

# НАКТОМ

MESSAGE FROM

# HELL



# Chapter 1: Whispers in the Amazon

The jungle breathed around Dr. Elena Vasquez as she carefully brushed away centuries of soil from the strange object her team had unearthed. Rain pattered against the hastily erected canopy above the dig site, creating a rhythmic soundtrack to her meticulous work. Three weeks into the expedition, and this was the first significant find—a stone tablet unlike anything she'd encountered in fifteen years of archaeological work in South America.

"Professor, you should take a break. You've been at it for six hours straight," her assistant, Marco, said, offering a canteen of water.

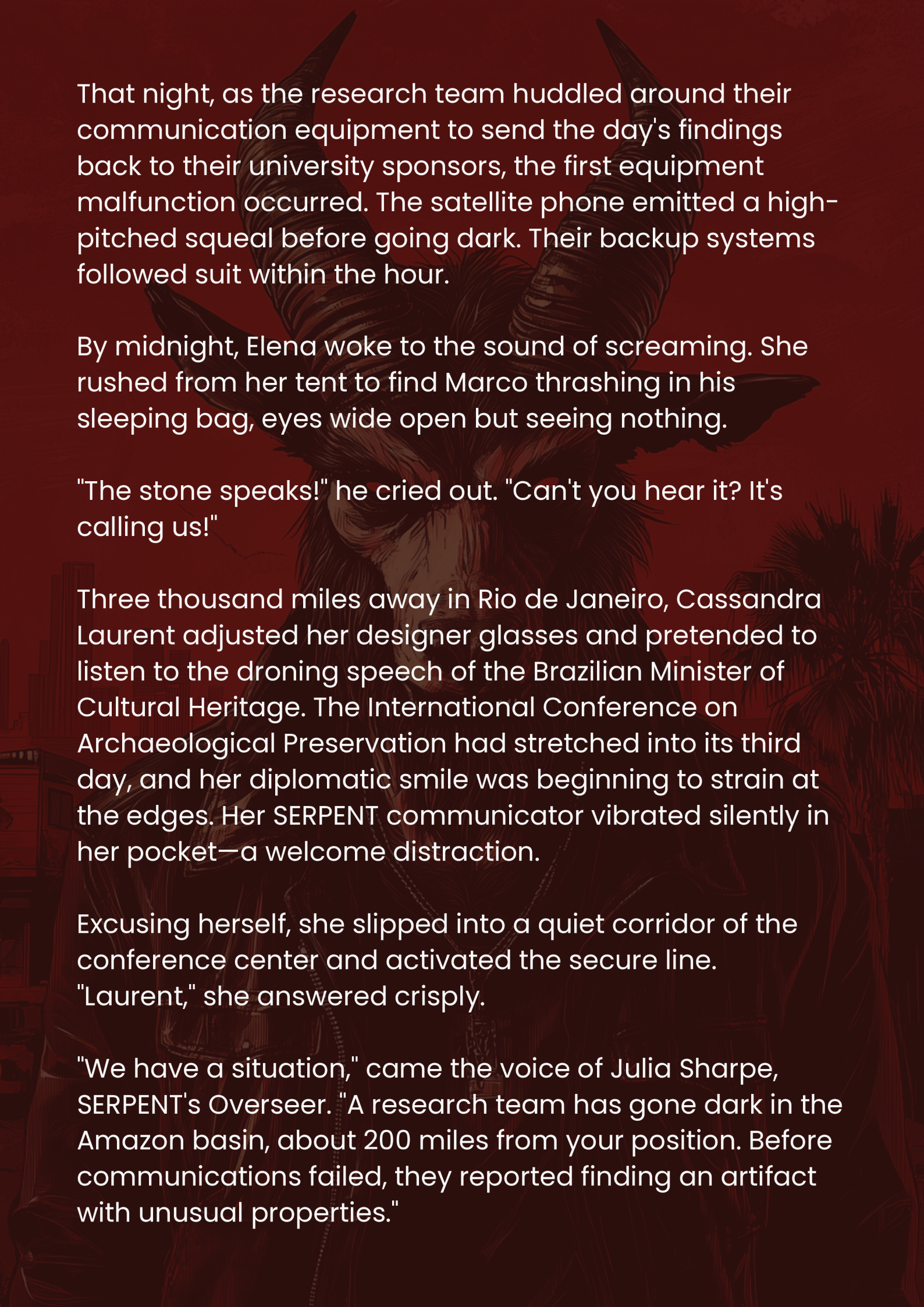
Elena shook her head, not taking her eyes off the artifact. "Look at these markings, Marco. This isn't Mayan. It's not Incan, Aztec, or any pre-Columbian script I've ever seen." She traced her finger just above the surface of the stone, following the strange angular symbols etched into its surface.

"This doesn't belong here. It shouldn't be here." Marco leaned closer, squinting at the tablet.

"Then what is it?"

"I don't know," Elena whispered, a tremor of excitement in her voice. "But I intend to find out."





That night, as the research team huddled around their communication equipment to send the day's findings back to their university sponsors, the first equipment malfunction occurred. The satellite phone emitted a high-pitched squeal before going dark. Their backup systems followed suit within the hour.

By midnight, Elena woke to the sound of screaming. She rushed from her tent to find Marco thrashing in his sleeping bag, eyes wide open but seeing nothing.

"The stone speaks!" he cried out. "Can't you hear it? It's calling us!"

Three thousand miles away in Rio de Janeiro, Cassandra Laurent adjusted her designer glasses and pretended to listen to the droning speech of the Brazilian Minister of Cultural Heritage. The International Conference on Archaeological Preservation had stretched into its third day, and her diplomatic smile was beginning to strain at the edges. Her SERPENT communicator vibrated silently in her pocket—a welcome distraction.

Excusing herself, she slipped into a quiet corridor of the conference center and activated the secure line.

"Laurent," she answered crisply.

"We have a situation," came the voice of Julia Sharpe, SERPENT's Overseer. "A research team has gone dark in the Amazon basin, about 200 miles from your position. Before communications failed, they reported finding an artifact with unusual properties."





Cassandra's interest piqued immediately.

"Define 'unusual.'"

"That's where it gets interesting. Reports mention researchers experiencing vivid hallucinations, equipment failures, and..." Julia paused, "claims that the artifact is 'speaking' to them."

"Sounds like someone found some interesting local fungi," Cassandra remarked dryly.

"Perhaps. But the Brazilian authorities called in American assistance after the last transmission. The CIA has dispatched a cleanup team."

Cassandra raised an eyebrow. "The CIA doesn't mobilize for archaeologists having bad trips."

"Precisely why we're interested. I need you to use your conference cover to gather what you can. Find out what's really happening out there."

"Consider it done."

Half a world away in Shadow Wing's mobile command center, Mei Huang sat cross-legged on the floor of her workspace, surrounded by holographic displays of intercepted communications and reports from various intelligence agencies. Her eyes flicked rapidly between screens, her keen analytical mind connecting seemingly disparate pieces of information.





She paused on a particular CIA intercept flagged by SERPENT's AI system:

SITUATION REPORT:

AMAZON BASIN INCIDENT – CLASSIFICATION LEVEL UMBRA.

The psychological profiles of the research team members before and after their discovery showed alarming changes. Rational, methodical scientists had transformed into terrified, babbling individuals within days. The words "mass hysteria" appeared repeatedly in the reports, but Mei knew better. Mass hysteria didn't typically manifest with such consistent hallucinations across different subjects.

The victims all reported the same thing: voices speaking an unknown language, emanating from the stone.

Mei pulled up her linguistic database and began cross-referencing the few phonetic transcriptions included in the reports. No matches appeared in any known human language.

Her communicator chimed. It was Dimitri Zechev. "You seeing this CIA chatter?" his Bulgarian accent came through the line.

"I am," Mei replied. "And I don't like it. Whatever they found in that jungle isn't just another archaeological curiosity."





"I've hacked the medical reports from the field team. These researchers aren't just hallucinating—their brain scans show abnormal activity in regions associated with language processing. It's like..."

"Like they're learning a new language," Mei finished his thought. "Involuntarily."

In the silence that followed, both SERPENT operatives considered the implications. Something was communicating with these researchers—something that used a language humans had never encountered before.

By the end of the day, all communications from the excavation site had ceased entirely. The last transmission, fragmented and distorted, contained only Dr. Vasquez's voice repeating a single phrase over and over:

"It's not from here. It's not from here. It's not from here..."



## Chapter 2: The Cleanup

Fox Meyer was enjoying his third cup of coffee at a nondescript diner in Washington D.C. when his secure phone vibrated with a distinctive pattern—his CIA contact was reaching out through their emergency channel. He casually checked his watch, paid for his breakfast, and strolled to the Lincoln Memorial before activating the secure line.

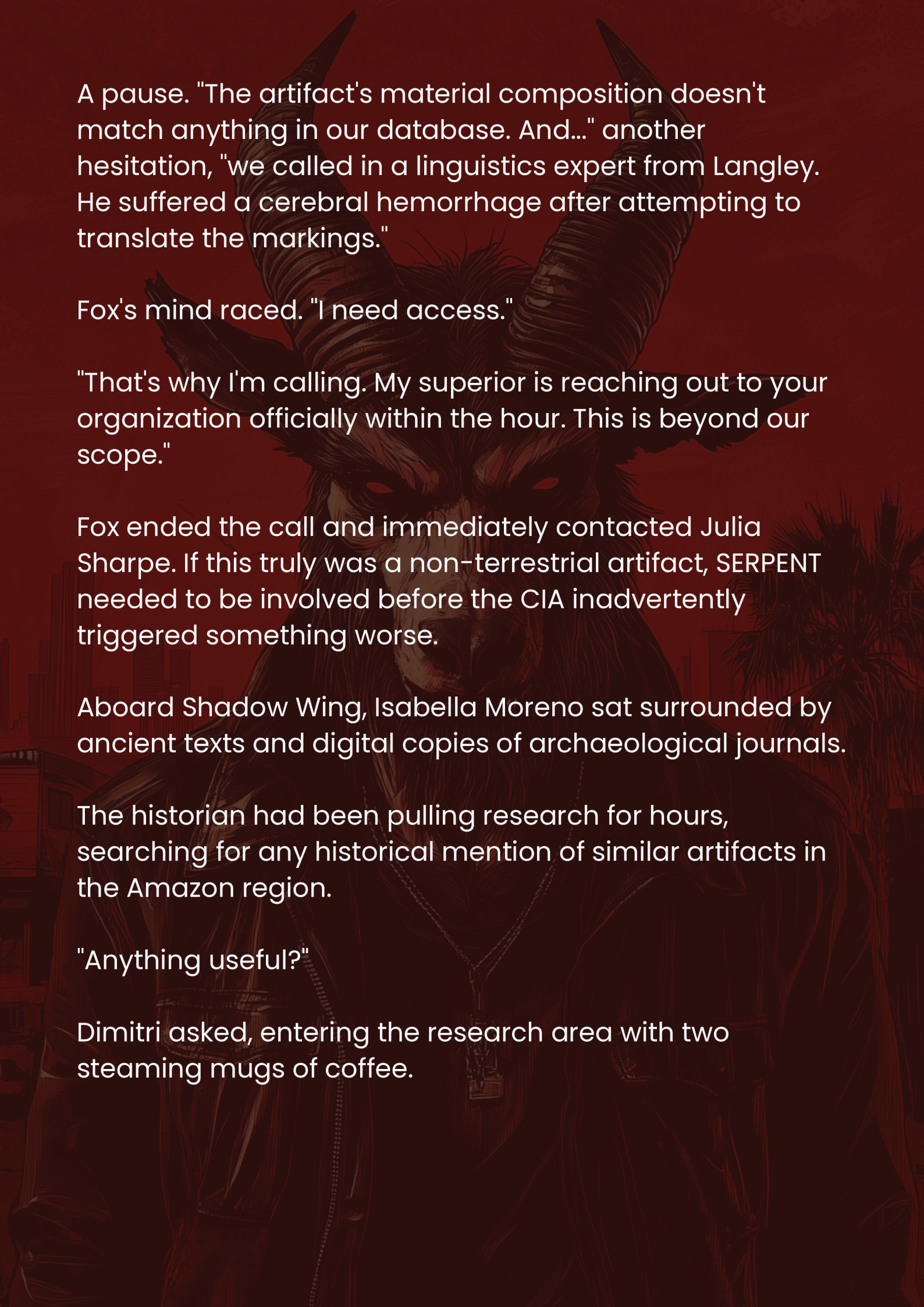
"I thought we agreed Tuesdays were our day, Patricia," he said lightly into the phone, eyes scanning for surveillance. "This couldn't wait," the female voice replied, tension evident. "We have a potential NTE situation in Brazil." Fox's casual demeanor evaporated instantly. Non-Terrestrial Entity situations were exactly why SERPENT had been formed in the first place.

"Details," he demanded, moving to a more secluded area. "An archaeological team uncovered an artifact in the Amazon. After exposure, all team members exhibited extreme psychological changes.

We sent in a containment unit yesterday, but they're reporting similar effects beginning to manifest. The artifact is being transported to Facility 8 for analysis."

"What makes you think it's extraterrestrial?"





A pause. "The artifact's material composition doesn't match anything in our database. And..." another hesitation, "we called in a linguistics expert from Langley. He suffered a cerebral hemorrhage after attempting to translate the markings."

Fox's mind raced. "I need access."

"That's why I'm calling. My superior is reaching out to your organization officially within the hour. This is beyond our scope."

Fox ended the call and immediately contacted Julia Sharpe. If this truly was a non-terrestrial artifact, SERPENT needed to be involved before the CIA inadvertently triggered something worse.

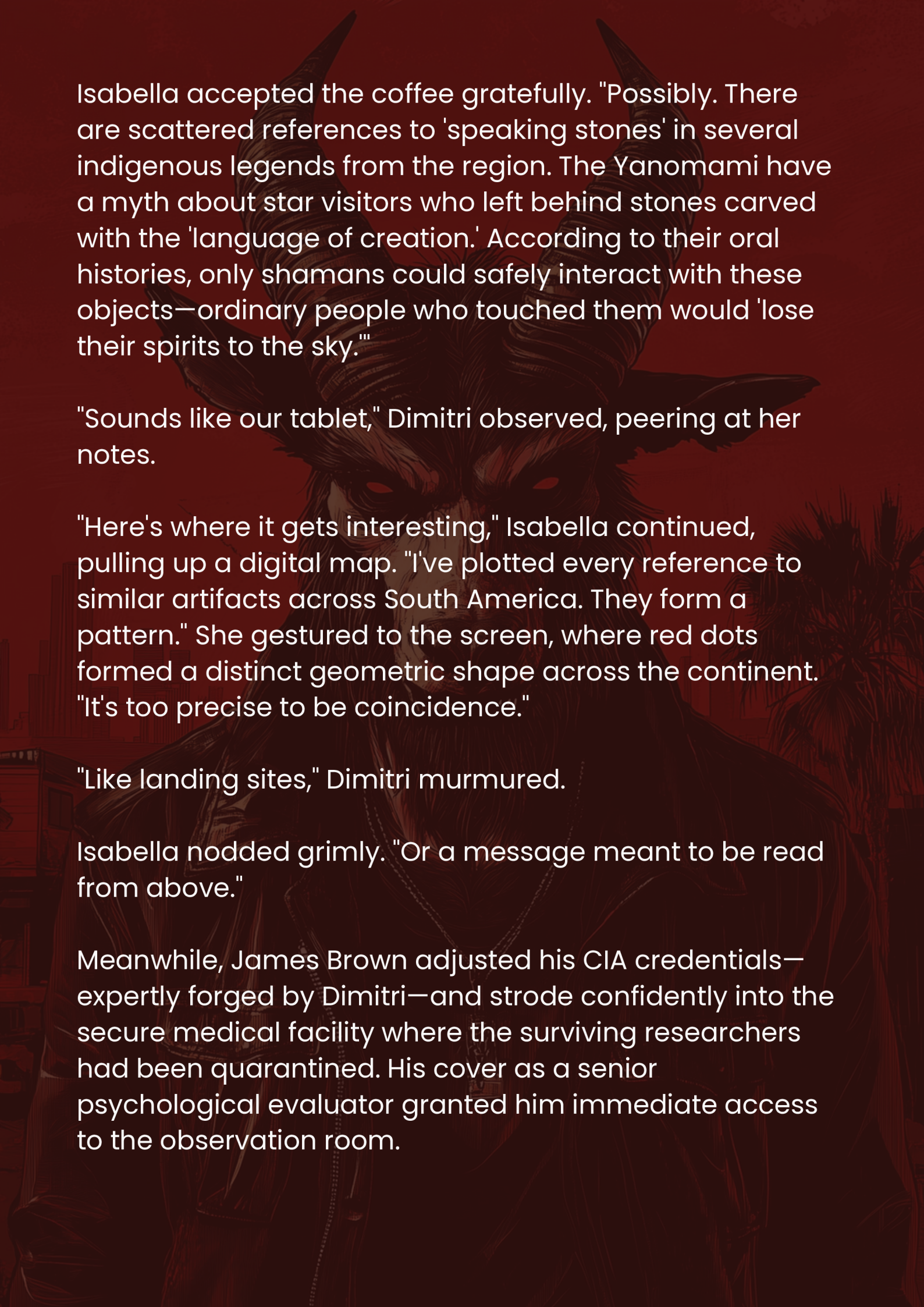
Aboard Shadow Wing, Isabella Moreno sat surrounded by ancient texts and digital copies of archaeological journals.

The historian had been pulling research for hours, searching for any historical mention of similar artifacts in the Amazon region.

"Anything useful?"

Dimitri asked, entering the research area with two steaming mugs of coffee.





Isabella accepted the coffee gratefully. "Possibly. There are scattered references to 'speaking stones' in several indigenous legends from the region. The Yanomami have a myth about star visitors who left behind stones carved with the 'language of creation.' According to their oral histories, only shamans could safely interact with these objects—ordinary people who touched them would 'lose their spirits to the sky.'"

"Sounds like our tablet," Dimitri observed, peering at her notes.

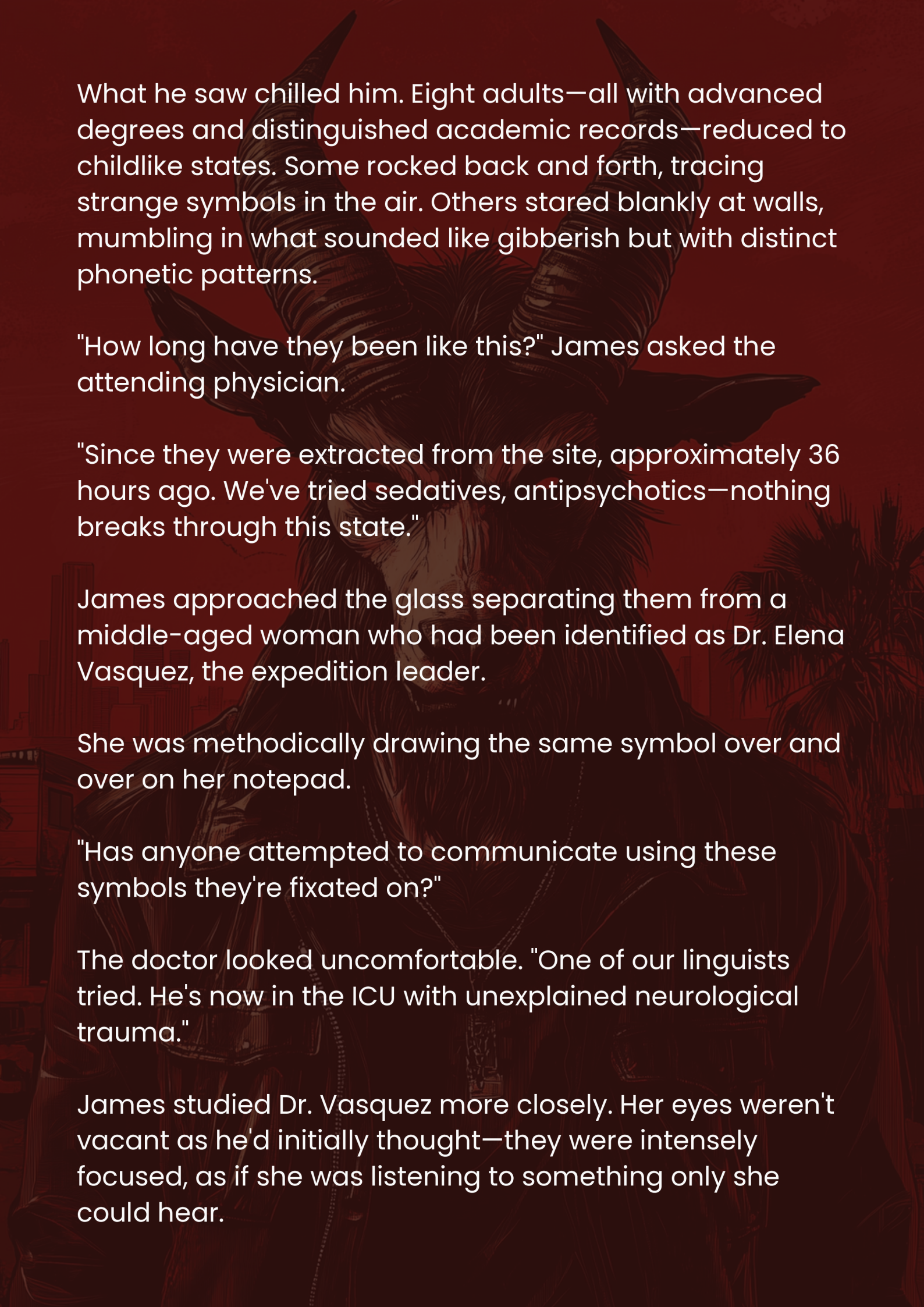
"Here's where it gets interesting," Isabella continued, pulling up a digital map. "I've plotted every reference to similar artifacts across South America. They form a pattern." She gestured to the screen, where red dots formed a distinct geometric shape across the continent. "It's too precise to be coincidence."

"Like landing sites," Dimitri murmured.

Isabella nodded grimly. "Or a message meant to be read from above."

Meanwhile, James Brown adjusted his CIA credentials—expertly forged by Dimitri—and strode confidently into the secure medical facility where the surviving researchers had been quarantined. His cover as a senior psychological evaluator granted him immediate access to the observation room.





What he saw chilled him. Eight adults—all with advanced degrees and distinguished academic records—reduced to childlike states. Some rocked back and forth, tracing strange symbols in the air. Others stared blankly at walls, mumbling in what sounded like gibberish but with distinct phonetic patterns.

"How long have they been like this?" James asked the attending physician.

"Since they were extracted from the site, approximately 36 hours ago. We've tried sedatives, antipsychotics—nothing breaks through this state."

James approached the glass separating them from a middle-aged woman who had been identified as Dr. Elena Vasquez, the expedition leader.

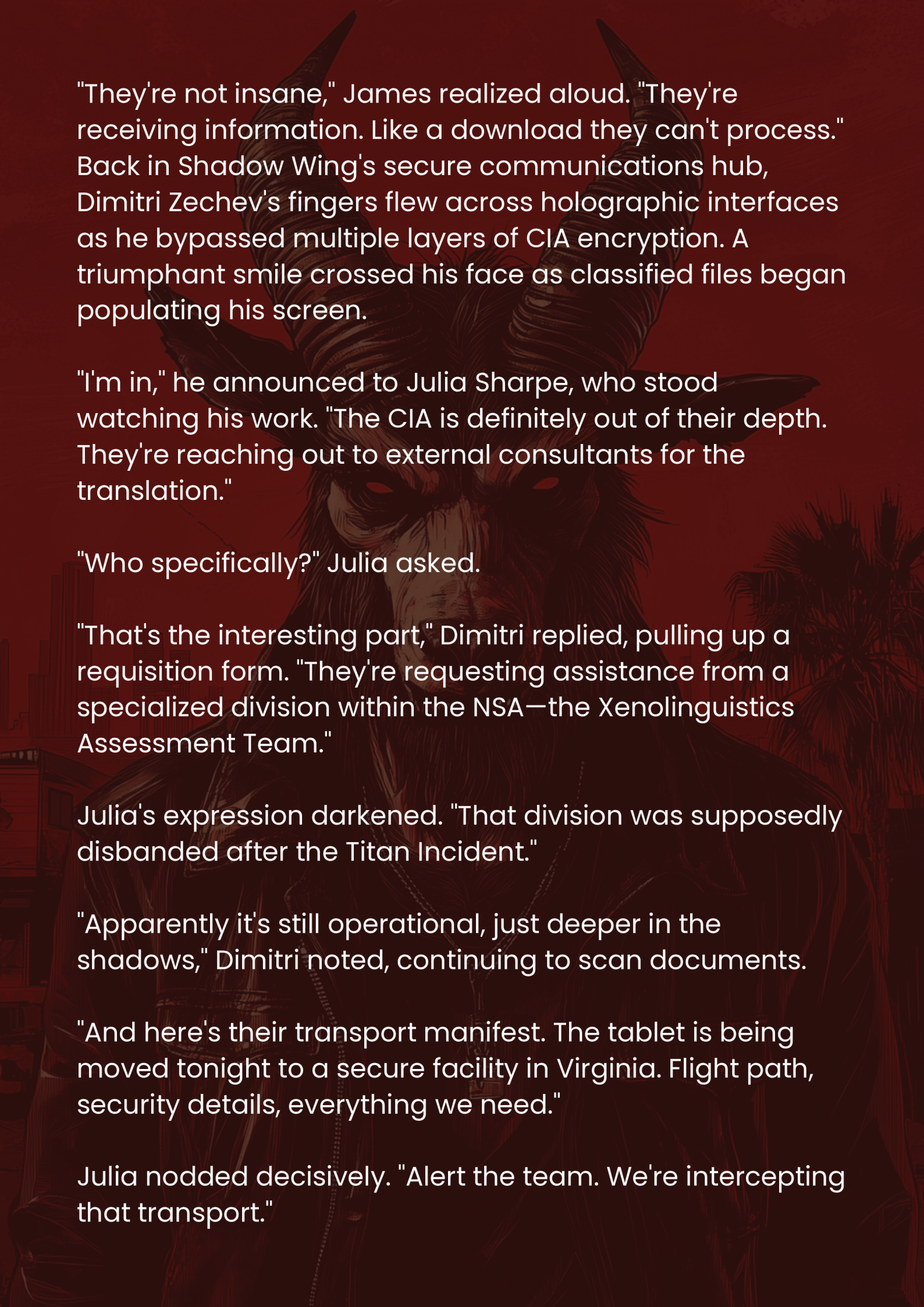
She was methodically drawing the same symbol over and over on her notepad.

"Has anyone attempted to communicate using these symbols they're fixated on?"

The doctor looked uncomfortable. "One of our linguists tried. He's now in the ICU with unexplained neurological trauma."

James studied Dr. Vasquez more closely. Her eyes weren't vacant as he'd initially thought—they were intensely focused, as if she was listening to something only she could hear.





"They're not insane," James realized aloud. "They're receiving information. Like a download they can't process." Back in Shadow Wing's secure communications hub, Dimitri Zechev's fingers flew across holographic interfaces as he bypassed multiple layers of CIA encryption. A triumphant smile crossed his face as classified files began populating his screen.

"I'm in," he announced to Julia Sharpe, who stood watching his work. "The CIA is definitely out of their depth. They're reaching out to external consultants for the translation."

"Who specifically?" Julia asked.

"That's the interesting part," Dimitri replied, pulling up a requisition form. "They're requesting assistance from a specialized division within the NSA—the Xenolinguistics Assessment Team."

Julia's expression darkened. "That division was supposedly disbanded after the Titan Incident."

"Apparently it's still operational, just deeper in the shadows," Dimitri noted, continuing to scan documents.

"And here's their transport manifest. The tablet is being moved tonight to a secure facility in Virginia. Flight path, security details, everything we need."

Julia nodded decisively. "Alert the team. We're intercepting that transport."



## Chapter 3: Shadow Wing Mobilizes

The sleek, modified Bombardier Global 8000 banked sharply over the Atlantic, its advanced engines barely audible inside the aircraft's spacious cabin. Shadow Wing wasn't just SERPENT's transportation—it was their mobile headquarters, intelligence center, and tactical base of operations.

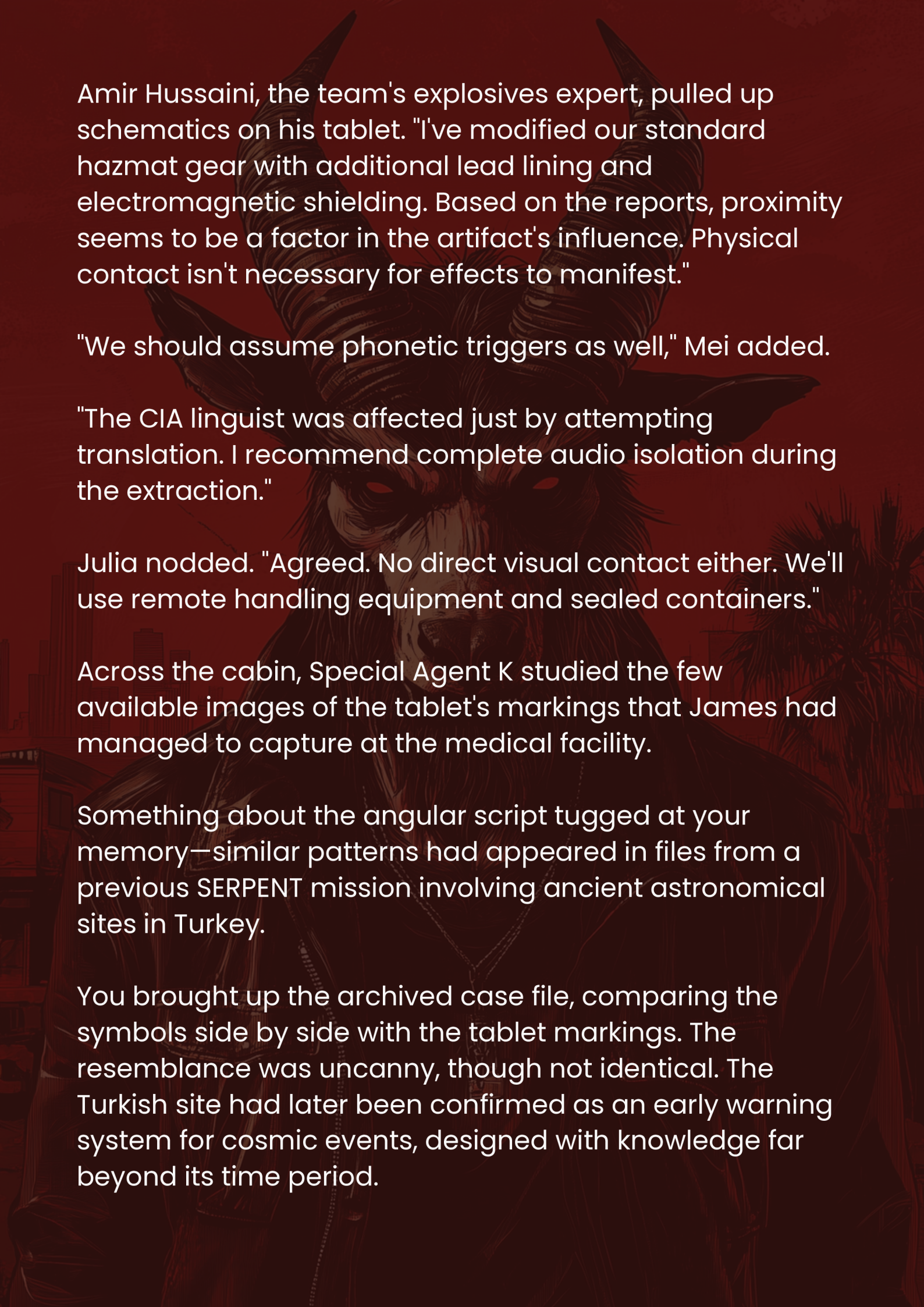
In the mid-cabin war room, Julia Sharpe stood before the holographic command table, her authoritative presence drawing the attention of the assembled team members. The three-dimensional projection displayed a remote airstrip in northern Brazil, surrounded by dense rainforest. "CIA transport N4791Z will land here at 0200 local time," Julia explained, zooming in on the runway. "They'll refuel and continue to Virginia with the artifact. Our window for interception is narrow."

Fox Meyer leaned forward, studying the projection. "Any word from Klumgongyn on whether the Volracs have encountered anything like this before?"

"He's been uncharacteristically reticent," Julia replied. "All he would say is that some technologies were considered forbidden even on Varnyr. He strongly advised caution."

Gabriel Adams, the BTRU leader, rose from his seat. "My team is ready for the intercept, but we need to talk containment. If this thing affects minds on contact, we need protection."





Amir Hussaini, the team's explosives expert, pulled up schematics on his tablet. "I've modified our standard hazmat gear with additional lead lining and electromagnetic shielding. Based on the reports, proximity seems to be a factor in the artifact's influence. Physical contact isn't necessary for effects to manifest."

"We should assume phonetic triggers as well," Mei added.

"The CIA linguist was affected just by attempting translation. I recommend complete audio isolation during the extraction."

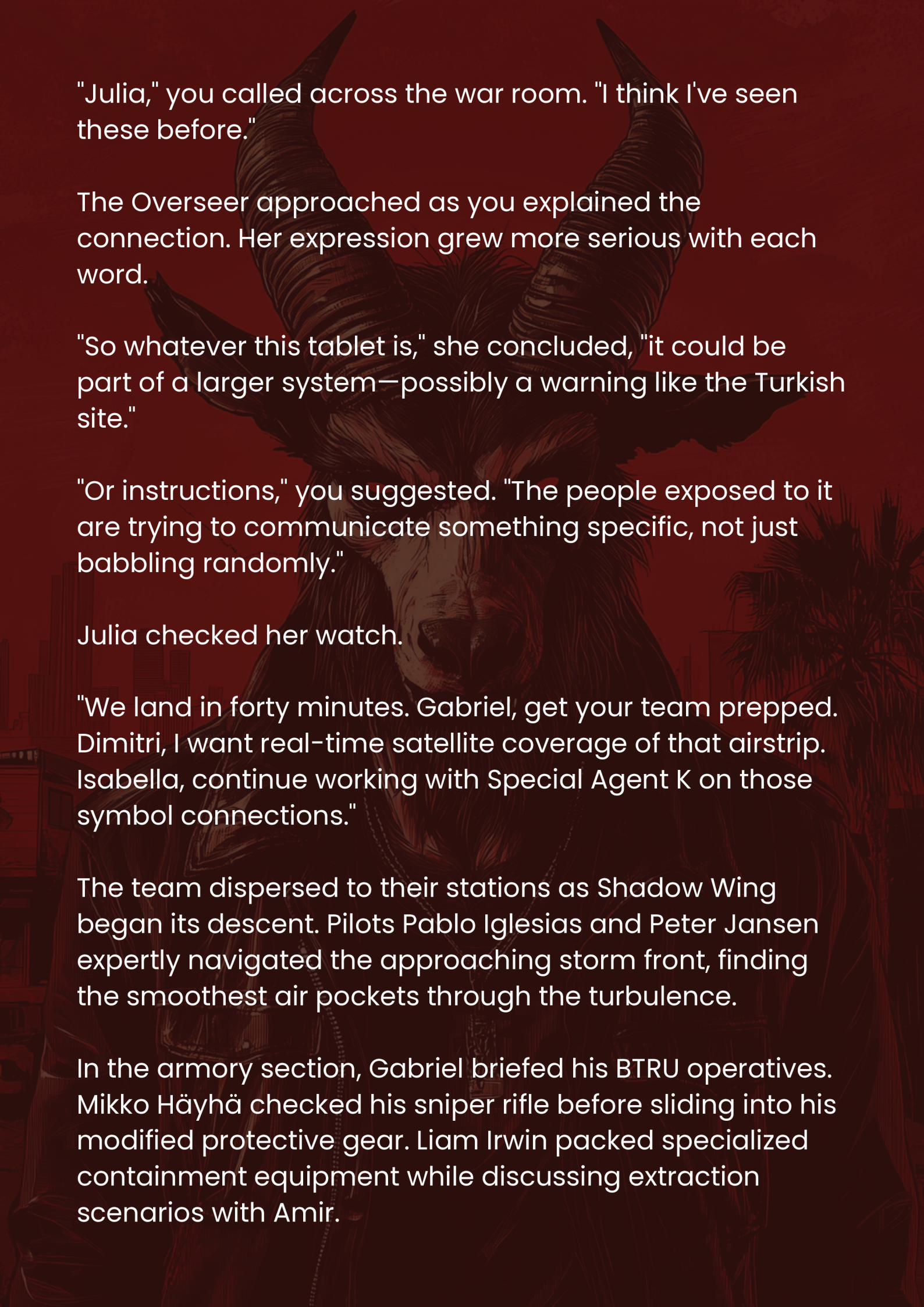
Julia nodded. "Agreed. No direct visual contact either. We'll use remote handling equipment and sealed containers."

Across the cabin, Special Agent K studied the few available images of the tablet's markings that James had managed to capture at the medical facility.

Something about the angular script tugged at your memory—similar patterns had appeared in files from a previous SERPENT mission involving ancient astronomical sites in Turkey.

You brought up the archived case file, comparing the symbols side by side with the tablet markings. The resemblance was uncanny, though not identical. The Turkish site had later been confirmed as an early warning system for cosmic events, designed with knowledge far beyond its time period.





"Julia," you called across the war room. "I think I've seen these before."

The Overseer approached as you explained the connection. Her expression grew more serious with each word.

"So whatever this tablet is," she concluded, "it could be part of a larger system—possibly a warning like the Turkish site."

"Or instructions," you suggested. "The people exposed to it are trying to communicate something specific, not just babbling randomly."

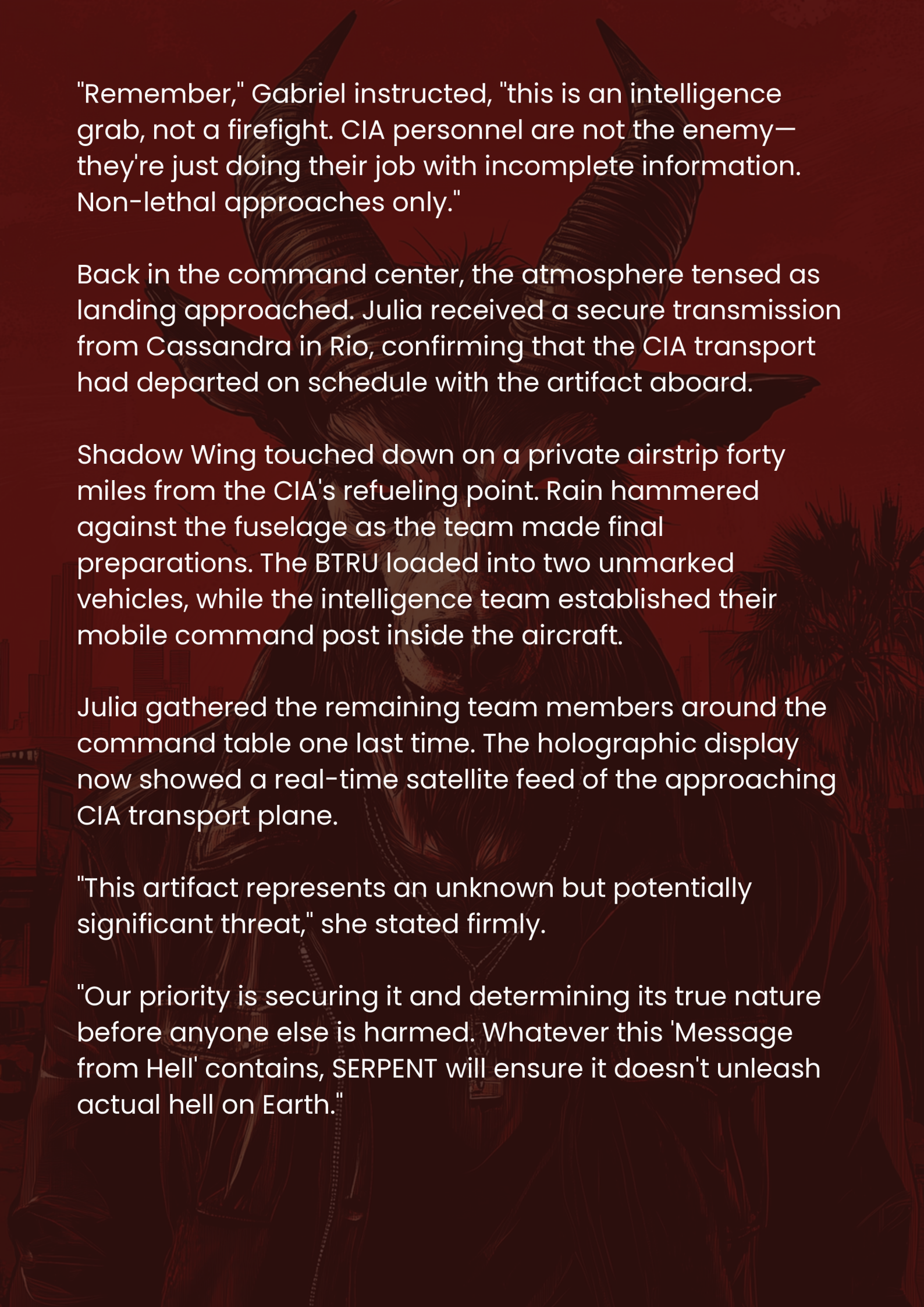
Julia checked her watch.

"We land in forty minutes. Gabriel, get your team prepped. Dimitri, I want real-time satellite coverage of that airstrip. Isabella, continue working with Special Agent K on those symbol connections."

The team dispersed to their stations as Shadow Wing began its descent. Pilots Pablo Iglesias and Peter Jansen expertly navigated the approaching storm front, finding the smoothest air pockets through the turbulence.

In the armory section, Gabriel briefed his BTRU operatives. Mikko Häyhä checked his sniper rifle before sliding into his modified protective gear. Liam Irwin packed specialized containment equipment while discussing extraction scenarios with Amir.





"Remember," Gabriel instructed, "this is an intelligence grab, not a firefight. CIA personnel are not the enemy—they're just doing their job with incomplete information. Non-lethal approaches only."

Back in the command center, the atmosphere tensed as landing approached. Julia received a secure transmission from Cassandra in Rio, confirming that the CIA transport had departed on schedule with the artifact aboard.

Shadow Wing touched down on a private airstrip forty miles from the CIA's refueling point. Rain hammered against the fuselage as the team made final preparations. The BTRU loaded into two unmarked vehicles, while the intelligence team established their mobile command post inside the aircraft.

Julia gathered the remaining team members around the command table one last time. The holographic display now showed a real-time satellite feed of the approaching CIA transport plane.

"This artifact represents an unknown but potentially significant threat," she stated firmly.

"Our priority is securing it and determining its true nature before anyone else is harmed. Whatever this 'Message from Hell' contains, SERPENT will ensure it doesn't unleash actual hell on Earth."



# Briefing



Greetings, Special Agent.

Recently an expedition in Brazil has found a strange tablet. It seems to be cursed, which is something obviously ridiculous to the untrained eye. However, we know better about the forces that may be.

The researchers went mad after too much contact with the tablet. A cleanup team from the CIA has intervened and taken them out of commission.

They are now asking us to translate the tablet. Given the expertise in your team regarding... strange things, this would be the perfect job for you.

As always, Special Agent, the contract is yours, if you choose to accept.



# Materials

tablet-message-from-hell.png

## Answer Instruction

Use the answer to unlock the flagfile, this will reward you with your badge.

Decipher the text to find the answer. You will know when you see the flag.

## Flagfile

Be advised, the flagfile is an encrypted ZIP. Make sure your OS supports the ZIP format. Ensure the password contains no hidden characters or formatting.

PS: Don't forget to claim your Coins and XP, by posting your card in the #card-brag channel in Discord.

<https://discord.hacktoria.com>

## Write-Up

There is an attached file called a write-up, this will give you the answer in case you get stuck.

## Acknowledgements

This challenge was made by Frank Diepmaat.