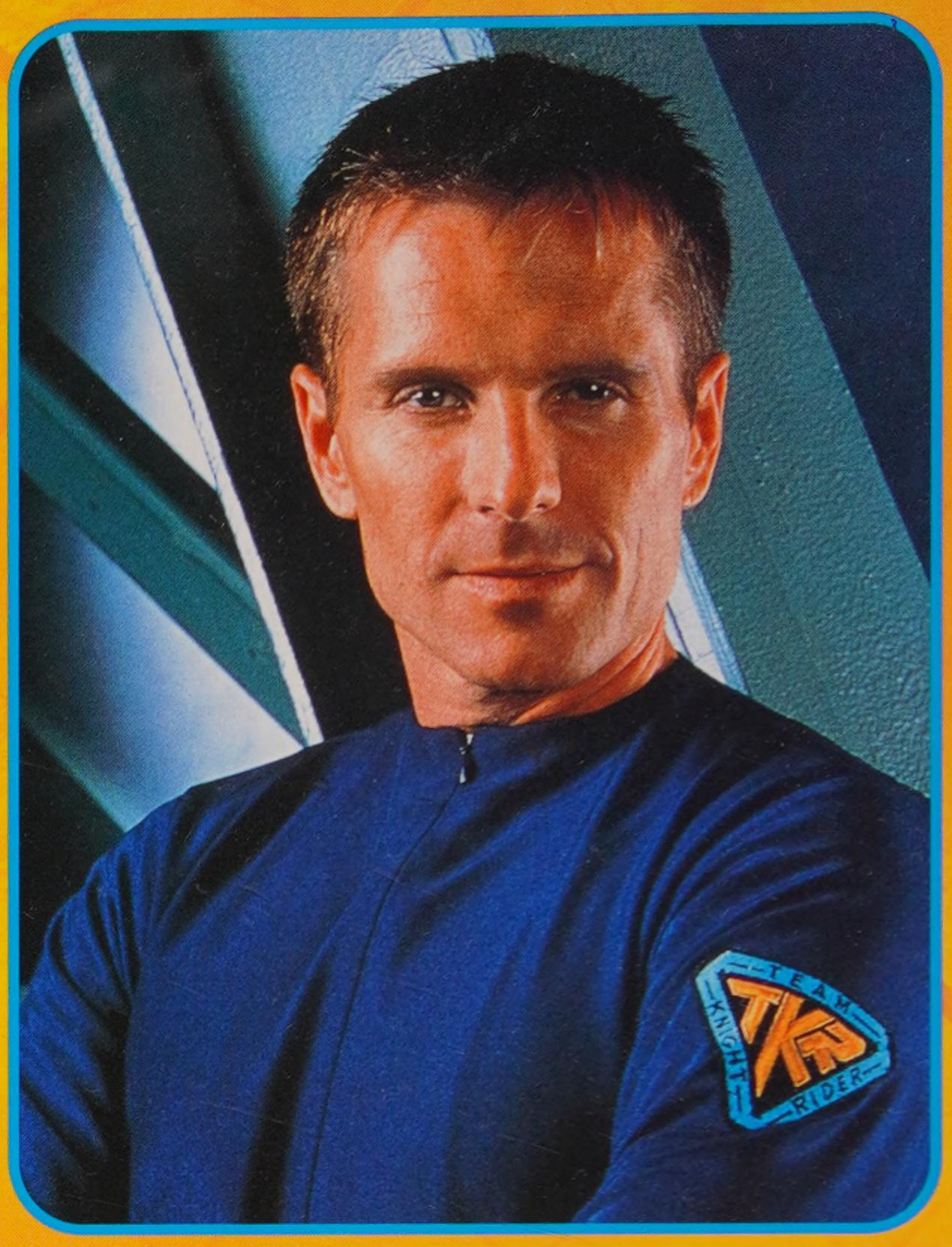
When James returned with the Fig Newtons, the room was empty.

The General was gone.

Across his chair lay a white towel, with the words 'Fallen Nation' spray-painted on it – in red.

Sky One soared over the mountains of the New Mexico Desert, south of Albuquerque. The craft's four powerful engines roared as it banked sharply and began to lose altitude. Several hundred feet above the barren ground, the engine mounts swivelled downwards and the plane hovered, then settled slowly into its landing with a cloud of dust and grit swirling around it. Nearby a lizard hissed from its rock and slipped away.

Suddenly, out of the shimmering heat haze, five shadows raced towards the rear of Sky One. Leading the chase was a burnished silver van, followed by a vivid red Mustang with two broad white stripes down its hood and trunk. Then came an equally sleek black truck with an extended cab and a large bed covered with a tarp. Just behind were two motorcycles, their chassis wrapped in a



gleaming shell of mercury-hued metal.

As they approached, dust surrounded them like a storm cloud, Sky One opened its rear cargo bay and extended a long ramp to the ground.

The five vehicles lined-up and took the ramp at speed. Before the last cycle was completely aboard, the ramp began to retract and the engines began to whine. By the time the door had closed, Sky One was airborne again.

Only the lizard knew it had ever been there.

Duke DePalma sat alone in the TKR Situation Room on Sky One's second level. He had been hoping for some quiet time, time to figure out how to make the Attack Beast behave. He seemed to spend more time arguing with the truck than getting any work done, and he hated the Beast's taste in music!

As his fingers attacked the inlaid keyboard in front of him, he wondered if Michael Knight had ever had such misery as this.



The computer screen blinked at him. He knew the technology that allowed Beast to be the vehicle it was, had been carefully designed to prevent tampering. In other words, he was stuck with it.

Raised voices in the hall outside made him look up. From the sound of it, Jenny and Kyle were at it again.

'Look, Jenny,' said Kyle as they entered, 'every law enforcement agency is involved with this, which is why FLAG's placing us on stand-by status.'

'Stand-by status?' said Jenny Andrews, incredulously. 'You're kidding me...Kyle, we can't let them kill General Butler just to prove some fanatical point.'

Kyle didn't look up. 'Jenny, we all know your history with the General.'

Jenny stiffened at the implied criticism of her impartiality, and it took her a few seconds to regain control. 'I think we should have Sky One change course for Virginia immediately.'

Kyle straightened, then pointed. 'Jenny, you see this chair? This is the chair where the boss sits. Do you see your name on it? No. This is my chair.'

Duke shifted uncomfortably as they glared at each other, then he broke the silence. 'Is it me, or is it getting a little warm in here?'

Jenny took her seat to the right of Kyle's and stared blindly at the monitor.

Kyle leaned over the desk and said, 'Erica, we need that tape.'

Erica West strode in, cassette in hand. 'I can only run so fast, Kyle. I'm wearing heels,' she said, brightly, handing the tape over.

Seemingly oblivious to the tension in the room, Erica took her seat beside Jenny.

Kyle slipped the tape into a slot on the desk. 'Where's Trek?' he asked.

No one answered. They didn't have to. Trek Sanders professed an airy disdain for



meetings of any kind. Duke and the others knew it was only a front, but no one ever called him in on it.

They directed their attention to one of the wall screens, where a haggard General Butler sat at a table reading from a sheet of paper in his trembling hands. 'I'm General Stephen Butler. I've been told to read this: "We are a group called Fallen Nation. We want no ransom. We have no demands for your weak and helpless government. We simply want to use the General to announce to the world our intention to bring America to her knees...What better way to illustrate our resolve than to capture one of your great military heroes and use him as our puppet?"'

Butler inhaled slowly, and suddenly flung the paper away. 'I'm not gonna do this,' he yelled, leaning towards the camera. 'Don't listen to these fanatics. They're nothing but a bunch of low-rent thugs...'

The tape ended abruptly in a shower of static.

The room was silent.

Duke, who had been watching Jenny's pained reactions, looked at Kyle. 'So, what do we have on Fallen Nation?'

'Nothing,' said Kyle. 'But given our stand-by status–'

'We're stuck on the sidelines,' said Jenny in utter disgust.

Kyle continued. 'I was going to say, FLAG's allowing us to pursue our own investigation. Duke, see



what the other agencies are up to. Erica, check with the garage, see if the vehicles are primed and ready if we need 'em...and, uh, somebody find Trek.'

Moments later Kyle was left alone with Jenny. Her expression left no doubt of her anger and disappointment at not being given an assignment.

'Jenny,' he said softly. 'I think you might be a little too close to this.'

'So, what are you saying? You want me to sit this one out?'

He shrugged. 'Well...some time off might not be a bad idea.'

Jenny stood, shook her head. 'I'll take a vacation when that General's home safe.'

Before Kyle could answer, she marched from the room.

Great, he thought; just...great.

Sky One's garage area bustled with activity, as mechanics checked the team's vehicles under Erica's supervision.

Kyle spotted Trek seated on Plato. As he approached, he heard a TV newsreader's voice note with mild astonishment an inexplicable swing in the stock market's numbers, '...it's almost as if someone's playing ping pong with the Dow Jones average.'

Kyle tapped the younger man on the shoulder. 'Trek, we missed you at the staff meeting.'

'Oh,' Trek swallowed. 'Well, Kyle, you know I'm not a morning person.'

'Well, I'll give you a chance to make it up to me,' said Kyle pulling the video cassette from his pocket. 'Got any idea where you think this tape was made?'

Trek inserted the tape into a slot below the computer, and froze the screen when the General's face appeared. 'It's either an industrial bunker or a basement...It's probably a basement, since the electrical outlet there in the corner is a commercial one...basement of a residential home narrows it down a bit.'

Kyle nodded for him to go on.

'Okay, now, Plato's gonna run a three-dimensional scan of the room to get the measurements. Hopefully, then he'll be able to narrow down a possible architectural design for the rest of the house.'

Three hours later Kyle ordered the rest



of the team to the Situation Room where the air began to crackle with the subtle excitement of a mission about to launch.

After reviewing his own monitor, Kyle briefed the others on the latest information. It was interesting, but he wasn't pleased. 'There's got to be something missing.'

Duke said, 'Some neighbours saw a van heading north from General Butler's house. We

should be zeroing in on that area.'

'The police closed off the roads within minutes,' said Jenny. 'They couldn't have gotten far.'

'Just got off the phone with the FBI,' said Erica. 'They're doing house-to-house in Alexandria, but so far...nada.'

'What if they didn't go north?' Jenny asked Duke.

'Five different witnesses say they did.'

'Which,' said Kyle, 'makes it all the more likely they went south.'

Duke frowned. 'How do you figure?'

'1978. The Red Brigade snatched former Prime Minister Aldo Moro in Rome. They used two vans. One took the visible route. The other had the hostage.'

'Should I be taking notes?' asked Erica with a slow-spreading smile. 'I mean, are we going to be tested on this?'

'Don't listen to her, Kyle,' said Kat from the screen. 'I think you're brilliant.'

'That's my motorcycle up there,' complained Erica. 'Who programmed her to talk back to me?'

Kyle had learned long ago to ignore Kat's flattery. He slapped a button on the desk and said, 'Trek, how you comin'?'

Trek's face immediately replaced Kat's image on the screen. To one side of him they could see a rotating 3-D image of a typical Virginia farmhouse.

'Well,' said Trek. 'Among the architectural styles in the area. This kind of house is the only one that would have the right size basement. The good news is, though, there are less of them to the south.'

'Plato, can you find a match?' asked Kyle.

The image flattened over a map of the countryside south of Alexandria. Within seconds it blinked rapidly and shrank to cover the silhouette of a building isolated amid fields and pastures.

'Tell her what she's won, Johnny,' said Plato gleefully.

'Hey,' said Trek. 'You'd be lost without us, wouldn't you?'

Kyle examined the screen. 'Of course, this is assuming the tape was made in a basement. Otherwise, we've got nothing.'

'You know,' said Trek, 'you really know how to suck the joy out of even the smallest victory.'

Kyle almost smiled. 'But since it's nothing concrete, we'll follow this lead ourselves. I don't want to alert the authorities prematurely.'

He looked at Jenny and nodded. Then he turned to Duke. 'It's time to let the Beast out of his cage.'

Sky One swooped over the low hills just south of the target and set down in a deserted meadow. Within minutes the ramp was extended, and the Beast growled out of the aircraft's belly. Duke drove, with Kyle beside him and Jenny in the back.

No one spoke until Kyle asked them to check their wristwatches for communication and video links with Sky One. Then he watched as Duke expertly manoeuvred the huge truck through the trees until they reached a narrow paved road.

'Beast,' said Duke. 'What's our ETA?'

'We'll get there when we get there,' replied the Beast. Then the rough male voice softened. 'How are you doing, Jenny? Are you comfortable?'

'I'm fine, thank you, Beast,' said Jenny, smiling at Duke's displeasure.

'You just let me know what I can do to make your ride more enjoyable,' continued the Beast. 'If you're chilly, I'd be happy to turn up the heat.'

'I can't even get him to turn on the radio,' said Duke.

Kyle chuckled. 'Maybe if you talked to him like a friend instead of a car.'

'It is a car,' said Duke.

'It is a truck,' insisted the Beast.

Duke decided not to press the point and concentrated on getting them to their destination. It wasn't long before he took them back off the road and across a small, weed-choked field. The Beast stopped at the edge of a band of trees.

The house stood directly ahead. Its low peaked roof showed gaps where the tiles had blown away, the long porch and its roof sagged in several places and paint peeled in curled strips from the walls. No one had lived here in years.

The trio went swiftly and silently to the side of the house, ducking behind some trees. There was no sign of intruders, but at this stage Kyle did not want to take any chances. 'Beast,' he said into his wrist-com, 'scan the area. Let us know what you've got.'

After a short pause the truck answered. 'No infra-red readings in the barn or the upper floor of the house. The basement is shielded. I can't tell you what's down there.'

'That must be where they're hiding him,' said Jenny. 'Let's move.'

Kyle put a restraining hand on her shoulder. 'Since we don't know what's waiting for us down there, we'll go slow. Stay behind me.'

From the condition of the porch it was clear that no one had used it recently, but when Kyle rounded the far corner, there was no question that they had found the right place. The cellar doors were made of steel, and set with a thick electronic lock. Duke passed a small scanner over the doors. 'We've got a magnetic lock with a ten-digit combination. And the doors are four inches thick. We won't be kicking 'em in.'

'Booby traps?'

'None that I can detect,' said Duke. 'But I may have something in the back of the Beast to cut through that lock.' He activated his wrist-com. 'Beast, are you carrying the diamond blade mini-saw?'

'I don't know, look for yourself,' replied the Beast. 'But Jenny, if you're in a hurry, I could just burn through that lock with my microwave laser beam.'

Jenny shrugged. 'Uh...sure, Beast. That would be great.'

Duke just managed to step safely aside when a dense beam blasted out of the wood and burned quickly through the lock, snapping it open. Duke turned to Kyle. 'I've got to talk to you about switching cars.'

Jenny patted his arm sympathetically and followed Kyle down the steps and into a cellar that ran half the length of the building.

'No one's here,' said Kyle, squinting in the dim light. 'They must have moved.'

Then he spotted a chair covered by a cloth in the middle of the floor. Someone, or something, was under the cloth.

Jenny inhaled sharply and moved towards the chair. Kyle tried to stop her but she brushed his hand away.

'Kyle, I can handle this.'

He watched as she moved towards the chair. Then he saw it, a thin red beam stretching across the floor. Before he could warn her, Jenny had stepped through it.

The cellar filled with a loud warning signal.

'It's coming from under there,' said Kyle, indicating the chair.

Jenny pulled the cloth away and revealed a three-foot-tall silver canister with a series of LED indicators all blinking wildly.

Duke checked it out. 'C-four,' he said, 'with a timed fuse.'

Kyle shook his head. 'How much time?'

'About a minute. When the whistle stops...boom!'

Kyle threw himself against the door until he thought his shoulder would break.

Duke spoke into his wrist-com. 'Beast, come in! Beast!'

'Nah,' said Kyle, 'he said the basement was shielded. Whatever they're using is blocking transmission.'

'Think, think,' said Jenny. 'There's gotta be a way out.'

Duke yanked the scanner from his pocket and turned in a slow circle. 'All the conventional exits have been sealed. But we have an air shaft in the upper corner of the east wall. It's welded shut.'

Kyle passed a hand over his face. 'Any way we can somehow blow it open?'

'Nope,' said Duke, pointing at the bomb. 'But in about forty seconds that thing will do it for us.'

Jenny threw herself up the steps at the door. She pounded on it, then stepped back. 'Wait. I hear something.'

Kyle stepped up to the door, and he could hear it too. The deep rumble of a powerful engine.

Duke heard it and quickly realised it was the Beast. 'Clear out! Move!'

A split second later, Beast smashed through the cellar doors, bellowing, 'All aboard! Hurry!'

Unfortunately, Beast's dramatic entrance caused the bomb to sway on the chair. Duke lunged for it before it hit the floor and detonated too soon. 'Beast, get 'em out of here!'

Kyle reacted instantly. He shoved Jenny into Beast's cab as it backed out of the wreckage, picking up speed, tyres squealing and smoking. Then, sitting up, he realised the signal had stopped.

Time stretched and in what seemed like tortuous slow-motion, he watched Duke explode from the cellar and race towards them, followed soon after by an immense fireball that blew apart the wall.

Suddenly Duke was in the air, and the shock waves hit Beast, rocking it as the farmhouse disintegrated into flaming wooden shrapnel. He landed on the hood and lay spread-eagled across the windshield. With bits of farmhouse falling out



of the sky, he scrambled for the door, yanked it open and scrambled into the back seat.

'Nice going, Beast,' he said. 'Finally came through for me.'

Without missing a beat the truck answered, 'Are you okay, Jenny?'

They moved out in case the terrorists had another surprise in store.

'They must have moved the General,' said Jenny. 'But why? How could they know we were on to them?'

Before they could consider the question, a voice came through Kyle's wrist-com. 'Kyle? It's Erica.'

'What's up?'

'You guys better get back here. You're not gonna believe this.'

A TV news report was showing on a monitor in the Situation Room. A reporter was speaking amid a mass of others all jockeying for position outside General Butler's Alexandria home. 'Just over an hour ago, General Stephen Butler made a heroic escape from his captors, who call themselves Fallen Nation. General, how did you escape?'

The General, looking rumpled and worn, held up his hands in an attempt to establish some order. 'Uh...they actually...uh...were trying to move me to a new location. And...uh...I was in a truck with one guard...and I was just lucky enough to get the drop on him.'

Another reporter asked, 'General Butler, just who is Fallen Nation?'

Butler shrugged. 'I really don't know. Uh...I didn't understand most of what they were saying, but it was hard to miss the contempt they held for us, or the intention to do us harm.'

Trek picked up a pen and tapped it lightly against his lips. 'How do they plan on doing that, General?'

'And how did they plan on doing that?' asked the reporter.

Butler shrugged again. 'I wish I knew, but they're not going to stop with a failed kidnapping. Next time these guys will raise the stakes.'

'But what can you do about it?' said Trek, staring intently at the screen.

Kyle gave him a tolerant glare as the reporter asked the same question.

Butler hesitated dramatically before answering. 'Well, I talked it over with some of my colleagues, and we're going to meet with the President and see what we can do to help.'

There was a faint smattering of applause as the General backed away, indicating that he was tired and the press conference was over.

Trek grinned and looked at the others. 'I can also watch "Family Matters" and tell you the punch line to every joke before Urkel can.'

Duke shook his head. 'And that's how you graduated MIT when you were eleven?'

'Ten,' said Trek, cocking an eyebrow.

Erica sighed loudly as she massaged the back of her neck. 'We better not invoice an expense account for our rescue of the General, being as he wound up saving himself.'

Jenny did not appreciate the humour. 'I just thank God he got out alive.'

Kyle agreed and the others settled down. He was still annoyed at their walking straight into a trap and now, General or not, this mission had become personal. 'Well,' he said, 'whoever these



Fallen Nation guys are, they're sophisticated and well organised, and we don't have a clue as to what they're planning.' He paused for a moment. 'Jenny, you need to talk to Butler.'

Jenny shook her head in disbelief. 'After what he's been through, you want me to go there and help him relive it? I don't think so.'

'He's the one lead we've got,' Kyle insisted.

'I don't care, okay,' said Jenny. 'I'm still not going.'

Oblivious to the others, Kyle leaned closer to her. 'You're not thinking this through, Jenny. Butler's the only person who can identify these guys. If I were a terrorist, I'd consider that a loose end.'

Domino took the highway straight and fast. At the wheel, Jenny used the wind that blasted over the windshield to clear her mind.

She really hated it when Kyle was right – especially when he was right and she was wrong. But when he cut through her personal involvement like that, in front of everyone else, well...

Still, his point had been well made. General Butler was in danger, and whatever information she could uncover would only serve to protect him.

Jenny did not slow down until she reached the driveway to the General's home.

TV vans were blocking the end of the road, and reporters were milling about on the

front lawn. A handful of Marine guards prevented them from actually getting too close.

A Lieutenant stepped into the road and flagged her down. She recognised him as Mark Davis from her days on the General's staff.

'Mmm,' said Domino, as the Lieutenant stepped up to the car. 'I love a man in uniform.'

Davis made a disgusted face as Jenny smiled up at him. 'We're very busy,' he said. 'The General doesn't have time to talk to you right now.'

'Look, Davis,' replied Jenny. 'I was one of his soldiers too. I care for him as much as you do.'

'I didn't desert him for some fancy car club,' said Davis.

Just then Butler's voice came over the walkie-talkie. 'Lieutenant, let her through.'

As Davis backed away, Domino purred, 'Ah Lieutenant...you single?'

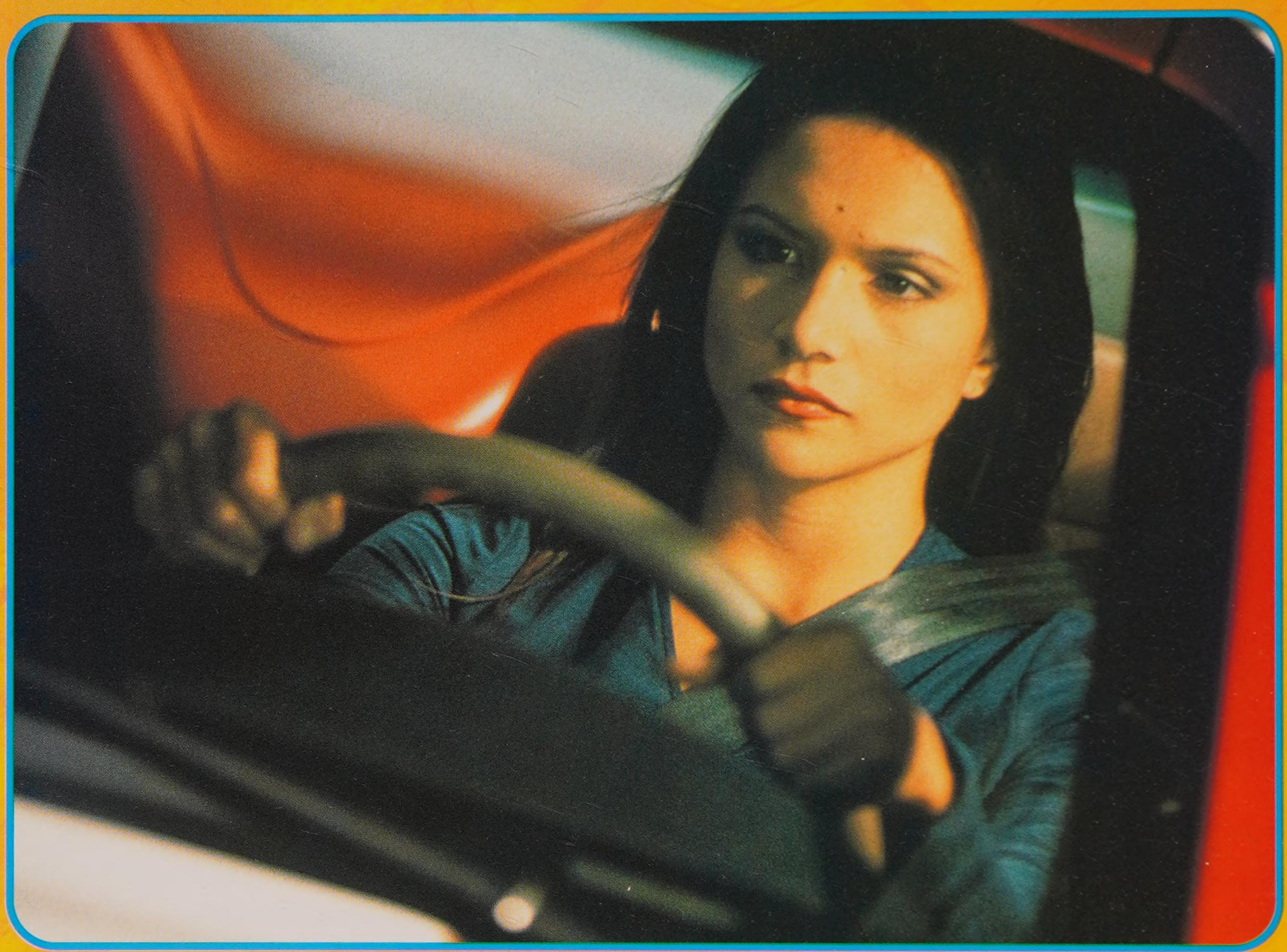
A guard directed Jenny to a parking area beyond the news van. Then another guard hustled her away quickly from the reporters before they realised what had happened.

She met General Butler outside his office. He greeted her warmly and they walked away from the house.

'Lee Majors called me this morning,' he said. 'Wants to play me in the TV movie based on my experience.'

'Hold out for James Garner,' said Jenny, smiling.

The General looked around the garden, then turned back to her. 'I fought in three wars,



and nobody took notice. I get kidnapped by a bunch of crackpots, and I'm on the cover of Newsweek.'

'You seem to be taking it in your stride.'

'I have to tell you something,' he said, seriously. 'This time, I was pretty scared.'

'I never heard you say that before,' said Jenny in some surprise.

The General looked at her. 'I've never faced anything like this. I'm just grateful that Georgia was away visiting the grandkids.'

They walked on through the garden. Jenny paused to touch a rose petal and breathe in its fragrance. 'What did the President have to say?' she asked.

'Oh...he wants me to lend a hand. I can't blame him. I mean we were all caught flat-footed by this bunch.'

Jenny stopped. 'Are you sure you want to take this on, after all you've been through?'

The General stopped too. 'Oh, I won't be doing it alone. I have an outstanding team backing me up. Of course, there's always room for one more...'

'General, I–' said Jenny.

'I really could use you,' continued the General.

'Gen–'

'Oh, I know,' he interrupted again, 'you're with the Foundation now, working for Kyle Stewart. I heard he's not doing too well after his accident. That he's...uh...not quite back up to speed.'

Jenny frowned, wondering where he got that kind of information. 'That's not true. Kyle's as good as he ever was when he was with the CIA. He holds the whole team together. He's a natural leader. I really admire him.'

He looked wistfully at her. 'You used to say that about me.'

'I still do,' she smiled. 'And believe me, I'm going to do everything I can to help.

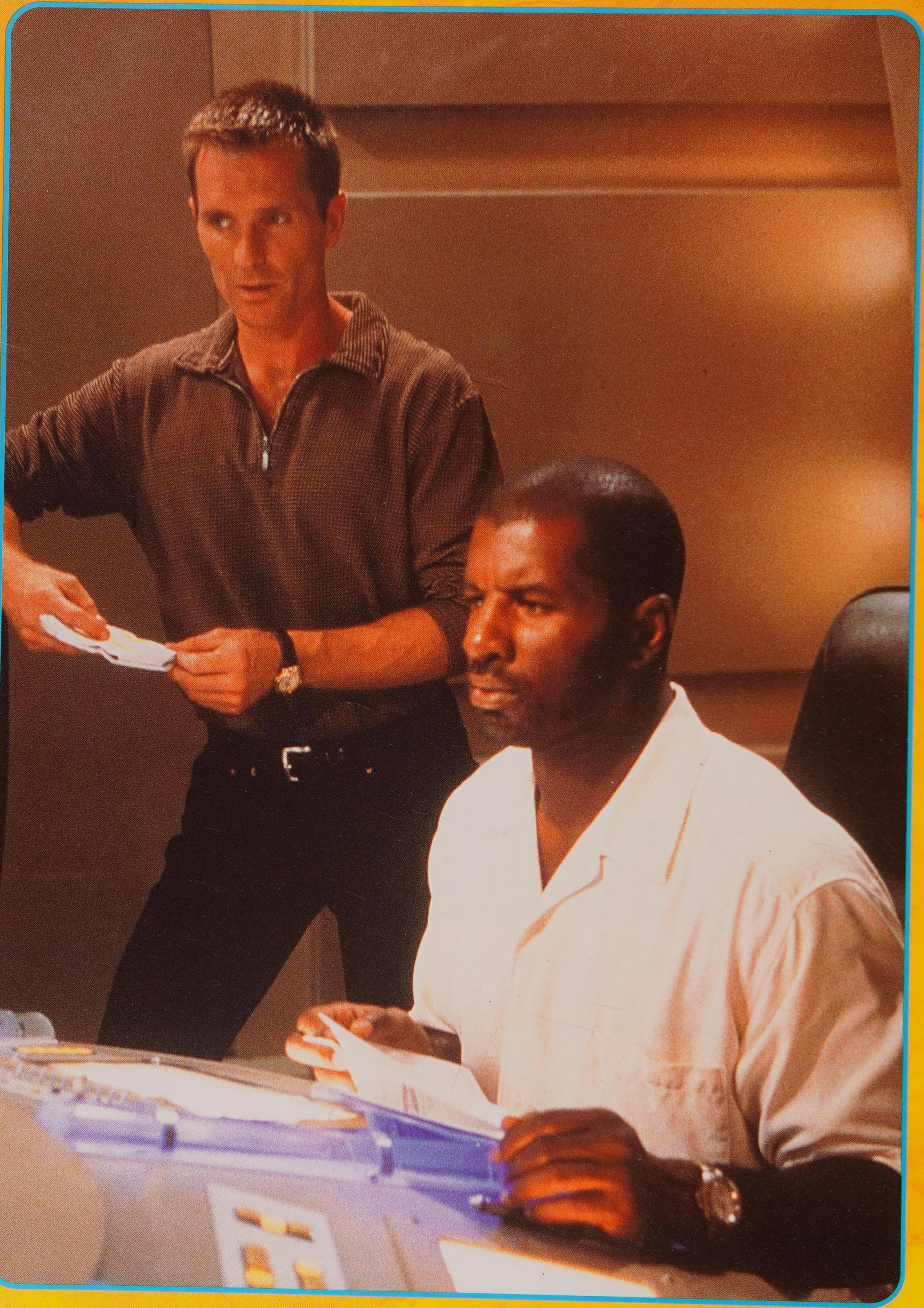
'Good,' said Butler with a sharp nod. 'Because the one thing I know for sure – we're going to hear from these guys again.'

Turbines thrummed in an isolated power station surrounded by a high chain-link fence and topped with concertina wire. As the night crew worked inside, a guard lay sprawled at the entrance. Blood slowly seeped from a wound on the back of his head.

On the main floor two men in hard hats worked at a large console, noting where more electricity was needed, where electricity usage was at its greatest in the state of Virginia.

The crewmen were used to the noise of the place and did not see the black-clad men sneak up behind them. They did not stand a chance as they were knocked unconscious.

In less than a minute one of the attackers had shut the power down, while his partner



clubbed the console beyond repair.

Within five minutes Virginia began to go dark.

Kyle could not suppress a yawn. He and Duke had been in the Situation Room for so long, it was beginning to seem as if they lived there. They were monitoring computer checks run by Sky One, Dante and Kat.

When Dante came up empty, Kyle rubbed the back of his neck and said, 'Did you try cross-referencing Interpol's terrorism data base with the CIA's?'

Dante replied, 'Not one match with Fallen Nation. Shouldn't you be out looking for them?'

'No,' said Kyle. 'I want a new lead before we make a move. Besides, we'd just be tripping all over the other law enforcement agencies who are doing the same thing.'

Duke studied the monitors for a moment. 'I've got an idea. How about checking alternate spellings under the FBI's Domestic Radicals Index?'

'I've checked everybody,' said Dante, in his very proper English accent. 'Interpol, CIA, FBI, IRS...'

'What about the NFL?' quipped Duke.

'Don't be cute,' said Dante. 'I'm telling you, I've got no record of them anywhere.'

Kat joined in. 'That's because he's got a really small memory. I can store a lot more information than he can.'

'Do you have anything on them?' said Kyle.

'No,' admitted Kat. 'But if I did, I'd have more than him.'

Dante snapped, 'This whole TKR program went to hell the day they started making female cars.'

Kyle stabbed a button on the console. 'Uh...Trek, how you comin'?'

Trek replied from Sky One's lab. 'We've gone over the forensic evidence from the crime scene. I agree with the FBI – there's nothing.'

Then he added, jokingly, 'And our lab is much better.'

'Does anyone have anything useful to say to me?' asked Kyle.

As if on cue, Erica came in, beaming. 'Kyle, Communications just got word – there's a state-wide blackout in Virginia.'

'You got here fast with that,' said Kyle.

She winked at him. 'I lost the heels.'

Kat joined in. 'I can show you a grid of all the affected power stations, since Dante isn't programmed to provide such a service.'

'Kiss up,' muttered Dante.

After giving the grinning Erica a sharp look, Kyle studied Kat's map.

'I've traced the source to one relay station,' continued Kat, smugly. 'It's definitely not a mechanical failure.'

'You think it's related?' asked Duke, frowning.

Kyle checked the location of the relay station. 'We're close,' he shrugged. 'Check it out.'

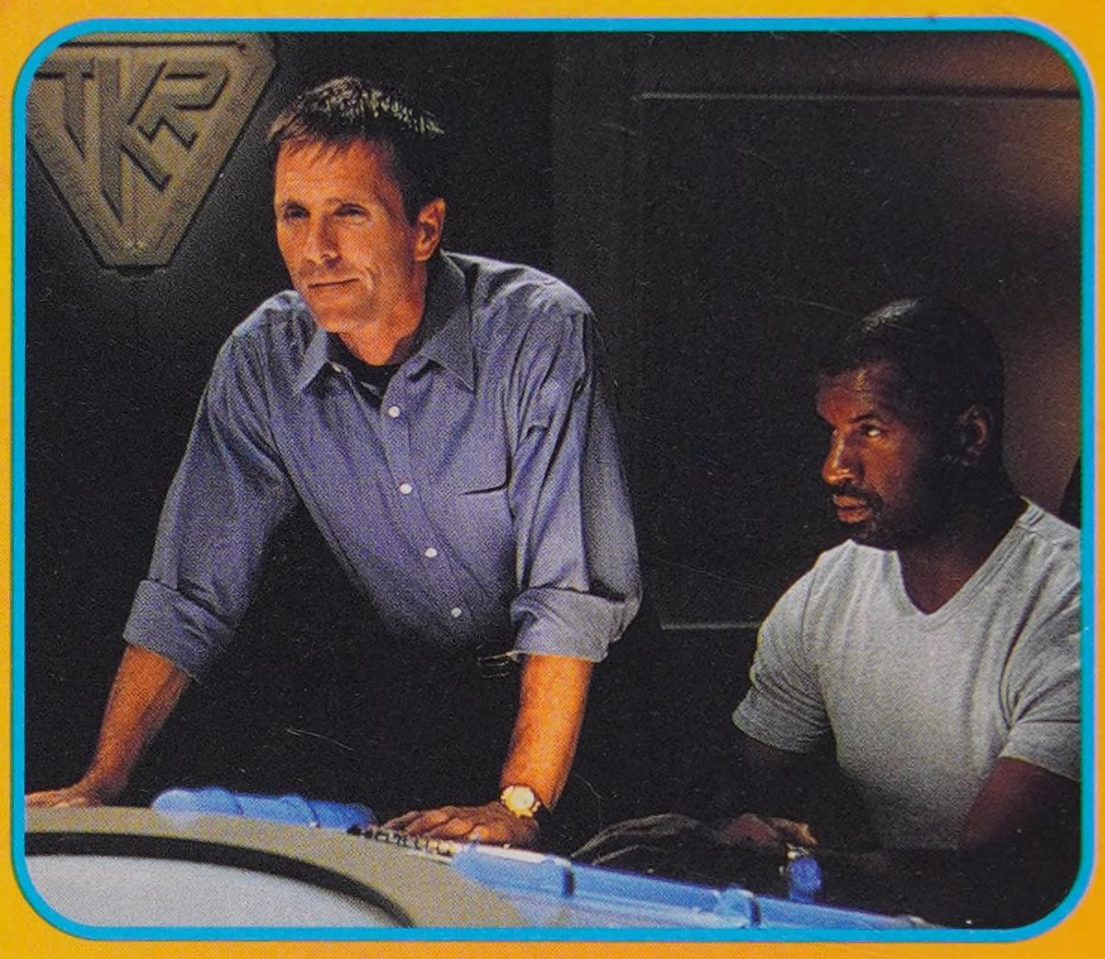
Twenty minutes later Beast pulled up in front of the relay station. They spotted the fallen guard.

'He's still breathing,' said Trek.

'All right,' said Duke. 'Get in.'

'I'll call the paramedics,' said Trek, priming his wrist-com.

The heavy metal entrance door was slightly ajar. Trek went in and quickly located the central console. Dismay crossed his face when he saw all the damage.



Trek shook his head as Duke came in. 'The whole computer system's been tampered with, as well as all the backup programs. It's gonna take days to restore this power, man.'

Duke let his gaze wander until he fixed on a security camera near the console. It didn't look right, and when he went closer, he nodded to himself and yanked it down.

'Well,' said Trek. 'We won't get anything from that.'

Duke smiled slowly. 'Don't be too sure,' and he pointed to a small grille beneath the lens. A quick twist, and he drew out a tiny microphone. Another twist, and an equally tiny audio cassette fell into his palm.

'Oh,' said Trek.

They didn't wait for the paramedics. Beast got them back to base in record time, and within minutes they were in the Situation Room, watching a sonic graph peak and ebb as the computers analysed the muffled voice pattern discovered on the tape.

Jenny, still on the road in Domino, was also present at the meeting – in the form of a holographic image projected above the desk.

Dante spoke. 'Of the five million voice prints I've tried, not one matches with the recording from the camera.'

'Same here,' said Kat. 'Sorry, Kyle.'

Kyle turned to Plato. 'Let me guess...you came up empty.'

'You are correct, sir,' replied Plato.

Kyle rubbed his eyes. 'Which leaves us right back where we started. Fallen Nation can strike at any time, and we can't do a thing about it.'

Jenny's holographic image joined in.

'Kyle, we just received a transmission of that voice print from Dante... Domino's running a check.'

'Tell her to forget it,' said Duke, miserably. 'We're never going to find a match.'

Kyle hated to admit it, but he agreed, and couldn't believe it when, not ten seconds later, Domino said, 'I know who it is.'

'But how?' said Kyle. 'None of the other cars...'

'Because I've just added that voice to my file,' said Domino.

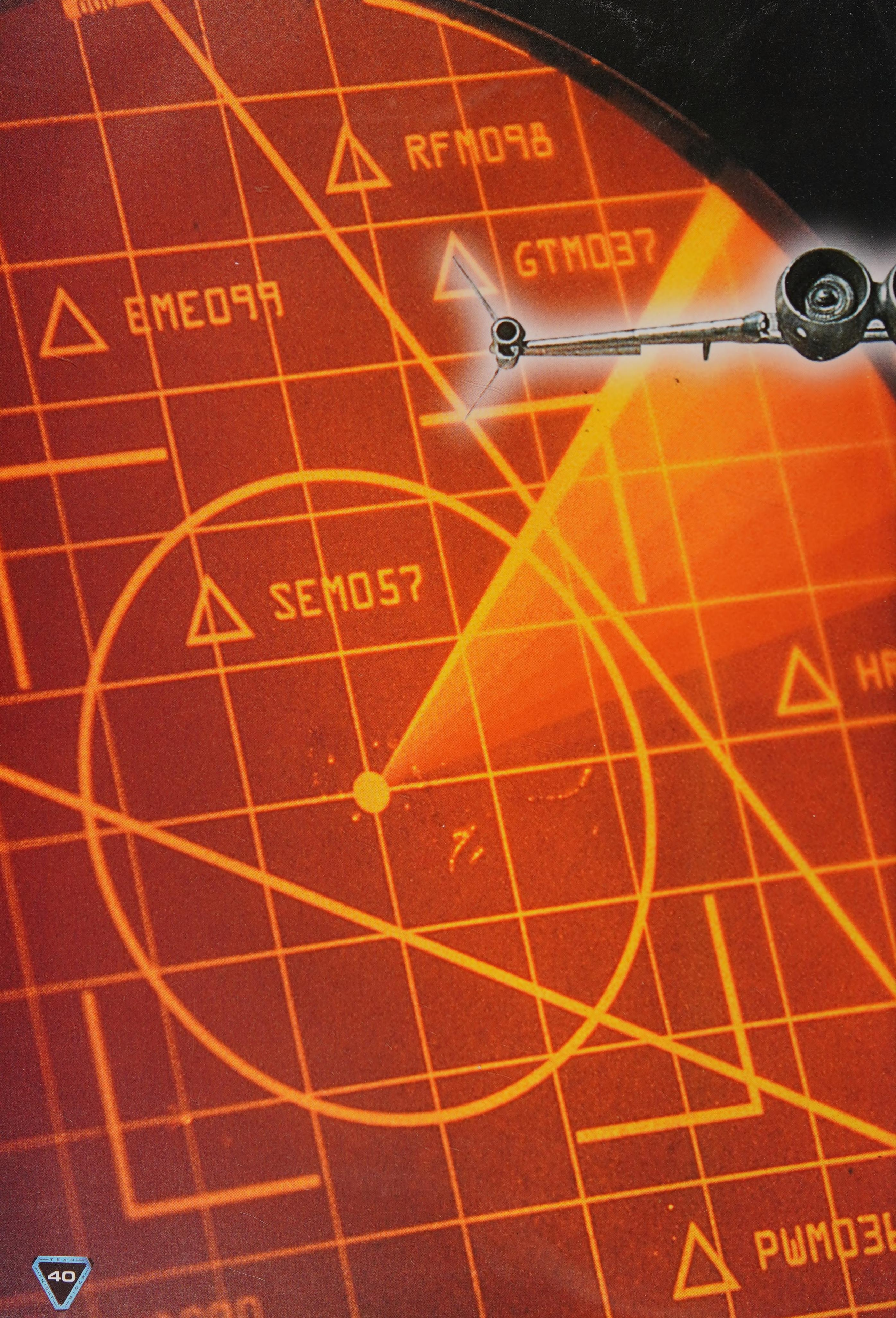
Although the others couldn't see the image that flashed on Domino's dashboard screen, they could hear Jenny's soft, shocked voice.

'Davis...it's Mark Davis.'



TKR FALLEN NATION

continues on page 42


RFM098
GTM037
8ME09A
SEM057

SKY ONE



Sky One is the enormous CSA military transport plane which serves as the headquarters for the TKR team.



This remarkable craft is outfitted with garages, sleeping quarters, target ranges and even a gym.

Sky One is a fully operational base which allows TKR to mobilise and deploy anywhere in the world.



FALLEN NATION PART TWO

Tension spread through the room as every available computer checked through every on-line telephone book to search for Mark Davis and his address.

It didn't help that one of the monitors was constantly tuned to the TV news. Its screen showed massive traffic jams, helpless police, and areas so dark that the camera lights were unable to penetrate them.

The newsreader sounded calm. 'As emergency generators continue to fall, Virginia plunges deeper into chaos tonight. Fallen Nation, the terrorist group responsible for capturing General Butler, have openly claimed responsibility for the state-wide blackout.'

Erica slumped back in her seat. 'We're never gonna find him this way. There's gotta be hundreds of listings for "Mark Davis".'

Jenny's holographic image still hovered above the desk. 'I'm heading back to the General's house to warn him,' she said.

Kyle shook his head. 'Not yet. Give us a chance to grab Davis first.'

Jenny's face darkened with concern and defiance. 'Butler has to know that Davis is a traitor.'

Kyle leaned close to the holographic image, lowering his voice, ignoring the others. 'He might not be the only one. If there are other people close to the General who are working with Davis, he could get tipped-off before we get to him.'

Jenny's voice was just as intense. 'And if Davis finds out we're on to him, it could cost Butler his life.'

They glared at each other, until Duke finally cleared his throat. 'Uh...Should we leave?'

Kyle shot him a glance. Duke shrugged. Erica raised a knowing eyebrow.

'Jenny,' said Kyle, 'I'm giving you an order. Don't tell Butler anything...'

Jenny's glare deepened, and a second later her image wavered and then vanished.

'...Jenny?'

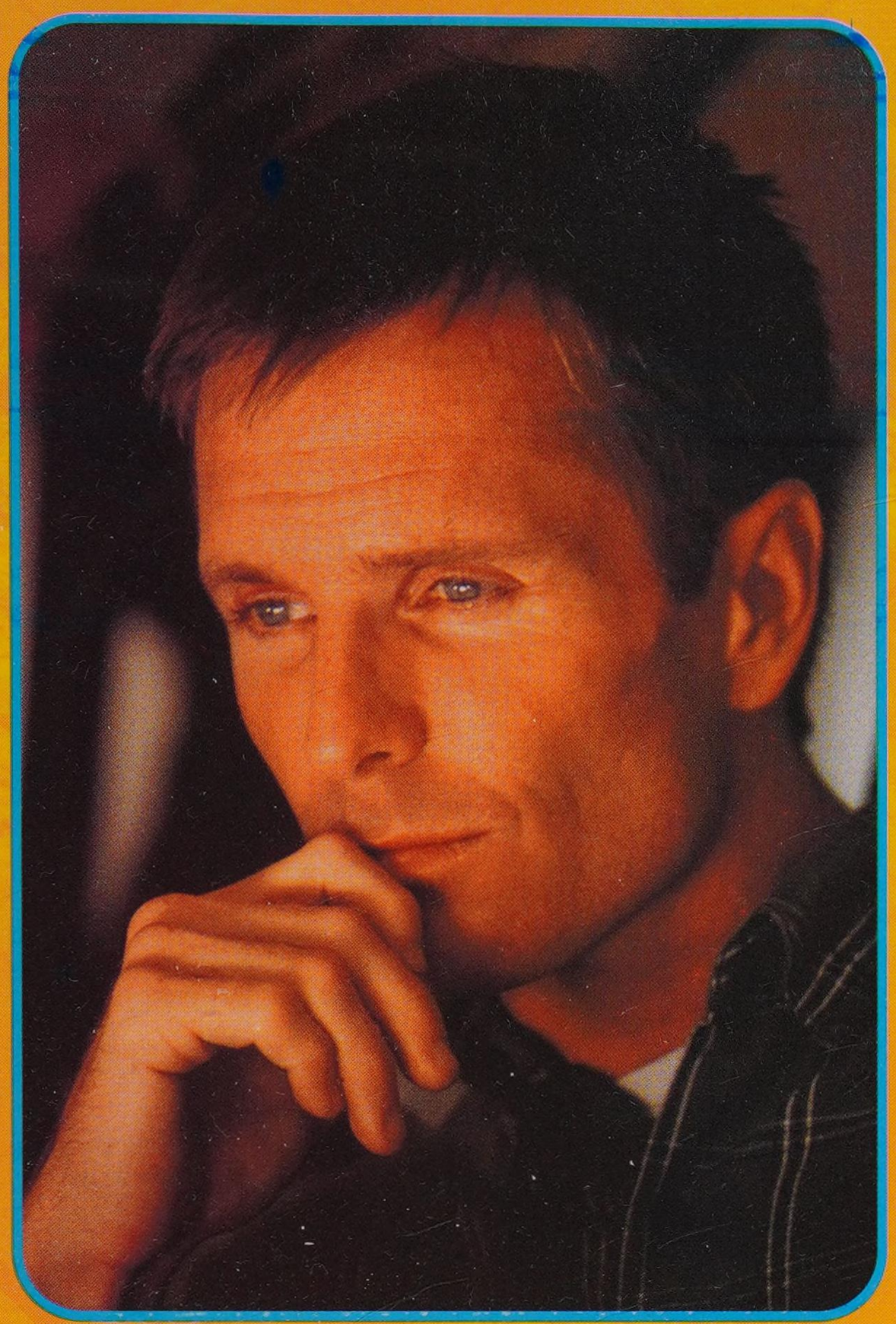
There was no answer.

'Jenny!'

No answer.

Trek coughed lightly. 'I think she hung up.'

'Yeah, I know,' said Kyle. 'Look, we gotta



find Davis...fast.'

Kyle turned angrily from the desk and stared intently at the monitors. Then, a decision taken, he stepped close to Dante's image and whispered something that no one else could hear.

In the Communications Room at the Annapolis Naval Air Station, a lone sergeant was doing her best to keep up with events outside. She was juggling orders from her superiors with frantic calls from people wanting to know if Maryland was next on Fallen Nation's list. So, it came as a relief when the next voice she heard had a cultured British accent.

'Hello,' it said, smoothly. 'Can you tell me how I can find a Lieutenant Mark Davis?'

'I'm sorry, sir,' she replied. 'I'm not authorised to release that information.'

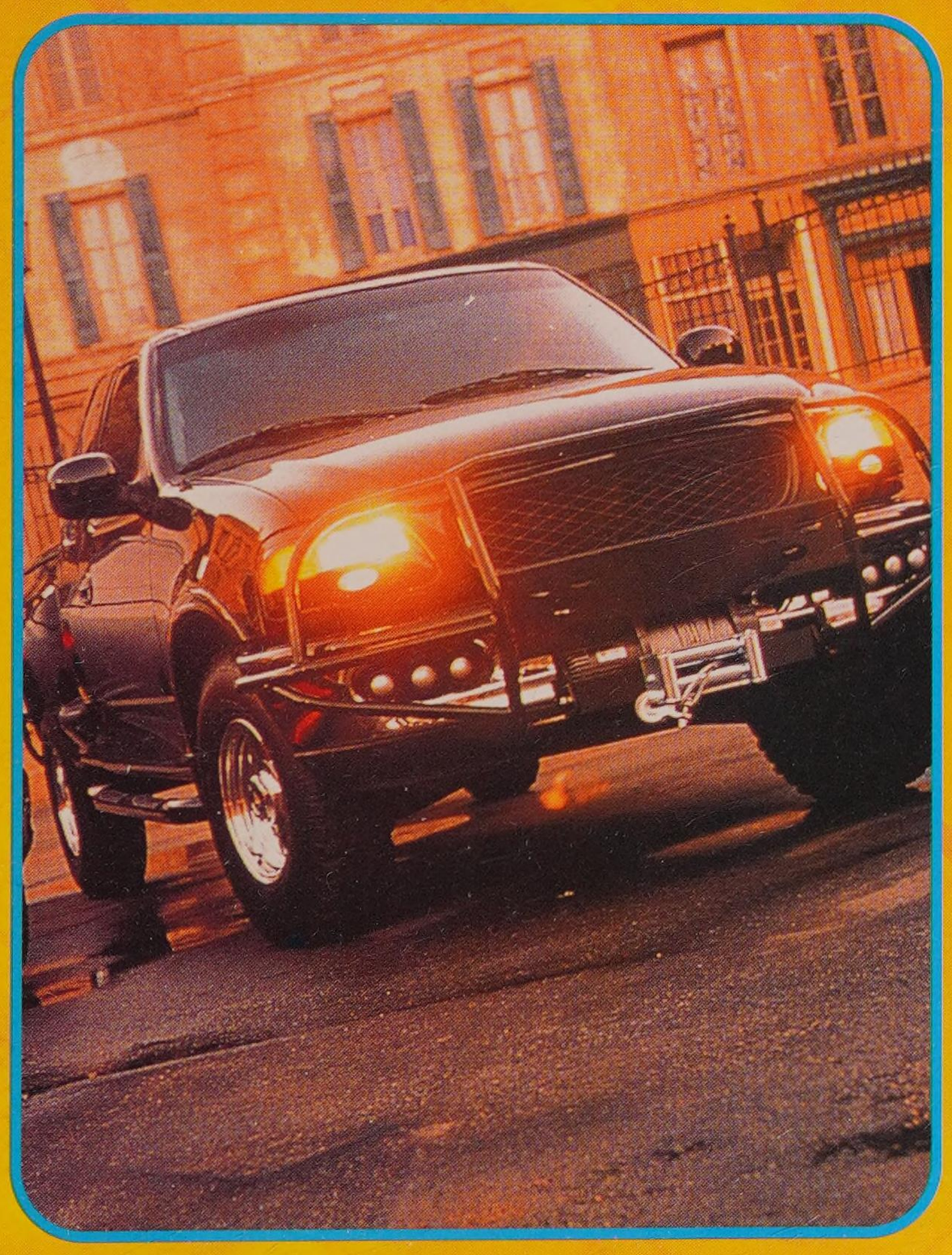
'Oh, are you sure? Not even for me?'

She couldn't hide a fleeting smile. 'I'm afraid so.'

'You know,' said the voice, now smoother, more intimate, 'I never usually say things like this, but has anyone ever told you what a lovely voice you have?'

The sergeant glanced nervously around the room, feeling guilty because she knew she had begun to blush.

She giggled slightly.



'He's in Baltimore,' Dante told Kyle, 'assembling troops for the crisis in Virginia. She even gave me her home address. Said she wants to meet me. I didn't have the heart to tell her I was a car.'

Jenny slapped Domino's steering wheel in increasing frustration. She had been making good time, but the traffic had thickened considerably to slow her down.

On Domino's dashboard monitor, the calm TV newsreader kept viewers updated on the blackout situation. 'As the number of highway accidents and reports of looting continue to rise, efforts to restore power to Virginia have been unsuccessful. Army and National Guard units have been reassigned and posted across the state in order to calm fearful, anxious residents...'

Jenny slapped the wheel again, as the newsreader continued. '...The Governor has declared a state of emergency, and the President plans on making a statement tonight. We caught up with General Butler at his home in Alexandria. He had this to say...'

Jenny glanced at the screen as Butler's face appeared and he began to speak. 'An attack like this is meant to cause panic. Now, the best thing we can do is to remain calm...'

A reporter asked, 'General, do you know what the President is going to say tonight?'

'No,' replied Butler. 'But the divisions under my command are on full alert. I'm sure the President is going to demand a swift and immediate action.'

'General,' said another reporter. 'A recent Gallup Poll puts your approval rating twenty points ahead of the President...'

'We're in good hands, with the President,' said Butler, reassuringly. 'I back him one hundred per cent.'

Jenny gave a weak smile. Her old boss had not lost his touch.

Outside an apartment complex in Baltimore, Trek and Erica waited in the PlatoKat combination. It looked like a very expensive, very futuristic sports car.

'He's on his way in,' said Trek. 'Now, remember, Kyle said stick to the plan. That means no improvising.'



Erica opened her side of the vehicle and climbed out, leaving her helmet behind.

'Hey, it's not like I've never done this before,' she said.

Trek blinked, but experience had taught him not to ask any questions. Then he saw a car drive up behind him and park at the kerb in front of the apartments.

Lieutenant Mark Davis slid out of the car, wearing a well-cut, very smart civilian suit. He stretched, yawned, then told his driver to stick around. He'd be back in a few minutes.

Trek crossed his fingers.

Things were moving fast, and Mark Davis didn't have much time. He hurried up the steps, coded himself in, and hurried to his apartment. Once he stepped inside, he froze.

He could hear water splashing off the tiles in the shower. Pulling a service revolver from his jacket he edged cautiously down the hall.

With one hand he pushed open the bathroom door and was surprised to see an officer's uniform on the floor.

He charged in and yanked the shower curtain aside just as the water was shut off.

He gaped in astonishment – at Erica.

'Oh!' she gasped, looking at him over her shoulder. 'I didn't expect you home so soon.'

He continued to gape.

She smiled. 'As you can see, I'm a Captain – so you have to be nice to me.'

'Yes, ma'am,' said Davis, as Erica wrapped herself in a thick, fluffy towel.

'Actually,' she said, 'I was hoping you could introduce me to General Butler...I just have to meet him.'

Davis preened. 'Well, I...I am the General's most trusted aide. If anyone can get you to see him, I can.'

'Oh!' purred Erica. 'How lucky for both of us, But, you know, it never occurred to me that his Lieutenant would be far more attractive than the General himself.'

Trek, listening in from outside the apartment complex, was dismayed. 'Why can't she ever stick to the script?'

He heard Erica gasp in pain as Davis grabbed a handful of her hair and pressed a revolver to her temple.

Then he heard the Lieutenant say, 'I don't know who you are, but I'm not buying it!'

'I'm telling the truth, I swear,' said Erica.

Davis explained. 'You almost had me convinced, right up till you said I was more attractive than Butler. They always prefer him.'

He shoved her away, but she spun and came right back, flattening him against the wall. Then he felt a tiny jab in his neck. As his legs buckled under him, he was sure he saw a needle

sticking out of her forefinger.

He was right.

Erica breathed a huge sigh of relief as she retracted the needle into her false nail. Then she lifted Davis in a fireman's carry and quickly hauled him out of the apartment and down the stairs. It wasn't until she reached the entrance hall that she realised she was still wrapped in the towel.



Thankfully, Trek had pulled PlatoKat closer to the entrance. Together they bundled the unconscious Lieutenant into the back half of her part of the vehicle.

Erica jumped in, grinning at Trek's startled look. She heard Davis's limousine driver call out a warning. Then he tried to start his engine, but it sputtered and died on him.

Erica looked at Trek. 'How'd you disable the limo?'

'Beverly Hills Cop,' replied Plato. 'Paramount Pictures, 1984...'

Erica was puzzled.

'...Eddie Murphy stuffed a banana in Judge Reinhold's exhaust pipe,' explained Plato.

'You guys scare me,' said Erica.

Kat spoke up. 'You two just better be quiet and listen to the police band.'

Accepting the advice, Erica switched on the radio, and they heard a police officer's voice reporting their position, 'Suspects are up ahead, approaching Northside Freeway...'

A crackle of static and another police voice, 'Right on the Ten.'

The police band crackled again, 'We're seconds away.'

That was answered by another voice. 'We see you. All units stand by.'

Trek frowned. 'You know, I think we should've spent a little more time planning our escape route.'

Erica giggled, enjoying herself. 'Live a little on the edge, will ya?'

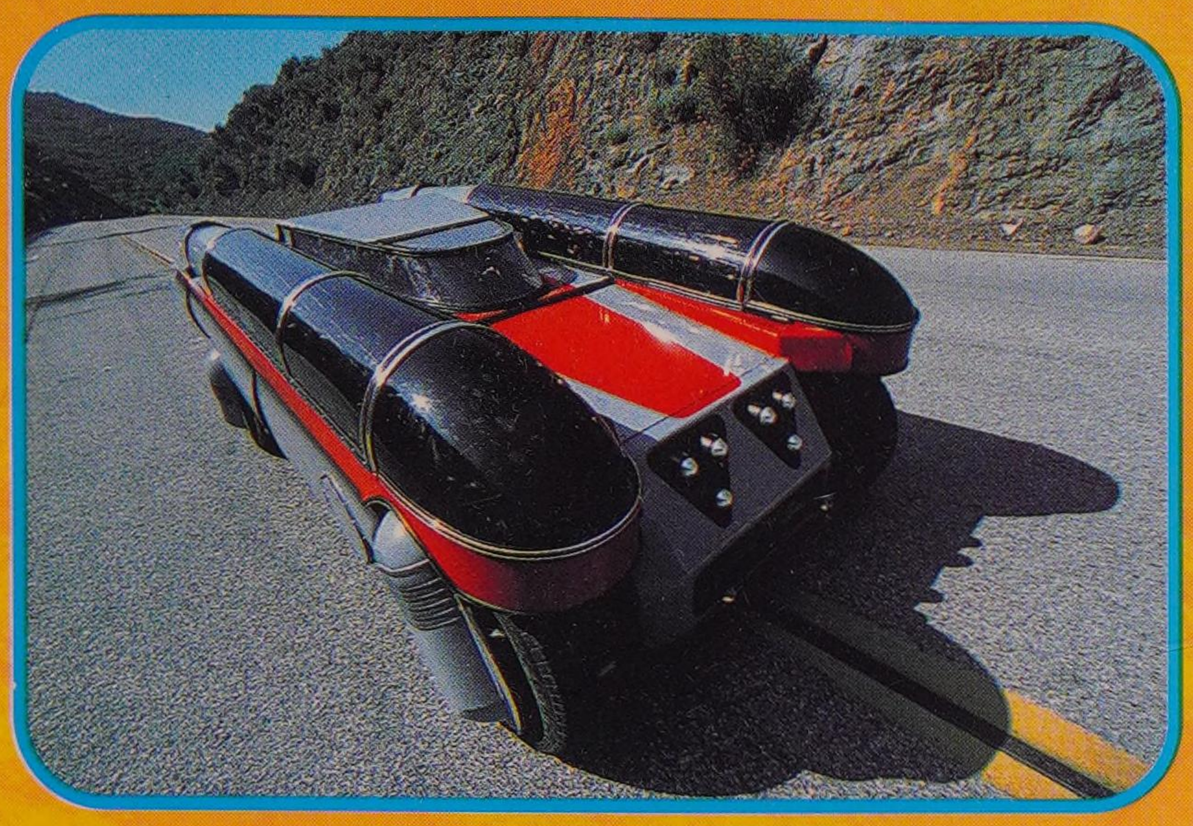
Trek yelled in surprise when a squad car passed them at high speed. He didn't bother to look back when he heard tyres squealing as the cop car did a U-turn up ahead.

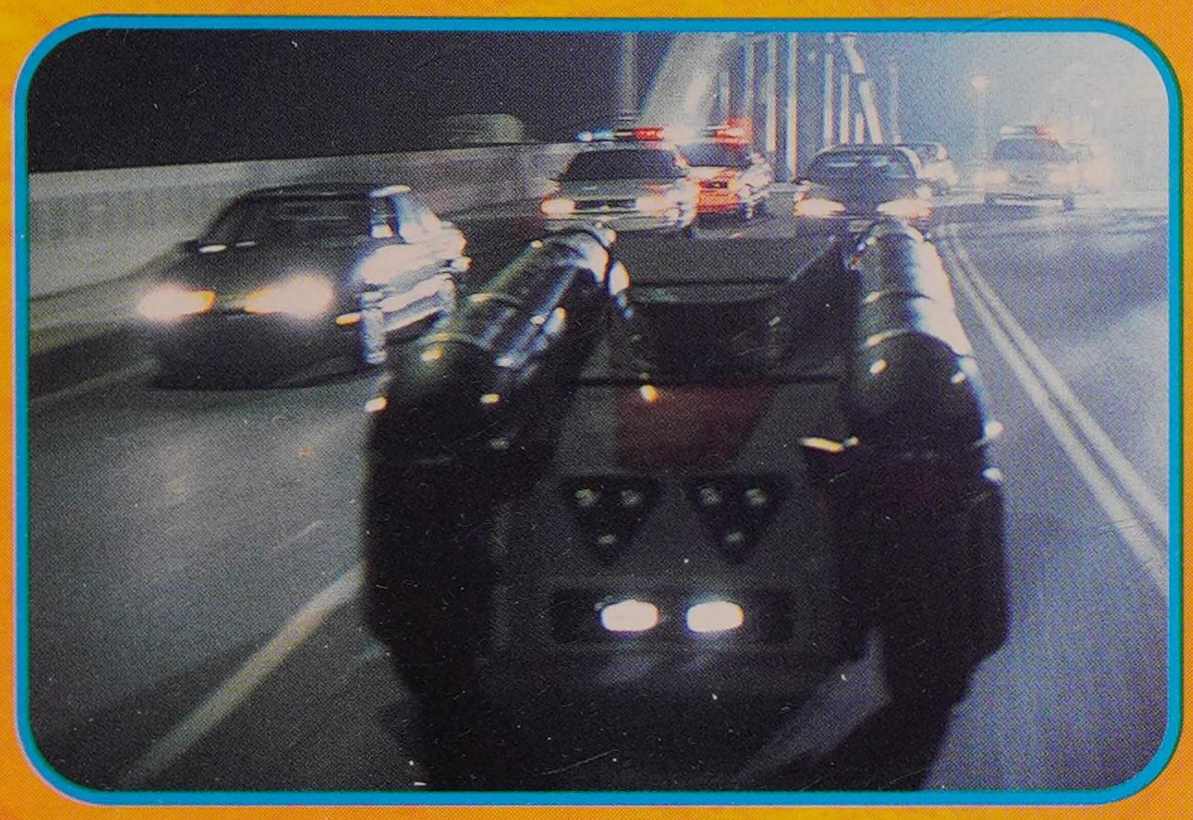
They took a corner on two wheels and turned into a wide boulevard only to find the way ahead blocked by three police cruisers. A reflex turn took them into another side street.

Another turn, and another pair of speeding cruisers, with screaming sirens and spinning lights, piled into the street behind them.

Now they were heading at top speed for one of the bridges over the river. Right across the middle of it sat half a dozen squad cars. The barricade was solid, and backed by almost a dozen uniformed cops leaning on the hoods and roofs, their shotguns and pistols aimed at the oncoming PlatoKat.

No more side streets. No chance of turning around.









Their only hope was a manoeuvre they had practised only a couple of times before...and that had been in the middle of the desert.

Trek looked at Erica. She just smiled and shrugged. It was his call.

With the barricade less than fifty yards ahead, he took a deep breath and flicked a switch under the right handlebar. After a moment's hesitation, the lights flickered once, and suddenly the midsection of the combo-bike folded away.

Plato yelled deliriously, 'It's two...two...two mints in one!' as Trek veered sharply to the left, heading straight for the narrow pedestrian walkway, then running along the low, concrete bridge wall.

The police just gaped in astonishment as he jumped the kerb, forcing several of them to leap for their lives, and sped away.

Erica wasn't so lucky. With no room on her right, she reared Kat onto its back wheel. The front wheel caught the closest cruiser on the hood, and Kat roared up and over the car, taking to the air with sparks trailing. She landed safely a good twenty yards away, and before any of the cops thought to turn and fire, she was gone too.

Kyle paced the narrow confines of the interrogation room, staring down every so often at the weary and dishevelled Mark Davis.

Davis's eyes followed him with a look of contempt. 'Like I said, I never even heard of Fallen Nation till they kidnapped the General.'

'You know,' said Kyle, reasonably. 'If you're not gonna be honest, how are we gonna be friends?'

Davis sneered. 'I got enough friends.'

Kyle shrugged, left the room and joined Duke behind the one-way mirror that looked into the interrogation room.

'Eighteen hours,' said Duke, 'and we've still got nothing.'

'He's not gonna talk,' said Kyle.

'Too bad,' said Duke. 'He just ran out of options.'

Kyle followed Duke back into the interrogation room, and watched as he grabbed Davis by the shirtfront, hauled him to his feet and dragged him roughly into the corridor.

'Hey, pal,' said Davis. 'Don't mess with me! I'm a Lieutenant in the United States Marine Corps!'

Duke's expression didn't change. 'I'd love for you to show off your fancy combat training.'

'We're not allowed to use it on civilians,' said Davis as Duke shoved him along.

A computer voice announced, 'Sky One has reached cruising altitude of twenty-eight thousand feet.'

'Hey, look, I told you everything I know!' said Davis.

'I believe you,' said Duke.

They reached the door, and Davis's relieved smile turned to consternation as Duke punched a code into a keypad.

'Well, then, what more do you want from me?' demanded Davis as the door began to hiss open.

'Nothing,' said Duke, shoving him into the airlock. 'You're free to go.'

'Hey!' said Davis, as Duke stepped back, slammed the door and tapped in the locking code.

Kyle joined him and they watched through a small window as realisation and panic began to twist Davis's features.

A red light in the airlock flared and a computer voice said, 'Warning. Opening of outer doors will cause explosive decompression in the airlock...Warning. Opening of outer doors...'

'Wait, please! Wait! Please!' screamed Davis.

'...will cause explosive decompression in the airlock...'

'Hey! Hey!' yelled the terrified Lieutenant, as the outer doors slowly began to swing open.

He clawed at the inner door. 'I...I'll tell you everything I know! There is no Fallen Nation! It's just a bunch of guys working for Butler! It's all part of his plan!'

'Butler?' whispered Kyle.

Now the escaping air began to pull Davis away from the inner door. 'They're gonna destroy Washington and take over the country! Please help me!'

The outer door swung fully open and Davis was sucked out of the lock, screaming, his arms and legs flailing – until he hit the ground. About six feet below.

Dazed, he rolled onto his back and blinked rapidly. He moaned when Duke appeared in the opening, his arms folded across his chest and a smile on his face.

After ordering Duke to throw Davis into the worst cell on the aircraft, Kyle ran to the Situation Room and made contact with Jenny and Domino.

Jenny watched as Kyle spoke on Domino's monitor. 'The blackout was a diversion, to keep the armed forces busy. And if it all goes according to plan, Butler's men, pretending to be part of Fallen Nation, will launch a nuclear missile against Washington.'

Jenny's holographic image flickered. 'That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard,' she said.

'Davis is clearly trying to throw us off track.'

'That was my first reaction,' said Kyle. 'But think about it, Jenny. We wake up tomorrow and there's a big hole between Maryland and Virginia, who do you think the country's gonna turn to?'

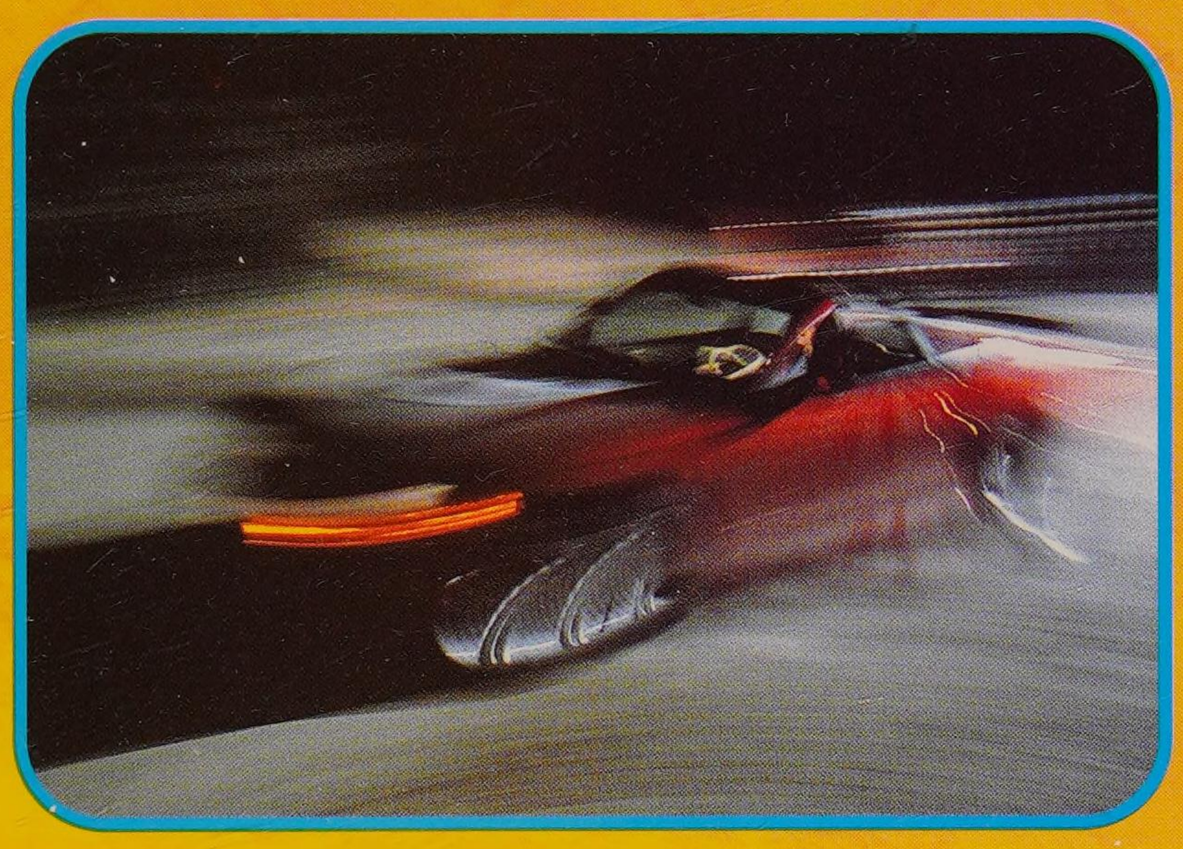
Jenny looked away. She knew the answer, but she didn't want to say it aloud.

Her image flickered again.

'Jenny,' pleaded Kyle, 'for God's sake, don't hang up on me again.'

But the image flickered again and then vanished.

As Domino raced on through the night, Jenny's anger rose and by the time she arrived at the General's house her temper was at full-bore. Davis was going to pay for this bit of nonsense, and as soon as she warned Butler of the treachery within his ranks, she was going back to Sky One to deal with Davis personally.



No one stopped her this time. As soon as the new aide recognised her he led her straight to Butler's office.

The General was reading at his desk when she came in. He stood immediately, a look of concern on his face. 'Jenny? Anything the matter?'

'No,' Jenny hesitated. 'Well, yes. It's about Lieutenant Davis.'

'Is he okay?' asked Butler.

'Yes...but...'

'Oh, that's a relief. I don't know what I'd do without him. He's a good man, a good soldier.'

'I don't think you know him as well as you thought,' said Jenny.

Butler smiled. 'There isn't anything you can say to me that's going to shake my confidence in him.'

The door opened, and two uniformed guards slipped into the office. Something about the atmosphere had changed. She wasn't sure what it was, but with a surreptitious move she switched on her wrist-com; just in case.

'He's involved in something...' she said.

The General cut her off with a wave. 'I don't think you're following me. Anything Mark Davis has done, he's done on my orders.'

The realisation hit her in a sickening wave, as Butler continued, 'Jenny, take a hard look around you. America is falling apart at the seams. Now, there's a lot of important work to do in the days ahead.'

'You made it all up,' she said, stepping back.

'You said it yourself, Jenny. The country needs me.'

She took another step back. 'So, now what? You're going to wipe out the government of the United States?'

'I have no intention,' replied Butler. 'Fallen Nation will do that for me.'

Suddenly the two guards were at her side. If she made a move towards Butler they would grab her.

'So,' she said with contempt, 'your Fallen Nation is going to wipe out Washington?'

Butler shrugged. 'It's no big loss.'

The TKR team sat in the Situation Room, listening with growing anger at Butler's smugness.

Then they heard Jenny say, 'Stephen, stop this now.'

'Tell me the truth,' replied Butler. 'You really gonna miss it?'

Kyle turned to the team. 'How easy is it gonna be to launch a nuclear missile?'

Trek leaned back, stared at the ceiling for a moment. 'A General with his kind of clout could probably get his hands on the necessary access codes, give 'em to a few of his psycho Marines. Some of whom have been stationed at the missile silo at one point, might know it pretty well...'

Trek frowned, then shook his head in reluctant admiration. 'Boy, you know, it's so easy. I'm surprised someone hasn't done it before.'

'Great,' said Kyle, closing his eyes.

Trek suddenly realised what he had said, but it was too late to take it back.

Duke grumbled, 'The country will be so desperate for leadership, he won't have to run for President...they'll crown him King.'

Kyle paced up and down the room, thinking as fast and hard as he could. 'Davis says Butler is going to launch at nine o'clock.'

Erica said, 'I thought people did this kind of thing at midnight.'

Kyle clasped his hands under his chin. 'There's no time to alert anyone. We're on our own. Let's move it.'

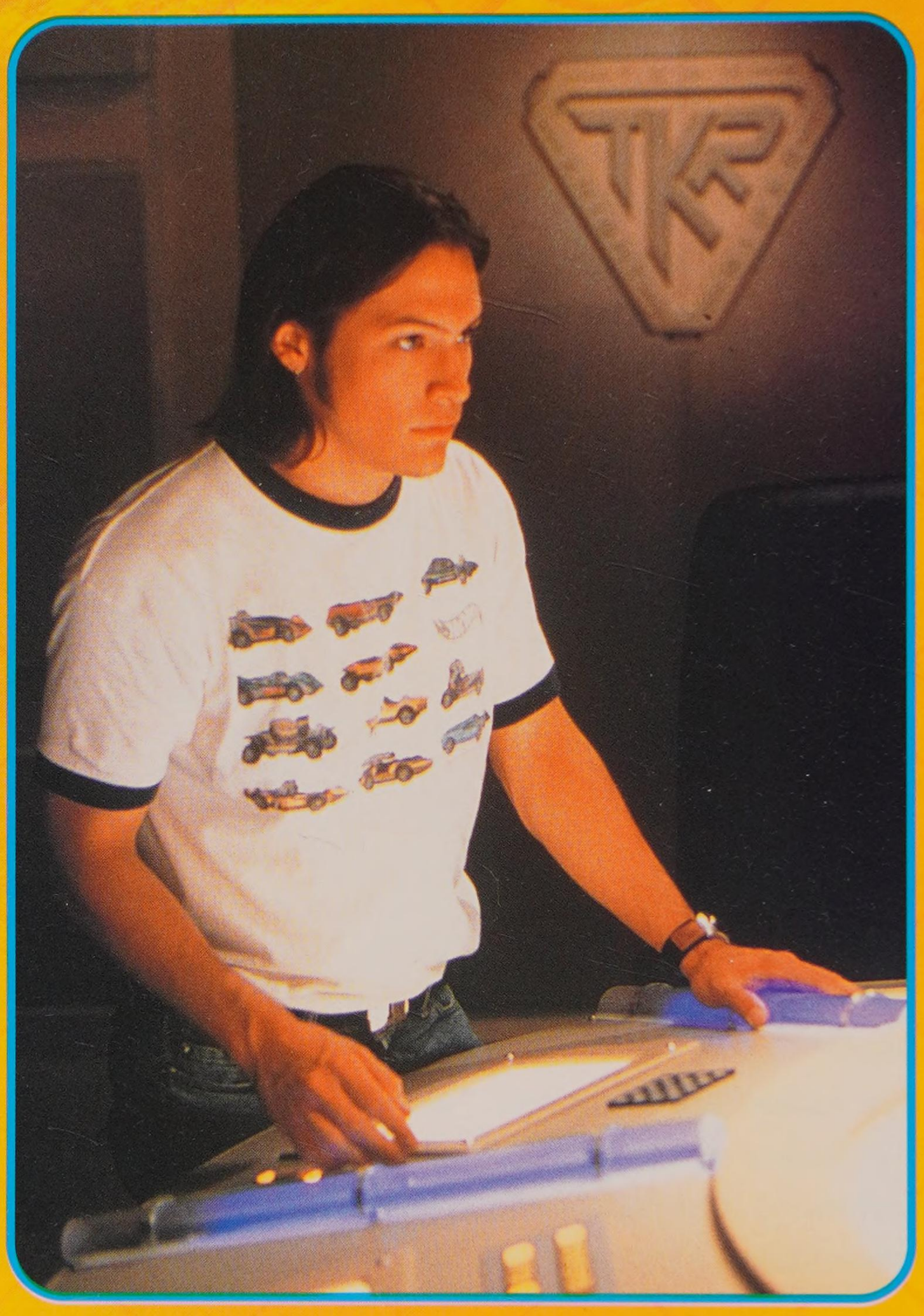
'What about Jenny?' asked Erica.

Jenny felt sick as she watched Butler, her mentor and oldest friend, calmly discussing the nuclear annihilation of the capital. She spoke up. 'The blood of a million people will be on your hands. Is that how you want history to remember you?'

Butler shook his head in disappointment. 'Jenny, you don't remember anything I taught you. It's a battlefield decision. To win, to save, you must always be prepared to sacrifice a few.'

She thought for a moment that she could get to him, but a shift in his eyes brought the guards closer to her sides. They grabbed her hands, pinning her.

'I'm sorry you won't be going with me,' said Butler.



He nodded, and the guards took her away. She knew that the others would be searching for a way to stop the launch. Her only hope was herself. And, with a little luck, Domino.

Just after sunset, a pair of Jeeps and a canvas-top truck pulled up to the gate of the Shenandoah Missile Installation. The guard stepped out of his gatehouse, saw the Jeeps' occupants and saluted smartly. A high steel-rod barrier slid aside and the convoy rumbled through.



The truck veered into the shadows with the second Jeep. The first Jeep moved on, stopping in front of a massive steel gate set in the hillside. The lone guard, puzzled but alert, widened his eyes as a stocky Colonel and a well-muscled Major stepped out of the vehicle.

The Colonel smiled.

The Major pulled a slender dart gun from his holster and shot the guard in the neck. He dropped immediately, and the Colonel wasted no time hurrying to the palm-print lock and slamming his open hand on it.

The doors opened.

The two officers entered the Control Room, where two Marines snapped immediately to attention.

The Colonel smiled.

The Major darted both guards and dragged their unconscious bodies to one side.

Not a word had been spoken. None had been needed.

The officers knew what had to be done. The Colonel opened a wall safe and pulled out the Code Book. The Major sat at the computer and began to punch in the numbers read out to him by the Colonel.

A steel blind opened in the north wall, allowing them to see the waiting missile in its silo.

Another six numbers, and the missile rose into launch position as the overhead silo doors began to slide open.

The time on the arming clock was exactly 8:35.

After being held in the pool house for several hours, Jenny was brought out by two guards in full battle gear. But she wasn't worried. As they hauled her towards the parking area, she heard a brief hissing and guessed that Domino had used her laser to pop a tyre on the guards' Jeep.

'Listen to me,' she said. 'You two are betraying your country.'

'Shut up!' said one of the guards, kicking at the flat tyre.

The other one pointed at Domino. 'Let's just take her car.'

Jenny didn't argue.

They shoved her into the back seat and demanded the keys.

Jenny sat back to enjoy the ride.

The first twenty yards were easy. After that Domino took over the steering, swinging wildly back and forth while the guards argued with each other as they tried to figure out what was going on!

Jenny grinned. It would have been a lot more fun if the situation wasn't so desperate.

In the Missile Control Room the renegade Colonel, Major and Sergeant checked the

nuclear missile's co-ordinates, as they aimed it towards Washington.

'At zero per cent deviation,' said the Sergeant.

The Major leaned over the keyboard. 'Right sixteen, left twenty-six, right four.'

'Alpha. Delta. Two-eight-nine,' confirmed the Colonel.

Kyle and Dante were leading the way, Duke and Beast right behind, the motorcycles trailing.

Trek said, 'Plato and I can probably take out their back-up generator, so we can get up close without them seeing us.'

Kyle asked, 'How long's it gonna take?'

'Six, maybe seven minutes,' said Trek.

Kyle checked the dashboard clock – 8:40 – and grimaced. 'No. We don't have time for subtlety.'

'How about loosening them up with some heavy artillery?' suggested Beast.

'No,' said Kyle. 'We'd give 'em too much warning.' He glanced at the clock again, shook his head, changed his mind. 'Drat, I hate making a mess.'

Duke grinned broadly. 'Okay, let's take it to 'em, Beast.'

The Beast pulled around and in front of Dante and roared down the narrow country road, swinging easily around the long curve at the base of the hill. A hundred yards ahead Duke could see the lights of the installation compound.

The Beast bellowed and picked up speed.

Kat pulled in behind him, weaving back and forth as Erica prayed the huge truck would do its job.

'Whooo!' said Duke, as the Beast struck the gate. It fell in an explosion of sparks and smoke.

The Beast swung close to the nearest building, scattering a handful of unprepared soldiers.

Erica went left, huddling as close to Kat as possible when rifles began to fire, ricocheting harmlessly off the cycle's sides and tinted windscreen.

Despite the danger, Erica couldn't help a delighted laugh when Kat complained, 'This is completely against regulations. We are not to engage in battle if we have no protective covering. I'm not the Beast, you know.'

The two guards were still arguing as Domino sped erratically along.

'What the hell you doing?! Quit fooling around.'

'It's steering itself, man! It could flip! This is dangerous!'

'I knew I shouldn't have let you drive. Turn around. Try something!'

'Oh, this...this thing's outta control.'

'Hit the brakes or something! Come on!'

Suddenly Domino stopped and the guards sighed with relief. She said, 'Goodbye boys,' and activated an ejection device that sent

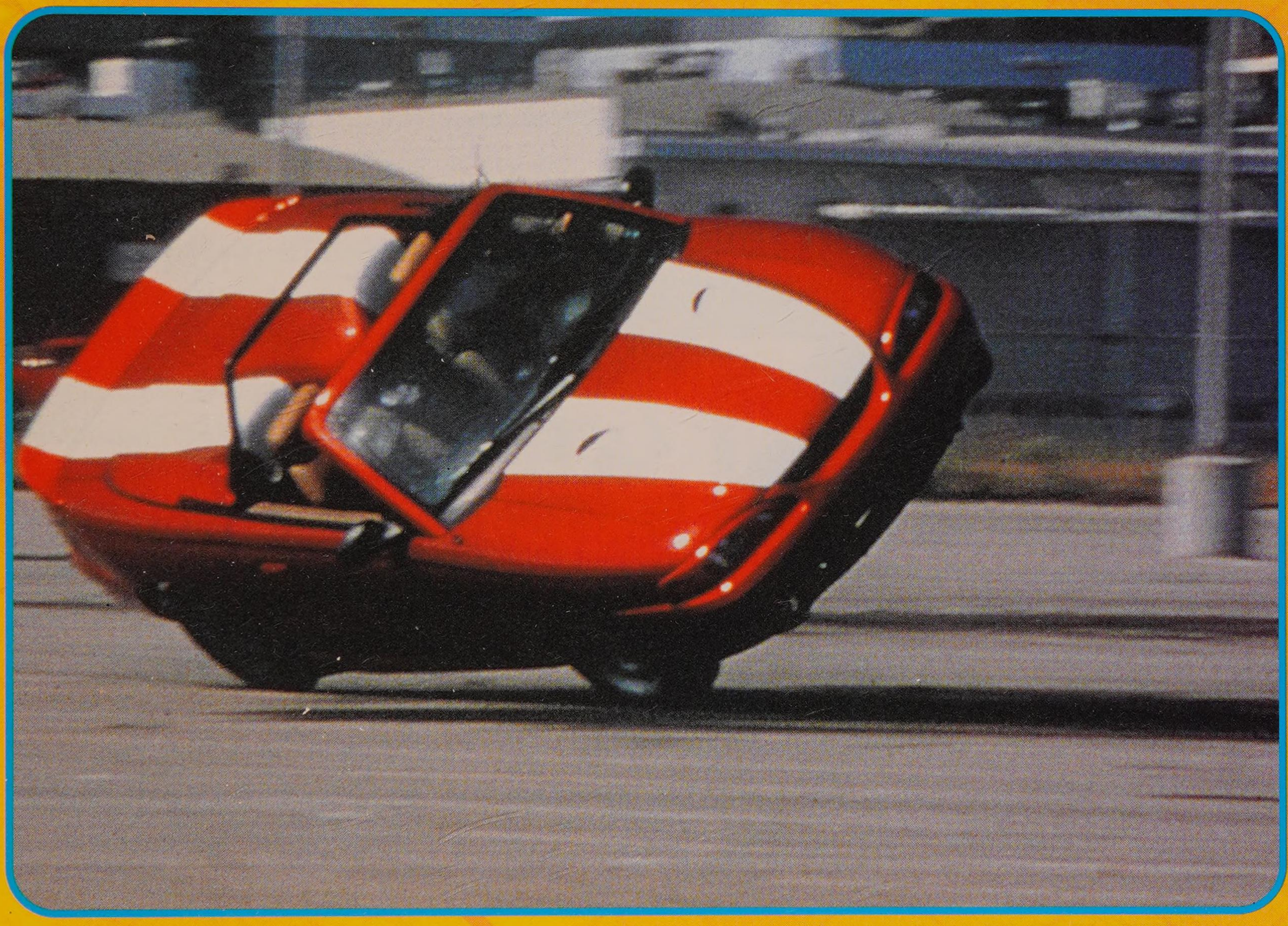
the men yelling into the air.

'Where to now?' Domino asked Jenny.

'As if I couldn't guess.'

Duke aimed the Beast towards the silo. Bullets sparked off the doors and hood, soldiers scattered out of the way.

You wanted a diversion, thought Duke, gleefully, as the Beast slewed around to charge



again, okay, you got one!

As the firing escalated, Dante braked in a cloud of dust and stones in front of the Missile Control Room door. 'Get it,' Kyle ordered as soon as he realised how thick it was, and Dante slid a compartment open in its roof, raised a small rocket launcher, and fired.

The door buckled, then toppled off its hinges just as Trek pulled up alongside him.

The two men ran in, pausing only when they discovered the officers in the Control Room – each standing with a launch key in his hand while a computer-voice announced, 'Missile launch sequence activated. One minute to lift off.'

Kyle leapt over the console and felled the Major with a drop-kick, then turned to take on the Colonel.

Trek ran to the panel and groaned.

The clock was set at 8:47.

'Oh, great,' he said. 'You know, you idiots were supposed to wait until nine!'

He jumped into the operator's seat and took the fastest familiarisation course in his life before attacking the keys.

The computer voice said, 'Fifty seconds to lift off.'

Kyle dodged a punch, threw a flurry of his own, and was dragged backwards when the Major regained his feet and slammed an arm around his throat.

Trek wiped perspiration from his eyes, tried another sequence, and moaned when nothing happened.

'Forty seconds...'

The Colonel fell over the console, with Kyle's arm wrapped around his chest.

'Hey, Trek,' said Kyle. 'Can you give me a little more time?'

'Yeah. But could you get him off the thing, please?'

Kyle braced himself and pulled, and the two of them rolled onto the floor.

'Thirty seconds...'

Outside, the Beast took out a half-track with a laser shot at the front wheel.

'Kyle,' said Duke. 'You guys better hurry up. We can't hold these guys off forever.'

Erica ploughed through a hastily formed wall of riflemen, skidded into a one-eighty turn and ploughed through them again. Kat still complained, but Erica just grinned.

'Twenty seconds...Lift off in ten...nine...eight...seven...six...five...four...three...two...one. Missile launched.'

Outside, everything stopped.

Erica, Duke, the installation troops – they all watched the missile lift on its fiery tail above the mountain and climb into the night sky.

'We're too late,' said Duke.

Erica wanted to cry.

The click of the keyboard was the only sound in the Control Room until Trek said, 'Oh, boy,' and let his hands fall into his lap.

Kyle leaned over his shoulder. 'Can...you alter its trajectory?'

Trek held up one finger, then nodded. 'I think so, yeah...All right, the missile still has a little ways to go before it...uh...turns back and...you know...boom!'

'Beginning initiation of re-entry sequence,' said the computer voice, as numbers on the screen scrolled up rapidly.

'Oh...' said Trek.

'What did you do?' said Kyle.

Trek gave him a quick painful smile. 'Well, I, uh...I seem to have sped up its re-entry. It's gonna be hitting the ground about...uh...five minutes sooner now.'

Kyle made a sound as if he'd just received a punch. He straightened and activated his wrist-com.

'Dante.'

Dante replied. 'Secret Service reports Air Force One is off the ground. The President is safe.'

'Great,' said Kyle. 'Now all we gotta do is worry about the nine hundred thousand other people in the DC area.'

'No,' said Trek. 'Look-look-look-look, as long as I can...uh...I can disarm the nuclear warhead, the damage should be minimal, and we should...'

'Warhead armed,' said the computer voice.

'Great,' said Trek.

'What's that?' said Kyle as alarms began to sound.

'Well, now,' said Trek. 'I just armed the warhead.'

Kyle's mouth dropped open as he leaned against the console. 'Come on, Trek.'

Growing more frantic, Trek didn't bother to look up. 'No pressure, all right? No pressure.'

Kyle rubbed an exasperated hand over his

chin. 'If it blows up in the atmosphere, it'll spread radiation across three continents.'

'I know how a nuclear missile works,' snapped Trek.

'All right,' said Kyle, his face drenched in sweat. 'All right.'

Taking a deep breath, licking his lips nervously, Trek entered the last series he knew. Then he reached out and held his finger over the red self-destruct button.

Kyle nodded.

Trek pressed the button...and nothing happened.

None of the indicators changed; the missile was still on its way.

Outside Duke and Erica stared at the sky. Waiting.

Domino pulled into Butler's driveway. This time the guard tried to stop Jenny from entering, but a simple side-kick to his chest dropped him into the bushes.

Trek stared intently at the monitor, urging it to do something...before it was too late.

It did.

The warning siren cut off abruptly, the numbers stopped scrolling, and the 'Self-destruct Accomplished' code flashed across the screen.

The missile had been destroyed. Safely.

'Nice going,' said Kyle.

'Ah...I wasn't worried,' said Trek, panting.

'No,' said Kyle, slapping him heartily on the back.

The guard outside General Butler's door went for his revolver when Jenny came around the corner. When he saw her dragging his buddy with one hand, and saw a gun in the other, he backed away. She cautioned him with a gesture to keep silent, then tied him up with his own belt and gagged him with a balled-up handkerchief.

She kicked open the door and tossed in the unconscious Marine ahead of her. Butler was at his desk, reading.

'It's finished,' she said.

He realised she wasn't bluffing.

'Now that it's over, I only have one regret.'

'What's that?' she asked.

'That I lost your respect.'

He stood up and put down the book. 'Well, at least you'll get one thing out of this...' He gave her a long pity-filled look. '...You'll be a hero.'

She didn't take the bait. After giving him a look of such contempt that he turned away, she said, 'I don't know what that is anymore.'

Back on Sky One, mechanics swarmed over the vehicles as they returned one-by-one...Equipment was checked...Ammunition replaced...The pilot ran down his checklist as the

engines warmed-up...Onboard computers processed all the new information gathered by the vehicles.

Erica pulled in and parked Kat gratefully. She pulled off her helmet, shook her hair loose, took a deep breath.

Kat was unhappy. 'Erica, I am going to have to report you for your flagrant disregard for regulations. One stray bullet could have irreparably damaged my program.'

'What's your point?' asked Erica, heading for the nearest shower.

'Nice job blowing up that missile,' Duke said to Trek. 'How'd you figure it out?'

Trek looked everywhere, except at Kyle. 'I didn't. I just typed in my mother's birthday and hoped for the best.'

'Ah,' said Duke, walking away.

Trek shrugged sheepishly at Kyle and followed.

For a moment the garage was quiet, nothing but the muffled thrum of the engines.

Then Domino rolled in, parked, and Jenny climbed out, very slowly.

Kyle, relieved that she was all right and sorry he couldn't have sent her support, waited. 'Welcome back,' he said.

Jenny bit her lower lip. 'Kyle...I don't know what to say.'

'This was a hard one,' he said. 'It's over.'

'I was totally insubordinate.'

'Yeh,' he said. 'You'd be in real trouble if this was the Marines.' He touched her shoulder. 'You did what you thought was right. That's worth more to me than someone who just follows orders.'

At last she smiled, accepting the forgiveness.

It had been a long, long day.





TKR = ACTION, ADVENTURE

Take a look at these great shots from selected



from 'Return of Mecaman'

& ACCELERATION

episodes of Team Knight Rider...

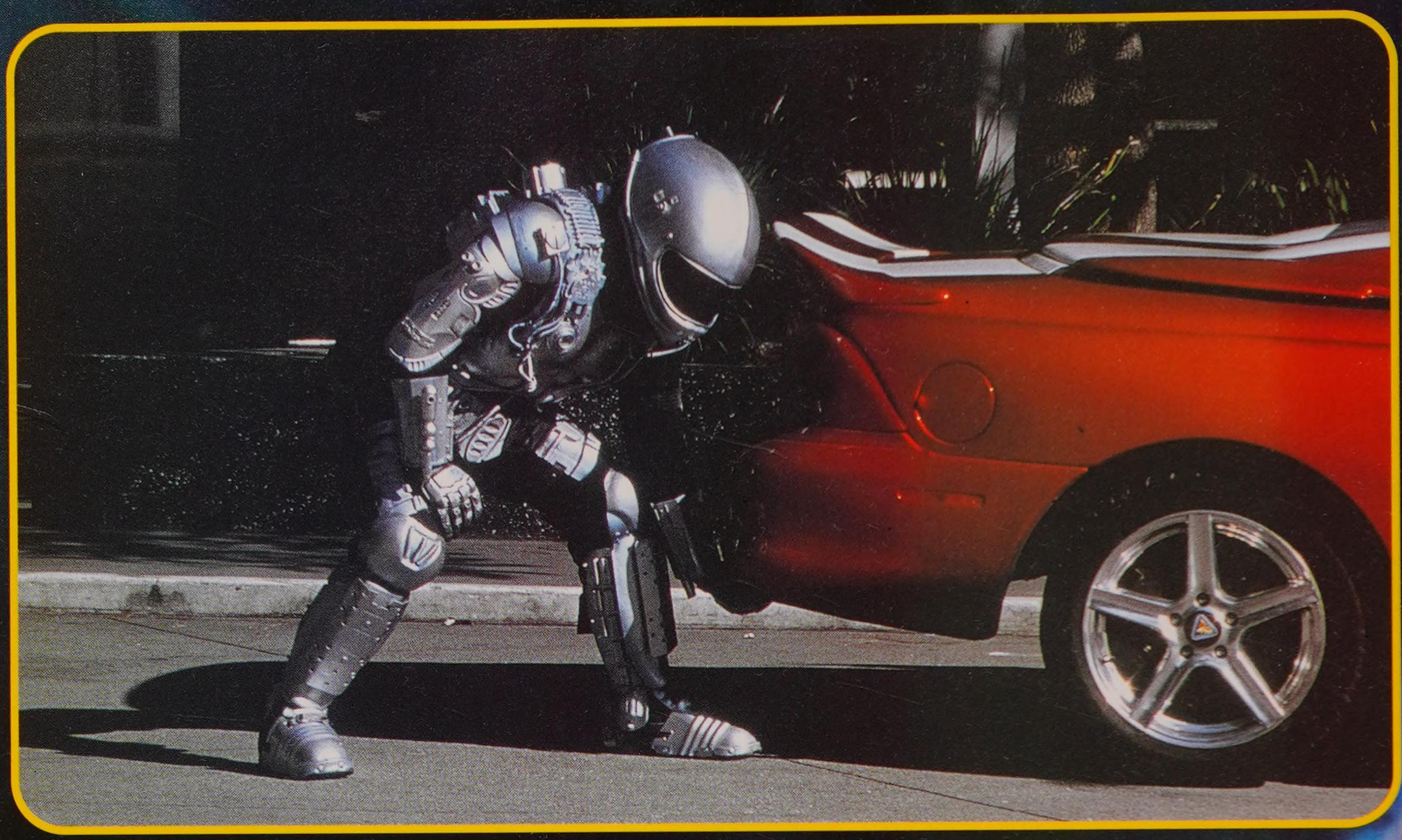


from 'K.R.O.'



from 'The A List'

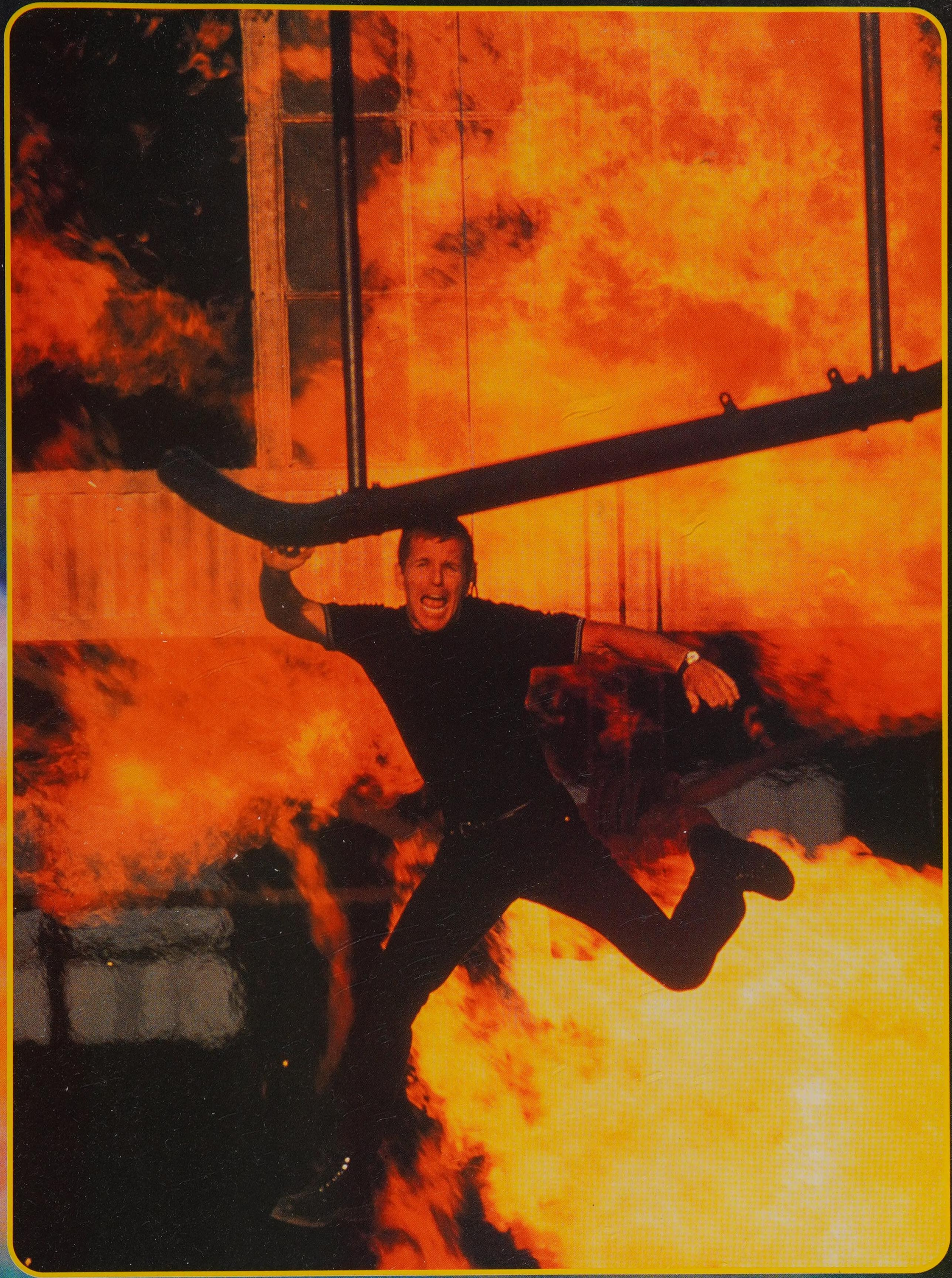
TKR = ACTION, ADVENTURE & ACCELERATION



from 'Iron Maiden'



from 'Inside Traitor'

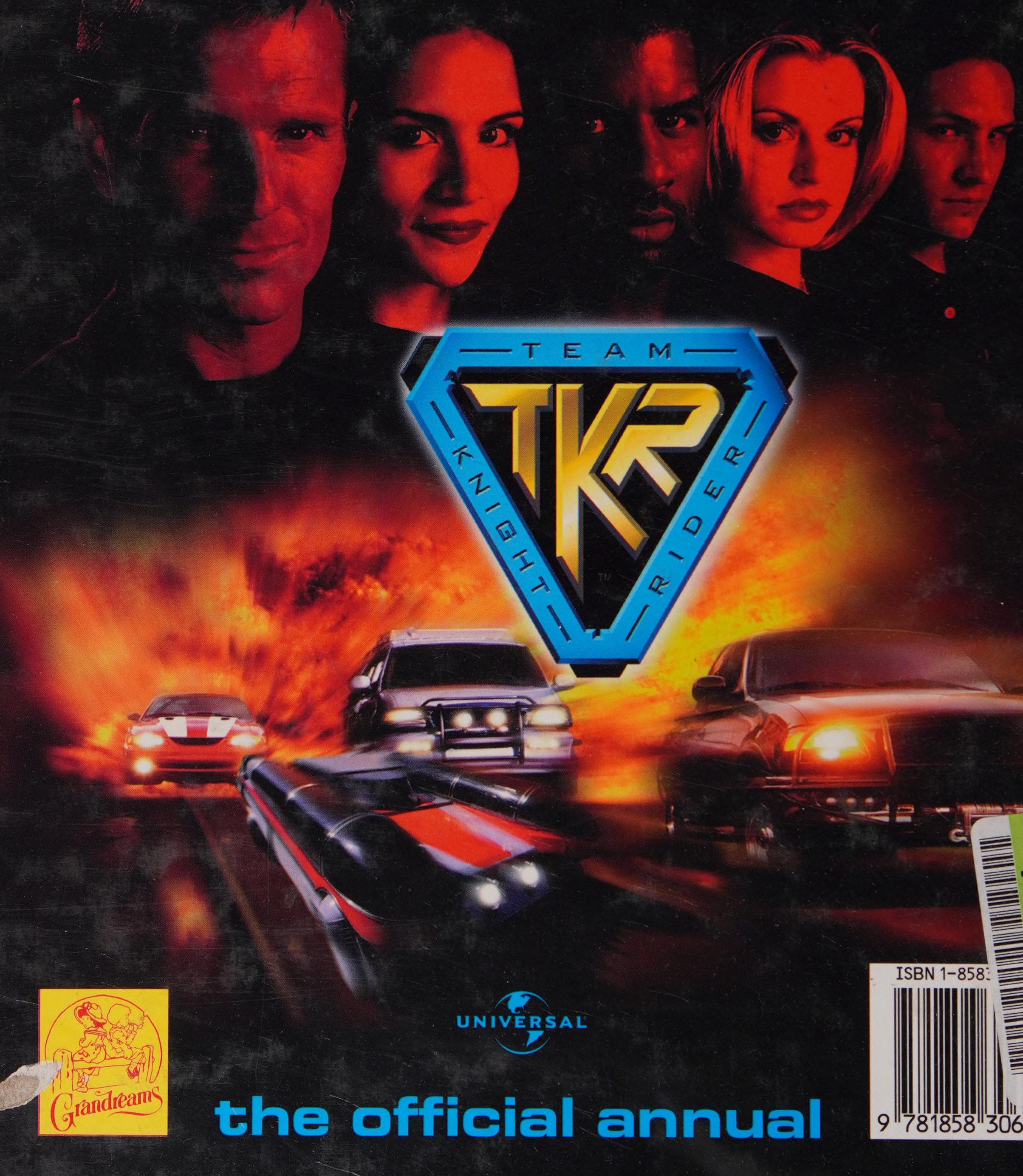


from 'Choctaw'





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