

The Zimmer Insurgency
Jason Shannon

Note:

The Zimmer Insurgency takes place over the course of about twenty-four hours. Kayla Zimmer, a fugitive from the corrupt government of the Republic of Panamerica, carries out an insurrection as a vendetta for they did to her years before. In this scene, she's travelling south from her assumed home in northern Quebec towards South America, and is forced to change names in Miami.

Miami, Florida,
Republic of Panamerica
1800 Zulu

The maglev glided to a stop at the Miami terminal. This as far as the name Emma would get her. Kayla had to change identities here. Panamerica wasn't like the Pacific; one needed a work visa to leave certain regions without raising red flags.

She departed the train onto the open platform, a string of concrete piers resting atop the waters. Apart from the skyscrapers sticking up, there was ocean on all horizons, the Gulf to the west and the Atlantic to the east. She proceeded to the nearest building jutting out of the water.

The elevator took her to street level, where hordes of bikes raced through the streets. It stunk like a sewer down here. A few of the street lights were burnt out, but the streets wouldn't have been all that illuminated either way. Many of the cyclists had lights on their bikes, which dimmed and shone as they huffed and peddled.

She boarded the nearest subway and bought a ticket to the end of the line, out near Old Hialeah. The subways ran on the same motionless maglev technology as their intercontinental counterparts, but Kayla never found them that motionless. At every stop she felt like vomiting. She never grew up taking weekend trips to the Holy Land in Missouri or the world's largest tumbleweed in Oaxaca. She went on one vacation to Vancouver once when she was seven, to see Ground Zero.

As the subway went further and further from downtown Miami, more and more people got off at the stops along the way, and fewer and fewer got on. By the time they arrived in Old Hialeah, there were only a handful of junkies and whores riding with her. There was a black man with a frizzled beard so far zoned out that he didn't even realize they were at the end of the line, two scantily clad Latinas that were maybe seventeen, and a pretty something with heavy breasts stuffed into a pushup bra. Kayla knew as soon as that bra came off, they'd swing down like pendulums and the tainted milk inside would practically ripple beneath the skin. The fact that she still combed her hair and applied makeup suggested she didn't sample her own product. Kayla had been led to believe sampling one's own is a recipe for disaster.

When she departed at the end of the line, there was such little lighting they were in near darkness. Graffiti was everywhere. Half the storefronts were boarded up. There was at least a half dozen dripping leaks in the glass ceiling that the state wouldn't even supply a bucket for.

This was the perfect place to pick up a new ID.

She knew an address from her days on the run. After her escape from Haiti, Miami was one place many of the escapees tried for. She picked up a few names from the others. When she came back to Panamerica, Cairns was the one she went to evade the body scanners.

A whore stood on the street corner a block up. She wore a dirty sleeveless trench coat, open in the front. Her breasts hung low and swayed with every step. The streets were basically empty. Someone, that must have been her pimp, sat on the stoop not far from her. She approached Kayla. The pimp eyed them intently.

"Hash, coke, jib, my dear?" the whore whispered. Kayla didn't know why she kept her voice down; with her tits out like that she was clearly in violation of the law.

"No, thank you," Kayla said politely, avoiding eye contact.

The whore stepped in front of her. With those ridiculous stripper heels she had a good eight inches on Kayla, and probably twenty kilos. "Sting?" she asked, and scratched the underside of her breast nonchalantly. They hung down to her navel. The woman was not attractive. She did not look like the made up business type in skimpy clothes from the subway. Her hair was a haggard mess and probably hadn't seen a shower in over a week, stench wafted from the woman's armpits and she was missing at least two teeth. "I'll give you a good price, sweetheart, even pump it into a bottle for you if you... don't like it straight from the cow."

Certainly not from this cow.

"I'm not on the tit," Kayla replied. She urgently avoided eye contact with the pimp, but she could see him stand up, walk into the street towards her.

A shape swam above them. Based upon it's size, if it wasn't a whale, it had to have been a megalodon. She'd heard raw megalodon was a delicacy in Japan.

The pimp approached and brushed Kayla's dark hair over her ear. She kept her gaze down. She knew the deal. Kayla was dressed up like a good wife, not a junkie or a whore or criminal. There was practically a dress code in these

parts, where the subways end underwater. She'd heard human trafficking was bad in the seafloor in San Francisco – women snatched up and vanished into the bowels of the subway system, fed a straight diet of horse meat they vomit from the scent of it and pumped full of hormones until they've doubled or tripled their cup size, then fed their own to addict them. Mules in Toronto, mules in Montreal, they're businesswomen. But mules at the end of the line on the seafloor subway, most of them were pubescent girls locked away for a month or two until they ripened. Kayla had the look not of a customer, but a potential mule herself.

"What can I do for you, my sweet?" the pimp asked. His voice was slippery. He had that type of bastard accent that came from the Dominican. "You and her, half hour, all the sting you can handle for a hundred bucks."

"I'm not interested, sorry," she said.

"Well I can't imagine a pretty young thing like you coming out to this part of town for some hetero love," he said. "But I do have a pretty boy inside. One of them two-cocked mutants, if that's what you're looking for. The one's a little thinner if your butt's not used to it." He smiled.

Mutants? Although she'd never left the Earth, she couldn't help but chant to herself that old adage: *Anything but anarchy*. "I don't want any trouble. I came down this way to see Cairns."

"Cairns? That hack. Sells dildos and lube and beads. Come into my house, my sweet, and I'll give you the pretty boy and this sting cow for one fifty, say one twenty-five. You won't find a better price than that anywhere else."

The whore reached out and lifted Kayla's chin. "Come on, my dear, no woman comes out this part of town unless there's a little lezzy in 'em."

Kayla punched the woman square in the nose. She stumbled back and nearly tripped in those godawful heals. Before the pimp could grab his gun, Kayla had him by the hair. He cringed as more than a few strands plucked from the back of his neck. She reached into his chest holster and removed the gun. She'd learned that one in the Southern Waste. It finally came in handy. She grinned. "How's about you have a suckle," she said.

"You'll pay for this, bitch. When I'm done with you, you'll have sting in those titties of yours on this very corner."

"Yeah, well, in the meantime, this cow needs a milking." She shoved his face against the whore's chest. Blood run from her nose. She didn't resist, she just scowled. "Suck," Kayla demanded. The pimp took a little. "Keep going." The whore grimaced after he'd sucked a good couple mouthfuls, and Kayla switched him to her other tit. She needed to make sure the pimp would be properly incapacitated at least until she boarded her next maglev. He was quickly reduced to a babbling stinger, much like a baby, ironically enough.

She found Cairns' dildo store two blocks over, behind a whorehouse and sandwiched between a gang hideout and an abandoned storefront. She wondered what Hialeah would look like if a blackout ever hit this place. "You're late," Cairns said. The dildos and vibrators were in the rear of the store, hidden behind rows of fabric. Officially, he sold drapery.

"Got held up," she said, dropping the gun on the counter. "A gift."

Cairns pointed to a young woman going bug-eyed over a rotating vibrator. "You, out. Come back in a few." She looked no older than sixteen. At least she came dressed like a whore to fit the dress code, but there was little to hide the innocence. Kayla hoped whatever church she belonged to didn't do a hymen test prior to the wedding. Cairns locked the door behind the girl, led Kayla into his office. Kayla sat down on the chair in front of his desk. Cairns was pale as a ghost, probably hadn't seen the surface in months. He'd burn to a crisp in direct sunlight now. He looked tired. "How are the implants working out for you?"

She looked down to her chest, and that ridiculous cleavage. "Yoga's a pain in the ass," she replied.

"You'll get used to them," he said. He said the same thing three years ago.

"I'll have them out before too long," she replied.

"The feds still have Kalie Chávez's physique in their records," he said. That was the name he knew her by. No one knew Kayla Zimmer. "So long as you've got that contraband silicone, they won't put two and two together." Most women went for genetic reconfigs these days. It made them a little droopier, but it looked less plastic. Her hubby never seemed to notice.

"Do you have my ID?" she asked.

He pulled a small plastic package out of his desk drawer, handed it to her. She let the nanite gel slather itself across her hands. The film of miniature insectoid machines linked together seamlessly to form her new finger and palm prints. Once the pattern came to fruition she relaxed – she never like the slithering feeling across her palm.

"Your file's already been set up," he explained. "Your new name is Petra van Zyl. You're based out of Miami. All you need is the fingerprints and you'll be set. These identities tend to only last about five years."

"I won't need it that long," she muttered. Reaching into her purse, she pulled out three gold coins, an archaic form of currency only the underbelly of society used anymore. Governments, corporations, almost everyone used digital currency now, their fingerprints linking to their bank accounts, yet there had emerged this entirely separate currency. The coins she handed him had no inscription, or identifying markers of any kind. They were simply gold jewellery that she'd had melted down into a coin-type shape. Their value was their weight, which would verify regardless of an inscription. Old rings were melted down, necklaces, earrings to make these. There was entire market in buying jewelry just to make this currency. Sting, weed, coke, abortions, dildos – as much gold ran through places like Old Hialeah as did the finest jewelry stores in Panama City.

The forger placed the coins upon the scale of his desk. He looked up nodded. "Thank you, Ms. van Zyl." He went to hand her the photo ID. "Can I ask," he said, hesitating, "what exactly you're running from?"

"I didn't pay for an inquisition," she replied, losing her patience.

"Few Spaniards move *to* Panamerica," he said. That European identity had held up well, she thought. "And your Spanish is more Mexico than Spain, sweetcheeks."

"I don't think you've met too many real Spaniards in your day, Mr. Cairns."

"I have a bit of a thing for accents, you know. Southwest, I'd say. New Mexico?" Arizona, actually, but close enough. He leaned his elbows in on the desk. "What do the feds want you for?"

"Mr. Cairns..." she said as calmly as possible.

"Quagga meat runner? Human trafficking? Coke from the Southern Waste? Had an abortion in Switzerland? Icepicked your kids to death? Atlanta Anarchist? Dyke? Bolivian train bombings?"

She reached into her purse and pulled out another coin, placed it on the desk and spun it. Folding her arms across her chest, she said, "I can find inquisitions anywhere, Cairns. What I'm looking for is no questions."

He smiled, plucking up the coin. "As you wish, Ms. van Zyl."

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