

SUBTERRANIA

(EXTRACT)

by
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FADE IN:

1

TENNIS COURT - ARTIFICIAL DAYLIGHT

1

Two men slog it out on a grass court. One approaches the net behind a powerful forehand. The return is high in the air. He leaps up and slam-dunks the ball to win the point.

The crowd go wild as the he pumps his arm right at his opponent. VICTOR is late twenties, a free child with an in-your-face persona. His multicoloured kit sums him up.

As Victor returns to serve we see that the court and stand are flanked by other courts. High above them all is a ceiling as we realise that we are in fact indoors.

The place is awash with bright light giving it the airy, open feel of a summer's afternoon. People mill around outside the courts amongst the shops, restaurants and gym.

Some head to the entrance - a long tiled tunnel with two airport-style travellers running in each direction.

The other end the tunnel opens into an enormous area making the sports arena look tiny. Thirty storeys of shops, offices and living space overlook an atrium filled with girders supporting stairways and walkways.

The whole place is designed to perfection and bustles with people moving in all directions. A busy city.

A SERIES OF SHOTS OF SUBTERRANIA

--Two men step out of a tailor's changing room in top hat and tails. They pose in front of the full-length mirror pleased with the way they look...

--A woman walks an eight-year-old girl to the entrance of a kids' play park with climbing frames, ropes and ball pools. The girl tries to pull away upset...

--Some teenagers hang around a large fountain, water spraying from the elegant design. They push and shove each other laughing as shoppers give them a wide berth...

--People relax in cafes and bars on platforms that seem suspended in mid air, held up by thin cables...

--A businessman talks on the phone in his plush, ultra-modern glass office overlooking the shops far below...

--As two men buff the glass working from a window-cleaning rig hanging by cables from runners on the ceiling. They move the rig to the next set of windows...

--Finally, we go higher and higher... then pass through rock and dirt to...

2 EXT. LONDON DOCKLANDS - DAY

2

A motorcycle courier zooms through the slow moving traffic on a wet day, surface water spraying up from the tyres. Commuters scuttle into towering glass offices.

The courier rounds a bend, has to swerve to avoid a queue of stationary cars. He cruises up the outside to the front.

Police in long raincoats bulked up by bulletproof vests use glow sticks to wave a van over to one side. Eight policemen descend on it, remove the driver at gunpoint and search it.

The courier holds out his ID in a plastic wallet. A policeman checks it along with his bag and waves him through. He accelerates away.

After a few blocks the towers give way to a wide flat area bordered by the River Thames.

The courier parks his bike, removes his helmet, pleased to feel the rain on his shaved head. This is THOMSON, hard biker exterior, with a softness hidden beneath.

He joins the hundreds of commuters heading towards a single storey bunker-like structure.

It is well designed yet functionally built to withstand a terrorist attack. Oversized sculptures are strategically placed around the paved quadrant for added protection.

Thomson stops outside the large glass entrance and stares at the sign above:

"WELCOME TO SUBTERRANIA"

He shudders. He checks the contents of his bag, takes a deep breath, joins the stream of people going in.

3 INT. SPORTS ARENA - ARTIFICIAL DAYLIGHT

3

Victor receives a serve wide. The ball comes back on the far side of the court. Victor SPRINTS towards the ball...

It seems out of reach...

He DIVES full stretch, eyes fixed firmly on the ball, muscles standing out on his arm...

As he HITS it back just dropping over the net for a winner.

That's the match. Victor pumps the air, shakes hands. He collects his racquets and heads for the exit before his opponent has sat down. He waves to the cheering crowd revelling in the limelight.

Some of the crowd boo him. Victor stops, looks up, pauses before giving them the bird. The cheers and boos increase as the paparazzi go crazy with their cameras.

Victor rushes off briefly signing a few autographs. He checks his watch as he ushered from the court.

4 INT. SUBTERRANIA ENTRANCE HALL - ARTIFICIAL DAYLIGHT 4

Thomson descends broad steps into a huge space crowded with people. The decor is corporate with marble floors, glass and steel everywhere.

But the content is more airport departure hall than office reception. People queue at metal detectors, X-ray scanners and fingerprint recognition machines.

A soothing electronic female voice can be heard on the public address system.

P.A. SYSTEM

For the safety of all our customers, please ensure that you keep your belongings with you at all times. Items left unattended will be removed and promptly destroyed. Thank you for your cooperation in making Subterrania the safest place on earth.

Thomson waits anxiously before being waved through a scanner. A security guard double checks his bag.

SECURITY GUARD

Purpose of visit: business or pleasure?

Thomson hesitates. The guard sees the contents of the bag.

SECURITY GUARD

Maybe the business of pleasure?

He hands the bag back, holds out an electronic bracelet equipped with sensors.

THOMSON

What's that for?

SECURITY GUARD

So we know how many people are inside and where they are.

THOMSON

You're taking the piss. That's an invasion of Civil Liberties. What if I don't want to wear it?

SECURITY GUARD
You don't get in.

Thomson realises he has no choice. He reluctantly holds out his arm, pulls up the sleeve of his leather jacket. The guard clamps it on.

Thomson stares absently up at the angled mirrored wall just above him still looking uncomfortable.

CUT TO:

5 INT. CONTROL CENTRE - CONTINUOUS

5

On the other side of the two-way mirror, a smart, cool guy stares back. BURTON HALBURY has his wits about him as he watches Thomson.

A team of operators man computer terminals and screens in the bright futuristic nerve centre. On one wall a massive electronic counter reads

"CUSTOMERS 11285"

Burton speaks into his small headset microphone.

BURTON
Focus on 418279.

Thomson's face appears on one of the hundreds of monitors in the bank above the glass. They show various scenes around the whole complex. Some in close-up, some distant.

BURTON
Give me his bios.

The screen changes to show Thomson's pulse and various chemical levels.

OPERATOR
All exceeding normal parameters.

BURTON
High anxiety. Tag him, keep an eye on him.

Below the counter a huge electronic wall map shows the plan of Subterranea. All over small green dots move about. One in the entrance hall turns orange.

OPERATOR
Tagged and monitored sir.

A screen follows Thomson as he makes his way to the lifts. Another screen shows a group of tourists with a guide.

CUT TO:

6 INT. ATRIUM - ARTIFICIAL DAYLIGHT 6

A smooth young guide, ALED, lectures the captivated group.

ALED
--and is totally secure from
terrorist attacks. Subterranea,
the safest place on earth.

A gruff barrel-shaped Yorkshireman speaks as he eats an ice cream. His wife and two kids, the same shape, lick away.

YORKSHIREMAN
(mutters)
Not safe from one of my farts.

His kids laugh. Aled deliberately ignores them as he leads the group to a large model of the whole complex, a work of art with its intricate detail, enclosed in a glass case.

The main atrium is an oval shape with a dozen smaller satellites around it, each connected to the main section via it's own tunnel.

ALED
But even with the sophisticated
security we're not complacent.
Should an incident occur,
automatic detection systems will
close shutters sealing off each
satellite isolating the problem.

He turns to face an arcade leading off the atrium. He points upwards to a giant steel shutter that can be seen above the arch like a gate hanging over a castle entrance.

They move off, the Yorkshireman showing off to his kids too much to realise he has left his bag behind.

7 INT. CHANGING ROOM - ARTIFICIAL DAYLIGHT 7

Victor washes in the luxurious shower. DAMIEN, young, suited, precise, collects Victor's things together.

VICTOR
Was that too quick?

DAMIEN
I always tell them it's quality
not quantity.

VICTOR

I had to miss a few shots early in the second otherwise I would have been in here twenty minutes ago.

DAMIEN

Well it gives you time to squeeze in the informal press conference they've scheduled.

Victor leans through the doorway with a look of disbelief.

VICTOR

I've got a plane to catch to New York remember? Just the most important tournament in my career.

DAMIEN

Sponsorship obligations. And as they are paying for--

VICTOR

Yeah yeah, I know. OK I'll be there in ten but let's keep it short. You know I don't do social.

Damien is pleased with his victory.

DAMIEN

You're the big star, they expect it.

VICTOR

I'm just a tennis player.

8

INT. ATRIUM - ARTIFICIAL DAYLIGHT

8

The men in the suits step out of the tailors. Both in their thirties, ANDY is happy and puts his arm around his friend LEWIS, more serious and troubled.

ANDY

Don't look so worried.

LEWIS

It's the speech. There's a week to go and I'm only half way through.

ANDY

Relax, you'll be fine. I'm not expecting a comedian. Just don't mention the stripper...

They stroll off with the other shoppers passing the group of teenagers who are being watched by a security guard.

Satisfied that they are not up to anything, the guard saunters off. As soon as he is out of sight, the boys pull up their hoodies to conceal their faces and huddle up.

9

INT. KIDS PLAY PARK - ARTIFICIAL DAYLIGHT

9

The woman, JULIE, young and somewhat drawn out, is still trying to persuade the little girl, AMY, to enter the park.

Amy is pulling a classic kid's strop and points to a poster of Victor playing tennis.

AMY

But I want to see Victor. I want his autograph. Mummy please.

JULIE

Maybe after mummy has got her things. I'll only be gone an hour. You can play here with the other children.

AMY

I don't want to play. It's not fair.

JULIE

That's enough! Now I'll be back in an hour, OK?

Julie bends to give her daughter a hug. Amy refuses.

AMY

I hate you.

Julie stares exasperated after her daughter as she marches into the play park.

10

INT. ATRIUM - ARTIFICIAL DAYLIGHT

10

A sturdy robotic dustbin rolls up to the Yorkshireman's bag. It's lights flash as an electronic arm gently grabs the bag and drops it through the open lid.

ROBOT

WARNING! Unattended bag will now be destroyed.

The lid closes and there is a thud of a small explosion making the robot jump.

In the distance, Aled gathers the group outside a set of double doors with multiple signs marking electricity and danger of death. The Yorkshireman looks back, troubled...

ALED

Prepare yourselves for the piece
de la resistance of Subterrania.

He swipes a card through a reader and the door clicks open. They follow him in.

11

INT. HYDROELECTRIC PLANT - CONTINUOUS

11

Aled leads the group onto a platform overlooking a massive industrial space. The group gasp in awe.

Below them stand three gigantic steel turbines like aeroplane jets. A network of cables and pipes run across the walls and floor. A steady hum pervades the air.

KID

Wow, what is this place?

ALED

The powerhouse of Subterrania.

A team of maintenance engineers work on the central turbine. Two carrying clipboards peel away. One is young and keen, BRAD, the other middle aged and superior, JURGEN.

BRAD

The fault in the regulator will be the same in the other two turbines. You ran the last few inspections, how did this get through?

JURGEN

You saw the results, it doesn't show under standard testing conditions. I can't be expected to think of everything.

FINLAY McCULLOUGH, mid-fifties, wearing a suit and hardhat, approaches them.

JURGEN

I suggest we keep this to ourselves for now.

BRAD

I think we should--

FINLAY

Everything OK?

JURGEN

I was just telling Bradley how we must follow protocol.

Brad stares hard at Jurgen. Decides to let it go.

BRAD

Don't call me Bradley. It's Brad.

FINLAY

When will number two be back online?

JURGEN

There's still a fair amount of work. I'd say three hours at least.

Finlay isn't happy.

JURGEN

You wouldn't want us to rush it would you?

FINLAY

I just don't like having our backup out of action.

Jurgen nudges Finlay. Aled is waving from the platform. Finlay acknowledges him.

FINLAY

Keep at it on number two.

Finlay climbs the stairs to the control platform. Aled leads the group towards Finlay.

ALED

This is Finlay McCullough, Subterranea's designer and chief engineer.

Finlay puffs up, waves them to a table. He flicks a switch and a three-dimensional hologram of the complex appears.

FINLAY

This is the engine room of Subterranea. A hydroelectric power station.

YORKSHIREMAN

How's that work then?

FINLAY

Subterranea is built in the path of several aquifers - underground rivers that flow through the bedrock beneath the surface.

The hologram changes to show a river of water flowing towards Subterranea.

FINLAY

Normally this would present a serious problem as the water pressure on the shell is enormous. But the power station diverts the flow of the aquifers to generate electricity.

The hologram changes to a working model of the plant.

FINLAY

So we remove the pressure on the shell whilst generating all the power we need at the same time.

12 INT. TUNNEL - ARTIFICIAL DAYLIGHT 12

A cleaner in overalls opens a side door at the tunnel entrance and wheels in his cleaning cart.

13 INT. CLEANING CUPBOARD - CONTINUOUS 13

The cleaner parks his cart next to several others in the small room. He turns to leave when he notices something strange about the wall.

He sizes it up, unsure what has caught his attention. He sees that the tiles seem to be bowing inwards. In fact the whole wall is pressing in.

He fiddles with a tile, trying to push it back when...

It FLIES out, SMASHING into his head. He staggers back as the whole wall pops forward sending tiles shooting across the room. They crash to the ground. Then silence.

Blood pours down his face as he lurches for the door.