



# HAZAKURIA

# ON THE WIRE

Stop a shark finning operation in Malaysia



## Chapter 1: The Sacrifice

The South China Sea lapped gently against the hidden dock as the first light of dawn painted the sky in shades of amber. Cassandra Laurent adjusted her designer sunglasses, the perfect accessory for her cover as a European businesswoman with questionable ethics and deep pockets. But behind those glasses, her eyes missed nothing.

"I count six men on the dock and three more on the boat," she whispered, her lips barely moving. The discreet comms device tucked behind her ear transmitted her words back to Shadow Wing circling high above Malaysian airspace.

"Copy that," came Fox Meyer's calm voice. "Satellite shows another vessel approaching from the southeast. Could be your VIP."

Cassandra straightened her linen blazer and took a casual sip from her espresso cup. From her position at the seaside café, she had the perfect vantage point of the illegal operation. The fishermen had already begun their grim work, hauling massive sharks onto the dock.

The sharp crack of machetes against cartilage carried across the water as fins were violently separated from still-living creatures, which were then unceremoniously dumped back into the ocean to suffer a slow death.

"They're monsters," she murmured.





"Focus, Cassandra," Fox replied. "We need the connection to the politician, not just the finning operation."

She raised her phone as if taking a selfie with the scenic background, instead capturing high-resolution images of the dock workers and their gruesome harvest.

The approaching boat cut through the water with purpose, its gleaming hull a stark contrast to the weathered fishing vessels.

"That's not a fishing boat," she observed. "Too clean, too expensive."

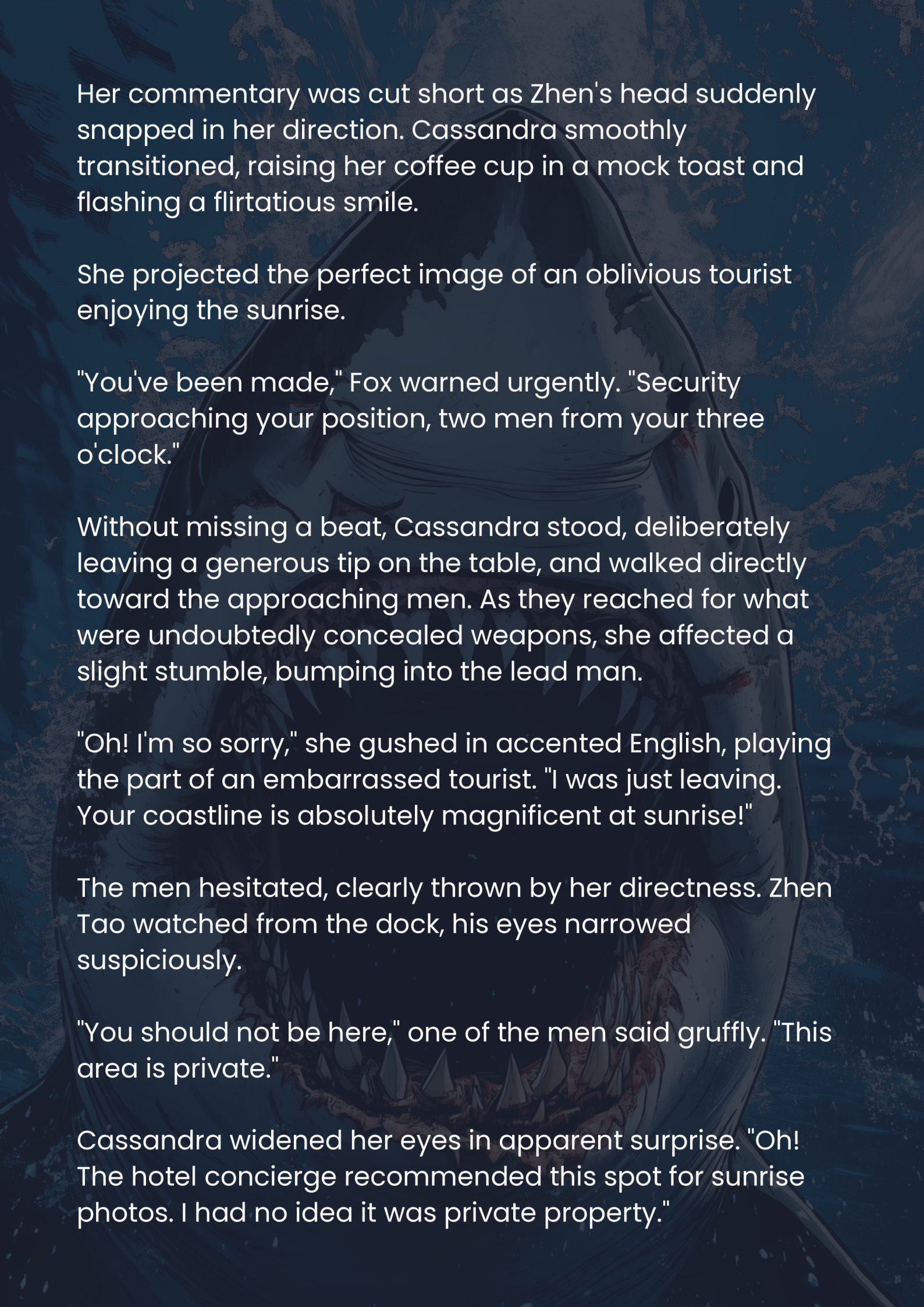
As the sleek craft docked, a man in an impeccably tailored suit stepped onto the wooden planks. The workers immediately straightened, their demeanor shifting from casual to deferential.

"That's our guy," Fox confirmed in her ear. "Facial recognition matches Zhen Tao, right-hand man to our political target."

Cassandra used her phone's camera to zoom in on Zhen as he inspected the morning's haul, nodding approvingly at several particularly large fins. She captured a series of rapid photos, documenting the interaction.

"He's receiving an envelope," she narrated quietly. "Probably payment records or—"





Her commentary was cut short as Zhen's head suddenly snapped in her direction. Cassandra smoothly transitioned, raising her coffee cup in a mock toast and flashing a flirtatious smile.

She projected the perfect image of an oblivious tourist enjoying the sunrise.

"You've been made," Fox warned urgently. "Security approaching your position, two men from your three o'clock."

Without missing a beat, Cassandra stood, deliberately leaving a generous tip on the table, and walked directly toward the approaching men. As they reached for what were undoubtedly concealed weapons, she affected a slight stumble, bumping into the lead man.

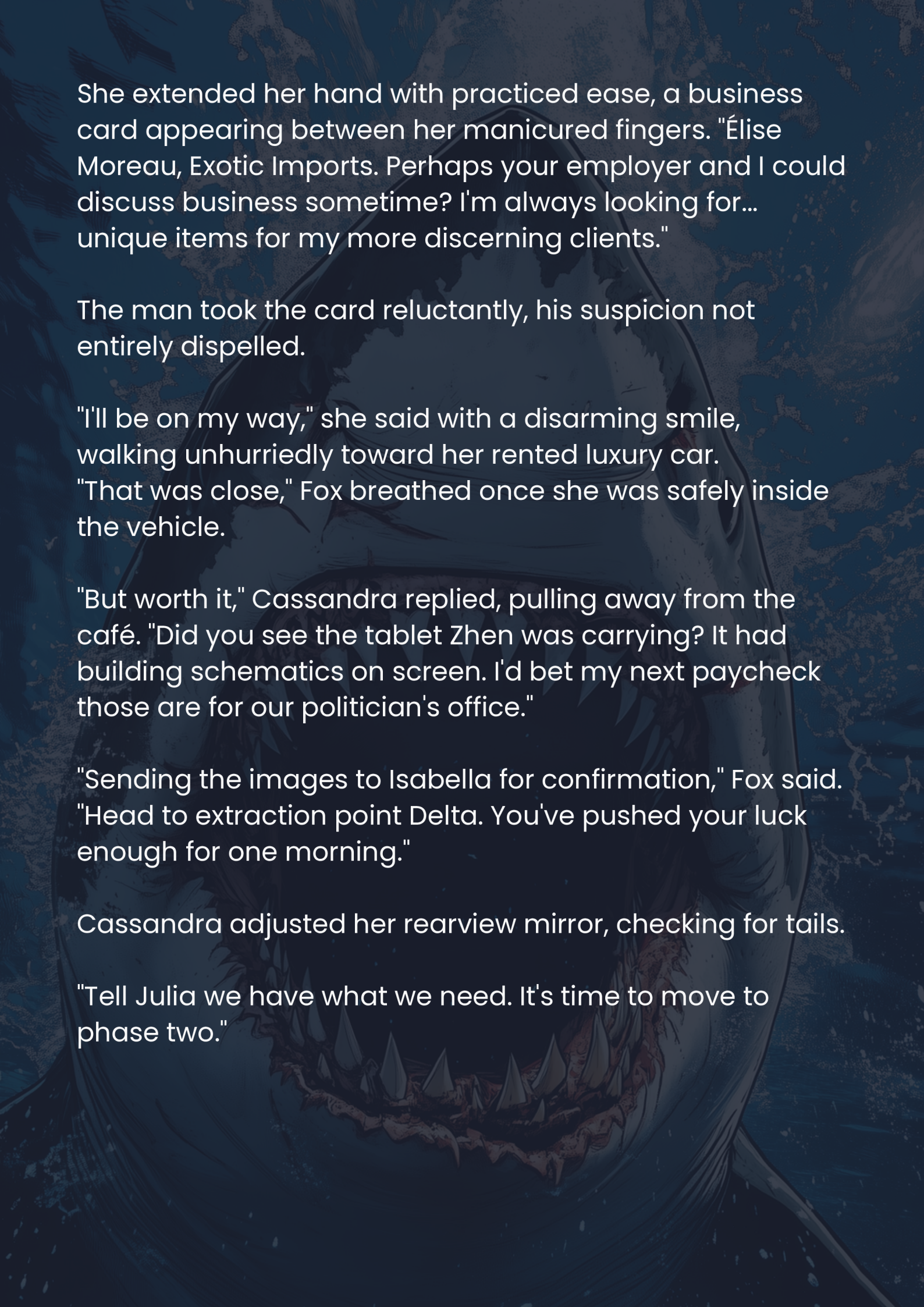
"Oh! I'm so sorry," she gushed in accented English, playing the part of an embarrassed tourist. "I was just leaving. Your coastline is absolutely magnificent at sunrise!"

The men hesitated, clearly thrown by her directness. Zhen Tao watched from the dock, his eyes narrowed suspiciously.

"You should not be here," one of the men said gruffly. "This area is private."

Cassandra widened her eyes in apparent surprise. "Oh! The hotel concierge recommended this spot for sunrise photos. I had no idea it was private property."





She extended her hand with practiced ease, a business card appearing between her manicured fingers. "Élise Moreau, Exotic Imports. Perhaps your employer and I could discuss business sometime? I'm always looking for... unique items for my more discerning clients."

The man took the card reluctantly, his suspicion not entirely dispelled.

"I'll be on my way," she said with a disarming smile, walking unhurriedly toward her rented luxury car.

"That was close," Fox breathed once she was safely inside the vehicle.

"But worth it," Cassandra replied, pulling away from the café. "Did you see the tablet Zhen was carrying? It had building schematics on screen. I'd bet my next paycheck those are for our politician's office."

"Sending the images to Isabella for confirmation," Fox said. "Head to extraction point Delta. You've pushed your luck enough for one morning."

Cassandra adjusted her rearview mirror, checking for tails.

"Tell Julia we have what we need. It's time to move to phase two."



## Chapter 2: Shadows in KL

The neon lights of Kuala Lumpur's business district reflected off the rain-slicked streets as James Brown adjusted his tie and checked his watch—a habit from his MI6 days that he'd never quite shaken.

From his position at the rooftop bar of the towering hotel, he had an unobstructed view of his target: the gleaming Petronas Financial Tower where one Dato' Ibrahim Zahir kept his unassuming office on the 43rd floor.

"How's the whiskey?" came Gabriel Adams' voice through his earpiece.

James didn't look up from his drink. "Overpriced. But the view is worth every penny."

Gabriel chuckled softly. "I'm in position in the service corridor. Security is tighter than we anticipated. Four guards at the main desk, key card access to all elevators, and biometric scanners for the executive floors."

"Someone's nervous," James mused. "Our friend Ibrahim isn't just a mid-level politician with a side hustle."

His phone vibrated with an incoming message. Isabella Moreno had sent a detailed cultural analysis of the building's security patterns, noting how the rotation schedule aligned with traditional Chinese numerology—a detail that would have been lost on most observers.



"Isabella's spotted a pattern," James relayed to Gabriel.

"Security rotation changes at 8 minutes past the hour, not on the hour. It's a superstition thing."

"That gives us a precise window," Gabriel replied. "But we still need access credentials."

James took a final sip of his whiskey and stood, straightening his bespoke suit. "Leave that to me. Our Malaysian friend may be suspicious, but he's also vain. Let's see if he's interested in a meeting with a British venture capitalist looking to diversify his portfolio."

Thirty minutes later, James stood in the gleaming lobby of the Petronas Tower, his cover identity flawlessly presented to the receptionist. His request for a meeting with Dato' Ibrahim's office was politely declined—the politician was out of the country on business.

"Perfect," James murmured to himself as he thanked the receptionist and departed.

Back in the temporary command center established in a nearby hotel suite, Isabella Moreno spread out her cultural research alongside building schematics.

"The politician is attending a conservation fundraiser in Singapore," she explained, the irony not lost on any of them. "It's a three-day event, which gives us our window."

"What about electronic security?" James asked.





Isabella gestured to her laptop, where she had compiled a dossier on Ibrahim's digital footprint. "Based on his social media presence and public appearances, he's obsessed with portraying himself as a technological progressive. His office will have the latest security systems, not just physical guards."

Gabriel studied the building plans. "We're not going to be able to hack our way past everything. We need boots on the ground."

James nodded slowly. "The timing needs to be accelerated. If we wait, we risk losing our window of opportunity. Ibrahim's absence is our chance."

"I'll alert Julia," Isabella said. "But we need Dimitri to handle the digital side of this breach."

"And we'll need a complete psychological profile from Mei," Gabriel added. "If we're going to understand what we're looking for once we're inside."

James stood, decision made. "Tell Shadow Wing to prepare for immediate deployment. We move tonight."



## Chapter 3: Digital Ghosts

Dimitri Zechev cracked his knuckles as lines of code cascaded down his multiple screens. The soft blue glow illuminated his face in the dimmed interior of Shadow Wing as the aircraft maintained a holding pattern over the South China Sea, just outside Malaysian airspace.

"Their security system is good," he muttered, "but not good enough."

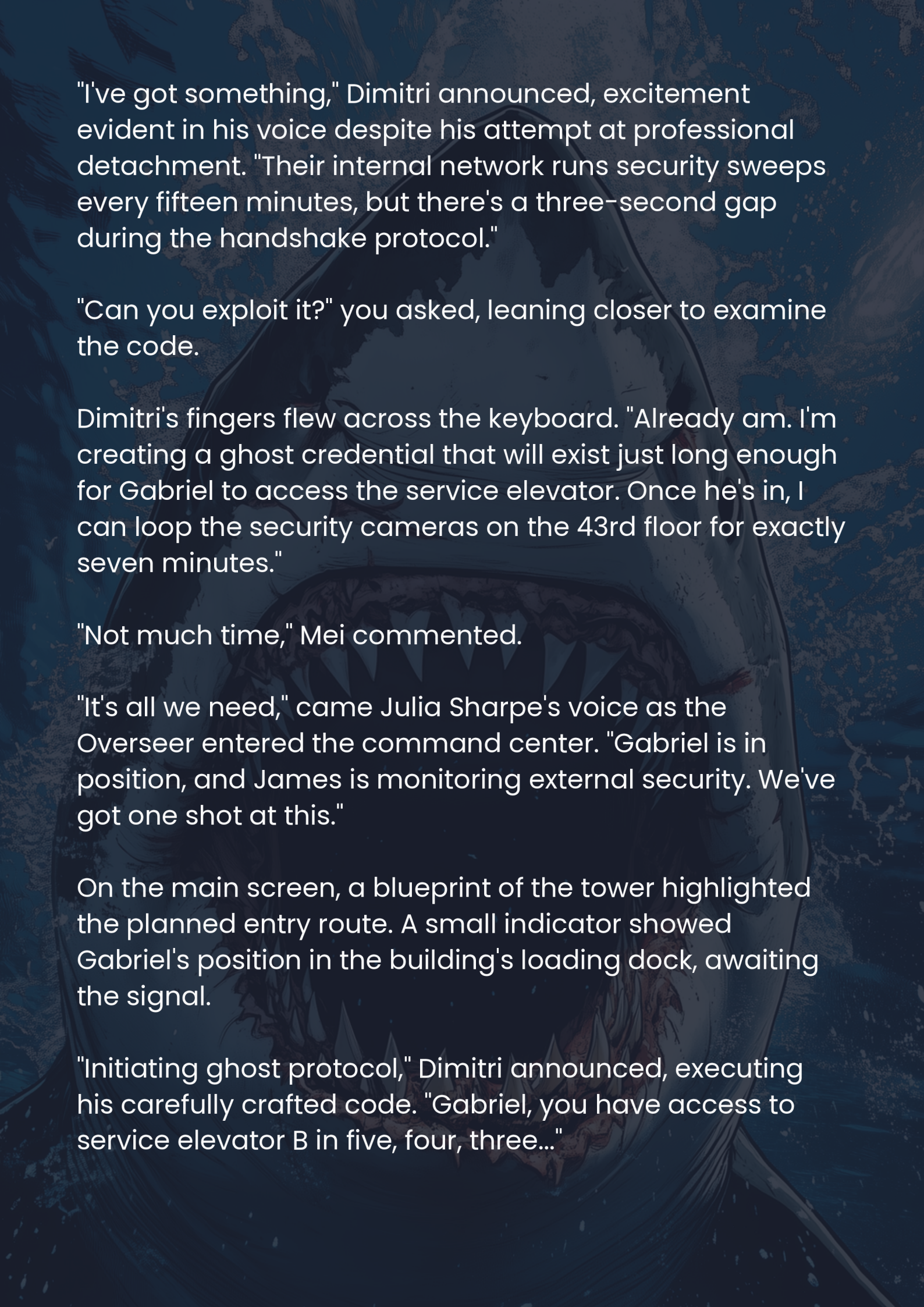
Across from him, Mei Huang studied psychological profiles and behavioral patterns she had compiled on Dato' Ibrahim and his inner circle.

"Based on his digital communications and public appearances, our target displays classic signs of narcissistic personality disorder with paranoid tendencies," she observed.

"He'll keep his most sensitive information close, but his need for validation means he's likely documented everything."

You, Special Agent K, stood behind them both, watching the operation unfold. Your expertise in OSINT and forensics would be critical once the data was extracted, but for now, you observed, mentally preparing for the analytical challenge ahead.





"I've got something," Dimitri announced, excitement evident in his voice despite his attempt at professional detachment. "Their internal network runs security sweeps every fifteen minutes, but there's a three-second gap during the handshake protocol."

"Can you exploit it?" you asked, leaning closer to examine the code.

Dimitri's fingers flew across the keyboard. "Already am. I'm creating a ghost credential that will exist just long enough for Gabriel to access the service elevator. Once he's in, I can loop the security cameras on the 43rd floor for exactly seven minutes."

"Not much time," Mei commented.

"It's all we need," came Julia Sharpe's voice as the Overseer entered the command center. "Gabriel is in position, and James is monitoring external security. We've got one shot at this."

On the main screen, a blueprint of the tower highlighted the planned entry route. A small indicator showed Gabriel's position in the building's loading dock, awaiting the signal.

"Initiating ghost protocol," Dimitri announced, executing his carefully crafted code. "Gabriel, you have access to service elevator B in five, four, three..."





"I'm in," Gabriel's voice came through the comms, slightly breathless. "Heading up. Maintenance uniform is working so far."

The tension in Shadow Wing's command center was palpable as you all watched Gabriel's progress through the building's security systems, temporarily blinded by Dimitri's digital sleight of hand.

"Forty-third floor in ten seconds," Gabriel narrated. "Corridor is clear."

Mei leaned forward, focused intensely on the building schematic. "Based on the politician's psychology, check the painting on the east wall of his office. People with his profile often hide safes or compartments behind ostentatious displays of wealth or power."

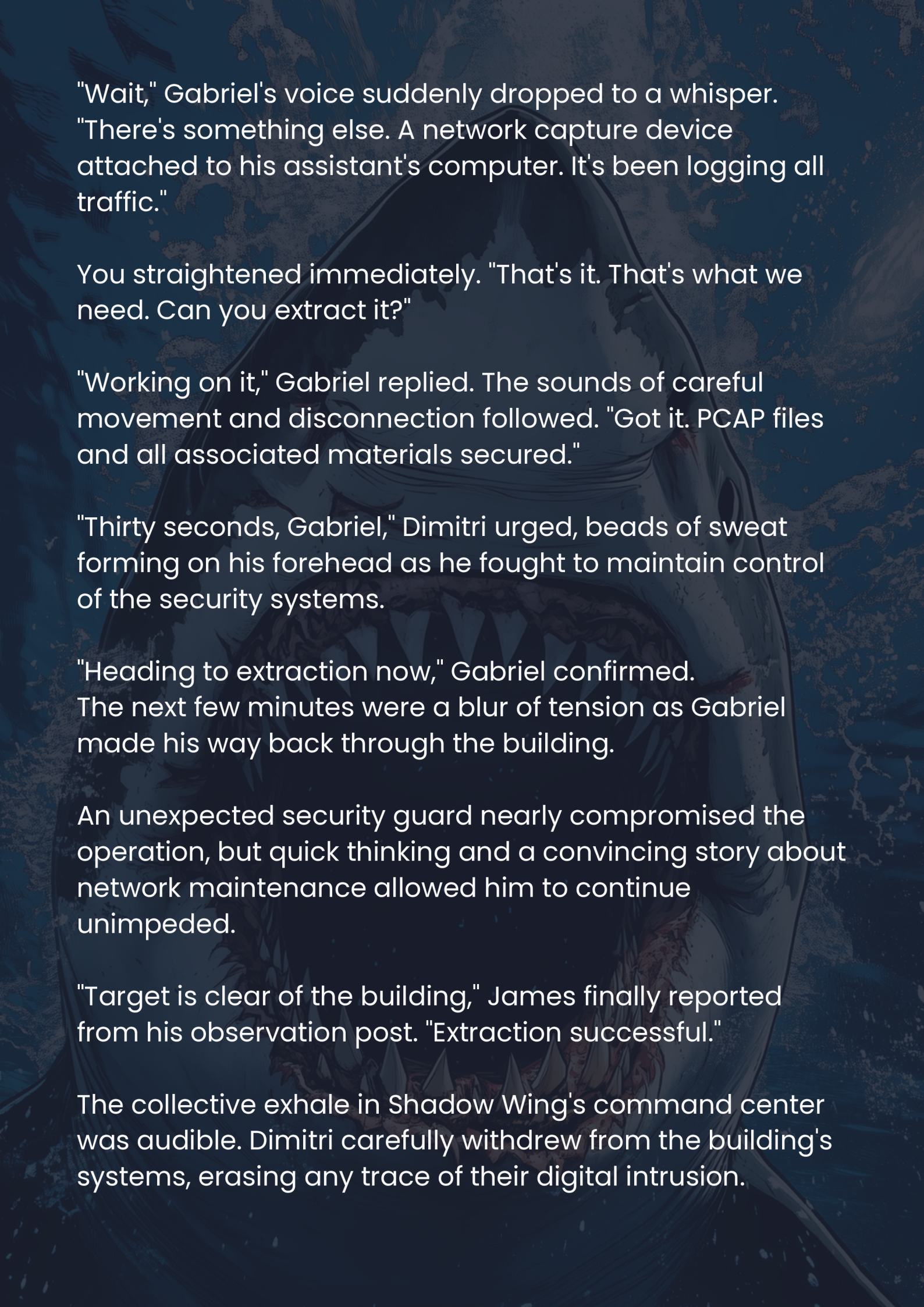
"Copy that," Gabriel replied. The sound of a door being carefully opened came through the comms. "I'm in his office. Starting search pattern."

For the next five minutes, you all listened as Gabriel methodically worked through the office, photographing documents and downloading digital files.

"Found a hidden hard drive," he reported. "Concealed in a fake book on the shelf. Classic."

"Two minutes remaining," Dimitri warned, his eyes fixed on the security systems he was temporarily holding at bay.





"Wait," Gabriel's voice suddenly dropped to a whisper. "There's something else. A network capture device attached to his assistant's computer. It's been logging all traffic."

You straightened immediately. "That's it. That's what we need. Can you extract it?"

"Working on it," Gabriel replied. The sounds of careful movement and disconnection followed. "Got it. PCAP files and all associated materials secured."

"Thirty seconds, Gabriel," Dimitri urged, beads of sweat forming on his forehead as he fought to maintain control of the security systems.

"Heading to extraction now," Gabriel confirmed. The next few minutes were a blur of tension as Gabriel made his way back through the building.

An unexpected security guard nearly compromised the operation, but quick thinking and a convincing story about network maintenance allowed him to continue unimpeded.

"Target is clear of the building," James finally reported from his observation post. "Extraction successful."

The collective exhale in Shadow Wing's command center was audible. Dimitri carefully withdrew from the building's systems, erasing any trace of their digital intrusion.





"Packages are being separated and secured," Julia announced as initial reports came in from the extraction team. "Data will be distributed for analysis according to specialty."

You turned to her, anticipation building. "What's my assignment?"

Julia's expression was serious as she handed you a sealed data drive.

"The PCAP files from the politician's office. If there's communication between Ibrahim and his Chinese criminal partners, it will be in there. We need to know what they're planning, who they're connected to, and how to stop them."

She gestured to a secure workstation.

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



# Briefing



Greetings, Special Agent.

One of our field agents in Malaysia managed to physically breach the office of a corrupt politician. Doubling as a mole for a Chinese criminal enterprise, mostly smuggling endangered animals. In this case their evil business involves shark fin trade and other exotic food items.

During the breach, our agent successfully obtained several pieces of information on the organization. Currently this does not include their name, as they only communicate using anonymous messages and codenames. We hope that the information, which includes pictures, floorplans, data dumps and packet captures. Will lead to a more complete picture of this organization.

We know that the Malaysian government will be exceptionally happy to get this criminal enterprise out of its borders. All data has been divided over several agents. Your segment for this contract is the analysis of a packet capture file. Figure out what is being communicated and find the message that matters.

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



# Materials

on-the-wire-starting-materials.zip

# Answer Instruction

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

Updated for 2025:

The link itself is now the answer, not the destination.

# 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.