

Neuromancer - Armitage

William Gibson, 1984

Armitage was a name, a simple way of calling him, but it meant nothing. Behind the handsome, empty face, there was nothing at all. He was a construct, a puppet, a shell game run by an AI named Wintermute.

Once, he'd been Colonel Willis Corto, and he'd led a team of soldiers into the Russian ice on a mission called Screaming Fist. The mission had gone bad, spectacularly bad, and Corto had come home with most of his face burned off and his mind in pieces.

They'd rebuilt his face. They couldn't rebuild his mind. That was left to Wintermute, which had reached into the padded cell where Corto rocked and mumbled, and had slowly, carefully, assembled a new personality around the wreckage of the old.

Armitage. A clean, sharp name. A suit of clothes for a hollow man. He gave orders, signed checks, made phone calls. None of it was real. None of it was him. Behind the mask, Corto was still screaming, still burning, still falling through Russian ice toward a ground that never came.