

A comic book illustration of a menacing character in a red hoodie, holding a blood-soaked knife, with a severed head at the bottom.

# FACTORY

THE COPYCAT  
**KILLER**



# Chapter 1: The Watcher

Sarah Chen pulled her jacket tighter around her shoulders as she walked the final block to her apartment. The October wind carried a chill that seemed to find every gap in her clothing, but it wasn't just the cold making her shiver.

For the third time this week, she had the distinct feeling of being watched.

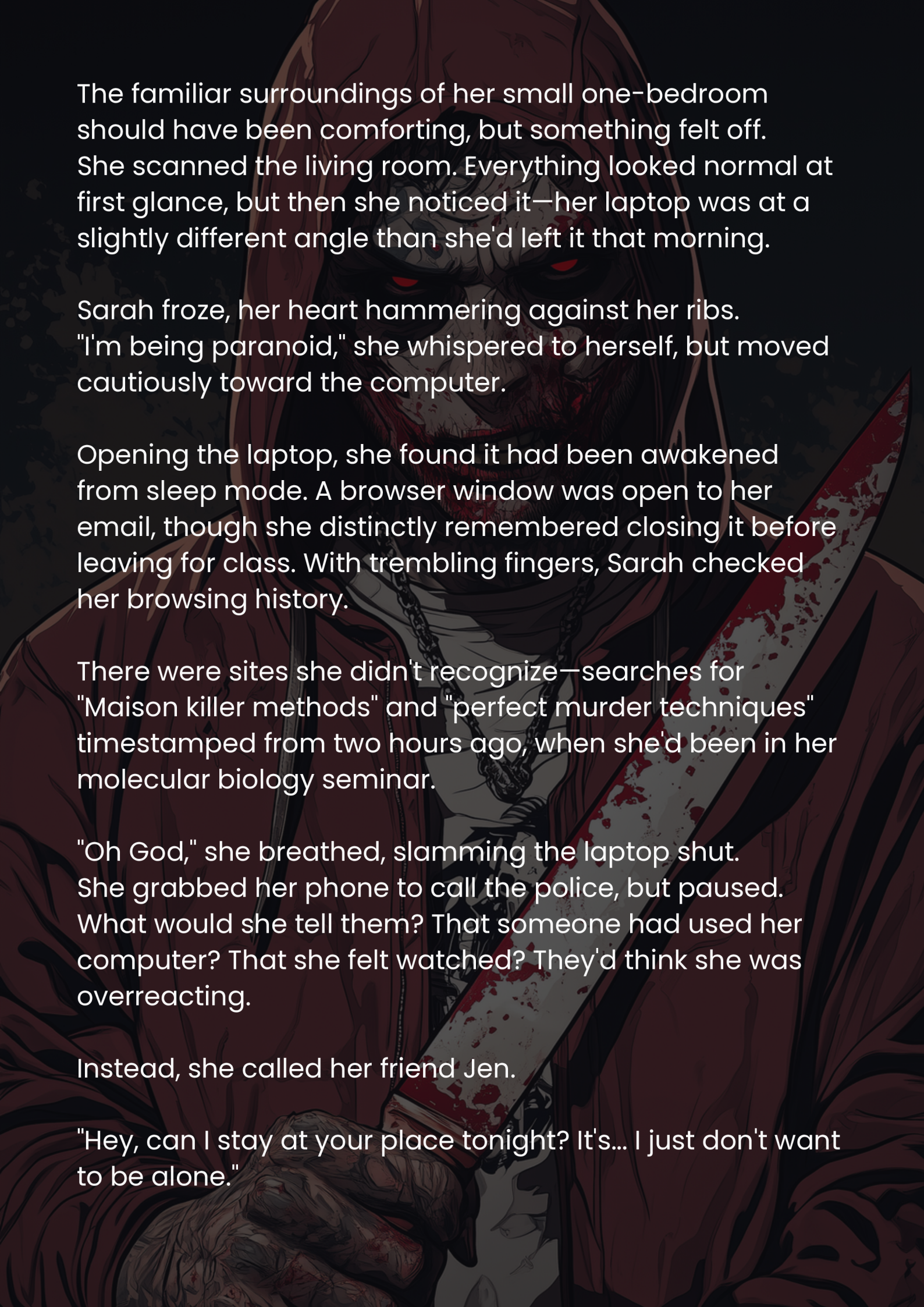
She glanced over her shoulder, scanning the dimly lit street. Nothing out of the ordinary—just a few parked cars, the neighborhood bodega closing up, a couple walking their dog. Yet the sensation persisted, a prickling awareness at the base of her skull that made her quicken her pace.

At her apartment building, Sarah fumbled with her keys, dropping them once before managing to unlock the entrance. The lobby was empty, the fluorescent lights casting harsh shadows. As the elevator doors closed, she caught her reflection in the polished metal—dark circles under her eyes, her usually neat hair disheveled from the wind. She hardly recognized herself.

When had she last slept through the night?

Inside her apartment, Sarah locked the door, secured the deadbolt, and slid the chain into place. Only then did she release the breath she'd been holding.





The familiar surroundings of her small one-bedroom should have been comforting, but something felt off. She scanned the living room. Everything looked normal at first glance, but then she noticed it—her laptop was at a slightly different angle than she'd left it that morning.

Sarah froze, her heart hammering against her ribs. "I'm being paranoid," she whispered to herself, but moved cautiously toward the computer.

Opening the laptop, she found it had been awakened from sleep mode. A browser window was open to her email, though she distinctly remembered closing it before leaving for class. With trembling fingers, Sarah checked her browsing history.

There were sites she didn't recognize—searches for "Maison killer methods" and "perfect murder techniques" timestamped from two hours ago, when she'd been in her molecular biology seminar.

"Oh God," she breathed, slamming the laptop shut. She grabbed her phone to call the police, but paused. What would she tell them? That someone had used her computer? That she felt watched? They'd think she was overreacting.

Instead, she called her friend Jen.

"Hey, can I stay at your place tonight? It's... I just don't want to be alone."



A dark, horror-themed illustration serves as the background. It depicts a man with a pale, bloody face, red eyes, and a wide, menacing grin. He is wearing a dark hooded garment and a chain necklace. A large, blood-stained knife is held diagonally across the frame, its blade pointing towards the bottom right. The overall color palette is dark, with shades of red, black, and grey.

"Everything okay?" Jen asked, concern evident in her voice.

"I'll explain when I get there. Just feeling a bit creeped out."

"Of course. I'll make up the couch."

Sarah packed an overnight bag, relief washing over her. She'd deal with this tomorrow—maybe change her locks, install a security camera.

As she turned to leave, her phone buzzed with a text from an unknown number:

YOU CAN'T ESCAPE ME, SARAH. WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED.

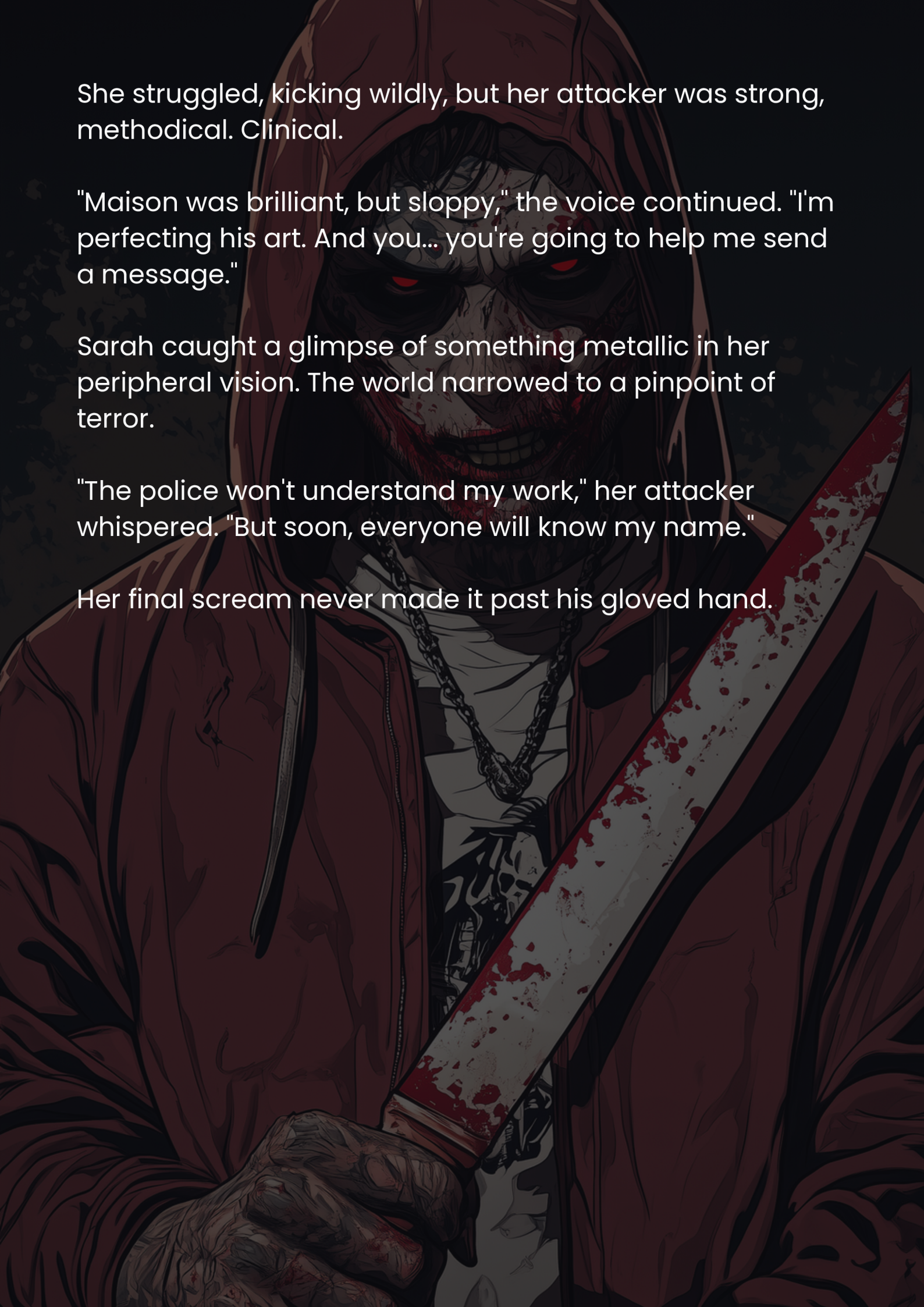
Her phone clattered to the floor. The front door was still locked from the inside. Whoever had sent the message was watching her right now.

A floorboard creaked in her bedroom.

Sarah lunged for the door, fumbling with the chain with panic-numbed fingers. Before she could slide it free, a gloved hand clamped over her mouth from behind. The scent of latex and cologne filled her nostrils as she was dragged backward.

"I've been watching you for weeks, Sarah," a voice whispered against her ear, eerily calm. "Learning your habits. Your schedule. Your fears."



A dark, horror-themed illustration. A hooded figure, possibly a killer, is the central focus. The figure's face is pale and covered in blood, with glowing red eyes. They are wearing a dark hooded jacket and a chain necklace. A large, blood-stained knife is held diagonally across the frame, from the bottom left towards the top right. The background is dark and textured.

She struggled, kicking wildly, but her attacker was strong, methodical. Clinical.

"Maison was brilliant, but sloppy," the voice continued. "I'm perfecting his art. And you... you're going to help me send a message."

Sarah caught a glimpse of something metallic in her peripheral vision. The world narrowed to a pinpoint of terror.

"The police won't understand my work," her attacker whispered. "But soon, everyone will know my name."

Her final scream never made it past his gloved hand.



## Chapter 2: Echoes of Violence

TFBI Special Agent Morgan Reeves ducked under the yellow crime scene tape, coffee in hand, nodding to the officer standing guard. Dawn was breaking over the city, casting long shadows through the apartment windows. This was the third scene in eight weeks with the same signature, and Reeves felt the familiar weight of dread settling in his stomach.

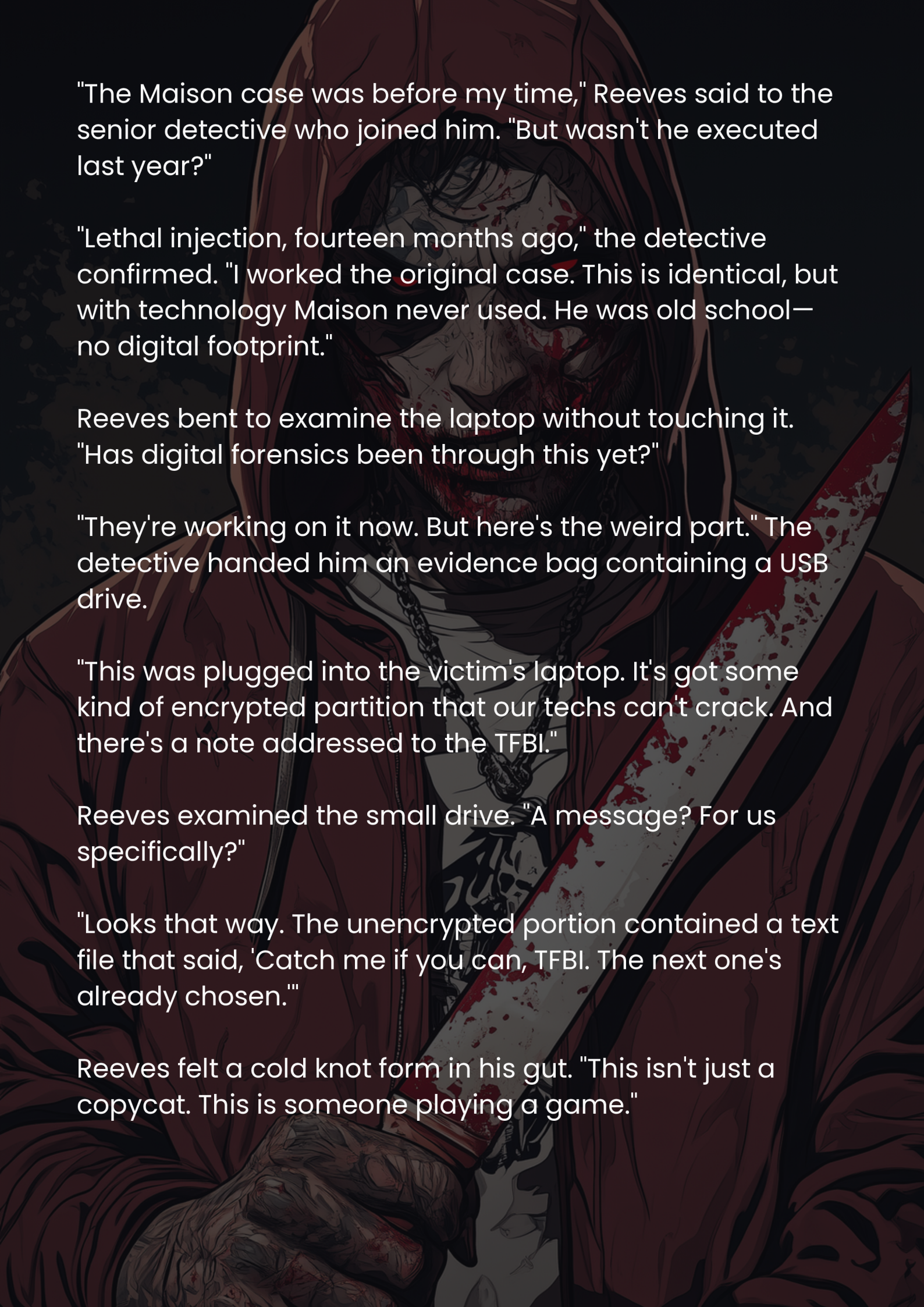
"What do we have?" he asked the lead CSI technician, who was carefully photographing a pattern carved into the wall.

"Female victim, 27, grad student at the university. Sarah Chen." The technician gestured toward the bedroom where the body had been discovered. "Same MO as the others. Meticulous arrangement, ritual elements, minimal evidence left behind."

Reeves stepped carefully around the marked evidence locations on the floor. "Time of death?"

"ME estimates between 9 and 11 PM last night. Neighbor called it in this morning when she noticed the door ajar." In the bedroom, Reeves felt his jaw tighten. The scene was a perfect recreation of the infamous Maison killing from five years ago—the body positioned precisely, personal items arranged in the same ritualistic pattern. But there were modern touches: a laptop open on the bedside table, displaying a screensaver of scrolling text, and a smartphone placed deliberately in the victim's hand.





"The Maison case was before my time," Reeves said to the senior detective who joined him. "But wasn't he executed last year?"

"Lethal injection, fourteen months ago," the detective confirmed. "I worked the original case. This is identical, but with technology Maison never used. He was old school—no digital footprint."

Reeves bent to examine the laptop without touching it. "Has digital forensics been through this yet?"

"They're working on it now. But here's the weird part." The detective handed him an evidence bag containing a USB drive.

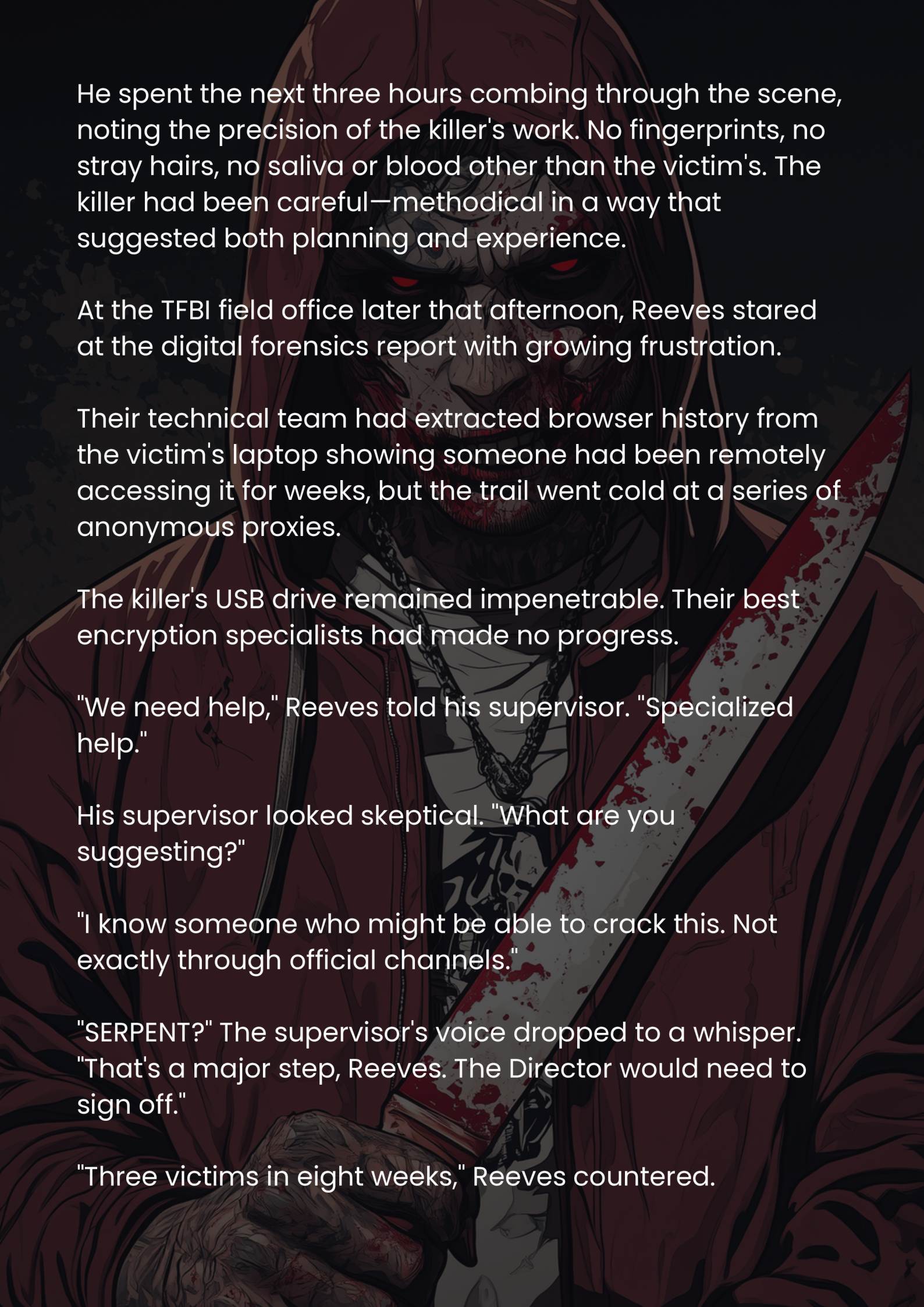
"This was plugged into the victim's laptop. It's got some kind of encrypted partition that our techs can't crack. And there's a note addressed to the TFBI."

Reeves examined the small drive. "A message? For us specifically?"

"Looks that way. The unencrypted portion contained a text file that said, 'Catch me if you can, TFBI. The next one's already chosen.'"

Reeves felt a cold knot form in his gut. "This isn't just a copycat. This is someone playing a game."





He spent the next three hours combing through the scene, noting the precision of the killer's work. No fingerprints, no stray hairs, no saliva or blood other than the victim's. The killer had been careful—methodical in a way that suggested both planning and experience.

At the TFBI field office later that afternoon, Reeves stared at the digital forensics report with growing frustration.

Their technical team had extracted browser history from the victim's laptop showing someone had been remotely accessing it for weeks, but the trail went cold at a series of anonymous proxies.

The killer's USB drive remained impenetrable. Their best encryption specialists had made no progress.

"We need help," Reeves told his supervisor. "Specialized help."

His supervisor looked skeptical. "What are you suggesting?"

"I know someone who might be able to crack this. Not exactly through official channels."

"SERPENT?" The supervisor's voice dropped to a whisper. "That's a major step, Reeves. The Director would need to sign off."

"Three victims in eight weeks," Reeves countered.





"And the killer's note suggests he's accelerating. We need their resources, especially their OSINT capabilities."

After a tense meeting with the Director, Reeves received reluctant authorization. In a secure room in the basement of the field office, he placed a call on a dedicated line few agents knew existed.

"This is Special Agent Reeves, TFBI. I need to speak with Fox Meyer. Authorization code Indigo-Seven-Tango."

There was a pause, then a voice he recognized. "Morgan, it's been a while. What's so urgent you're calling on this line?"

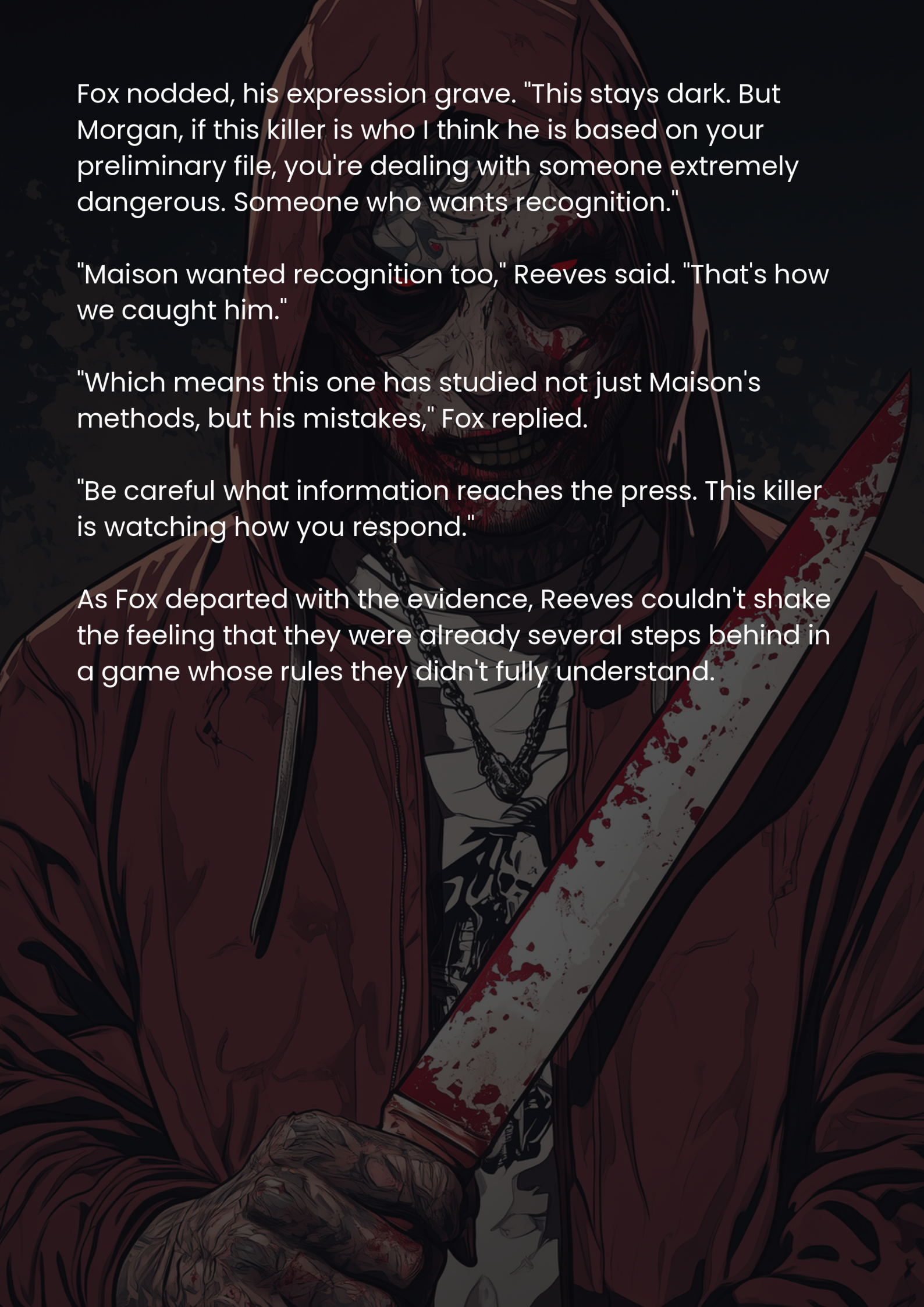
"We've got a situation, Fox. The Copycat Killer case. He's three victims in, and he's left us digital breadcrumbs we can't follow. I need SERPENT's help—specifically your OSINT specialist and that Bulgarian tech genius."

"Send me what you have. I'll talk to the Overseer."

Four hours later, Reeves met Fox Meyer in an unmarked van in a parking garage, handing over the USB drive and digital copies of all case files.

"The Director wants this contained," Reeves emphasized. "If word gets out that we're using... external resources..."





Fox nodded, his expression grave. "This stays dark. But Morgan, if this killer is who I think he is based on your preliminary file, you're dealing with someone extremely dangerous. Someone who wants recognition."

"Maison wanted recognition too," Reeves said. "That's how we caught him."

"Which means this one has studied not just Maison's methods, but his mistakes," Fox replied.

"Be careful what information reaches the press. This killer is watching how you respond."

As Fox departed with the evidence, Reeves couldn't shake the feeling that they were already several steps behind in a game whose rules they didn't fully understand.



## Chapter 3: Digital Pursuit

Thirty-five thousand feet above the Atlantic, Special Agent K stared at the holographic display dominating the war room of Shadow Wing. Red markers indicated the three known murder sites, pulsing gently against the city map. Digital timelines floated beside each marker, showing the progression of the killer's technique.

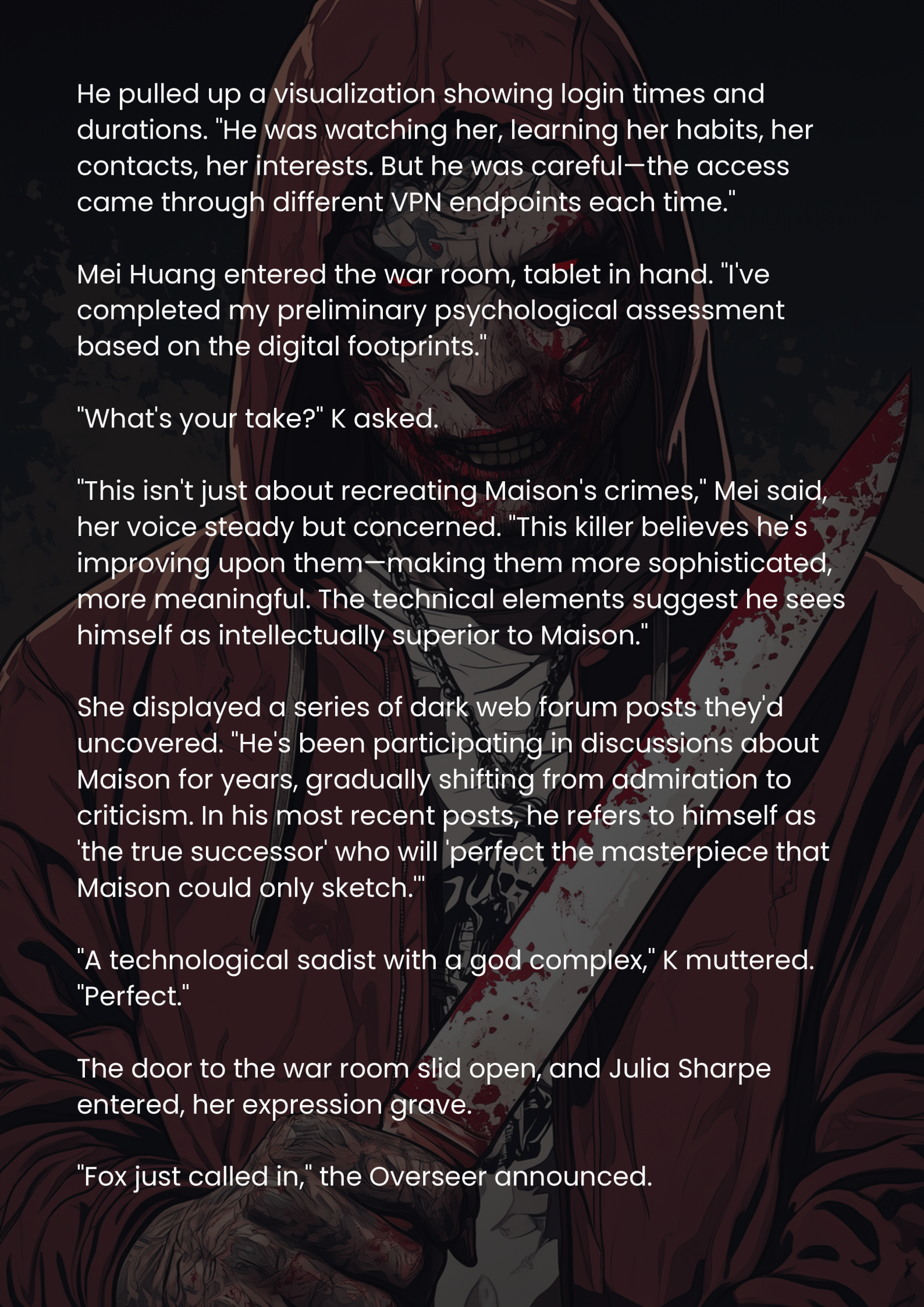
"He's evolving," K muttered, swiping through the crime scene photos. "Getting more confident with each victim." Dimitri Zechev hunched over his workstation nearby, fingers flying across multiple keyboards as lines of code reflected in his glasses.

"This USB encryption is military-grade," the Bulgarian tech expert noted, "but with custom modifications. Our killer has serious technical skills or access to someone who does." He looked up. "I've isolated a backdoor, but it's going to take time to exploit it safely."

The aircraft banked slightly as it adjusted course. Through the windows, K could see the first hints of dawn breaking over the ocean. They'd been working through the night since Fox Meyer had brought aboard the evidence from the TFBI.

"Any progress on the browser history?" K asked. Dimitri nodded. "The killer used a sophisticated remote access tool to monitor the victim's online activities for weeks before striking. Look at this."





He pulled up a visualization showing login times and durations. "He was watching her, learning her habits, her contacts, her interests. But he was careful—the access came through different VPN endpoints each time."

Mei Huang entered the war room, tablet in hand. "I've completed my preliminary psychological assessment based on the digital footprints."

"What's your take?" K asked.

"This isn't just about recreating Maison's crimes," Mei said, her voice steady but concerned. "This killer believes he's improving upon them—making them more sophisticated, more meaningful. The technical elements suggest he sees himself as intellectually superior to Maison."

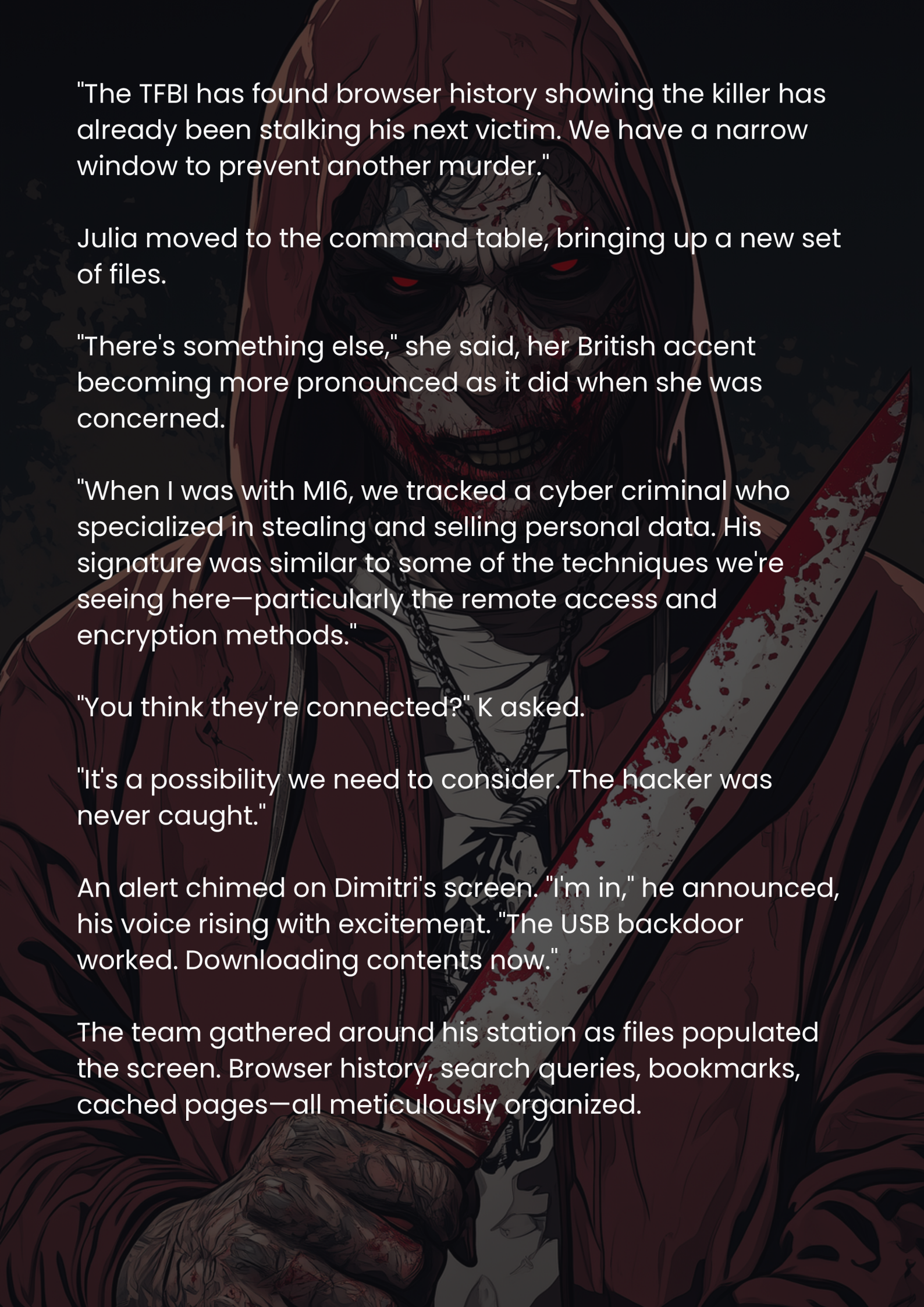
She displayed a series of dark web forum posts they'd uncovered. "He's been participating in discussions about Maison for years, gradually shifting from admiration to criticism. In his most recent posts, he refers to himself as 'the true successor' who will 'perfect the masterpiece that Maison could only sketch.'"

"A technological sadist with a god complex," K muttered. "Perfect."

The door to the war room slid open, and Julia Sharpe entered, her expression grave.

"Fox just called in," the Overseer announced.





"The TFBI has found browser history showing the killer has already been stalking his next victim. We have a narrow window to prevent another murder."

Julia moved to the command table, bringing up a new set of files.

"There's something else," she said, her British accent becoming more pronounced as it did when she was concerned.

"When I was with MI6, we tracked a cyber criminal who specialized in stealing and selling personal data. His signature was similar to some of the techniques we're seeing here—particularly the remote access and encryption methods."

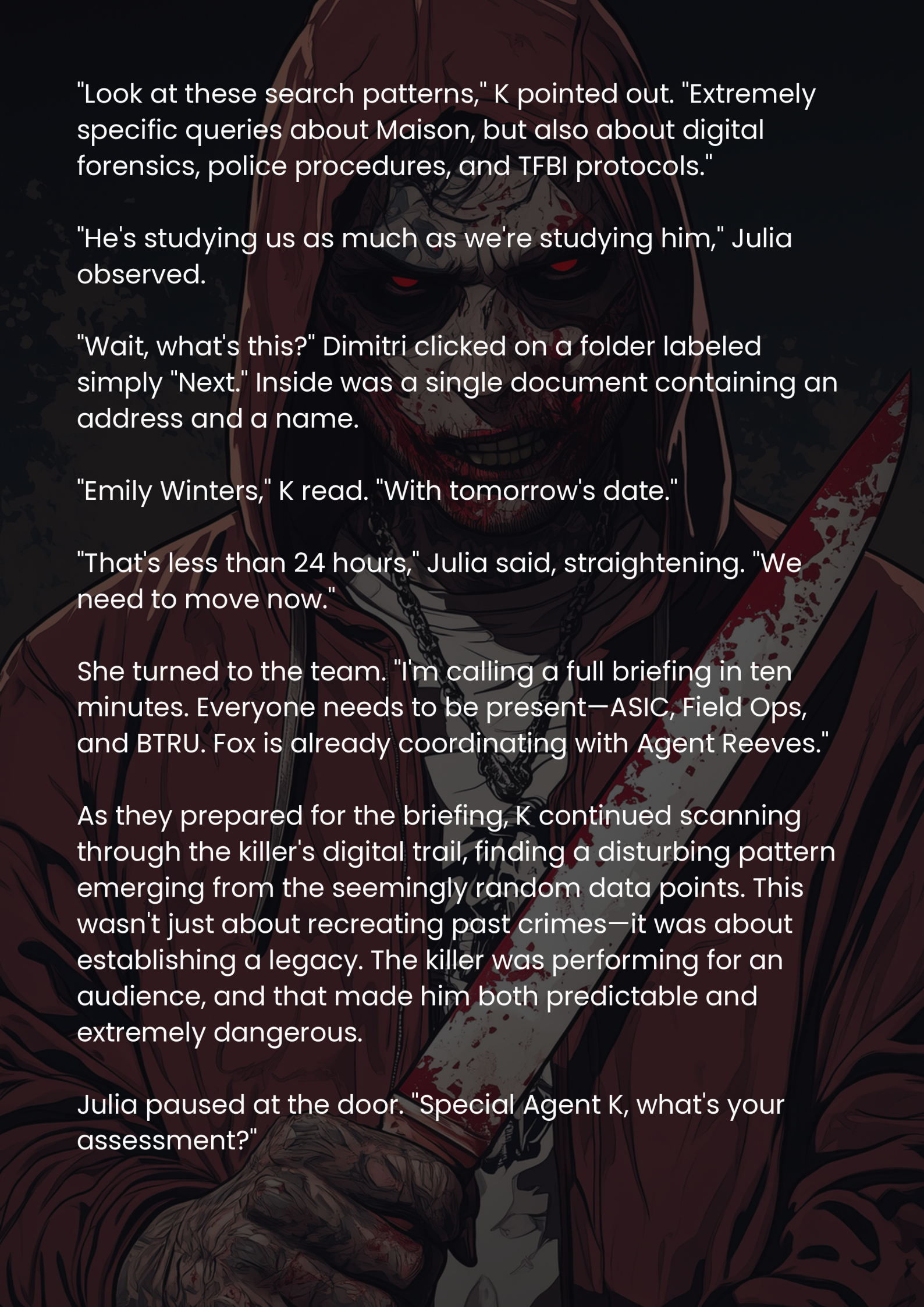
"You think they're connected?" K asked.

"It's a possibility we need to consider. The hacker was never caught."

An alert chimed on Dimitri's screen. "I'm in," he announced, his voice rising with excitement. "The USB backdoor worked. Downloading contents now."

The team gathered around his station as files populated the screen. Browser history, search queries, bookmarks, cached pages—all meticulously organized.





"Look at these search patterns," K pointed out. "Extremely specific queries about Maison, but also about digital forensics, police procedures, and TFBI protocols."

"He's studying us as much as we're studying him," Julia observed.

"Wait, what's this?" Dimitri clicked on a folder labeled simply "Next." Inside was a single document containing an address and a name.

"Emily Winters," K read. "With tomorrow's date."

"That's less than 24 hours," Julia said, straightening. "We need to move now."

She turned to the team. "I'm calling a full briefing in ten minutes. Everyone needs to be present—ASIC, Field Ops, and BTRU. Fox is already coordinating with Agent Reeves."

As they prepared for the briefing, K continued scanning through the killer's digital trail, finding a disturbing pattern emerging from the seemingly random data points. This wasn't just about recreating past crimes—it was about establishing a legacy. The killer was performing for an audience, and that made him both predictable and extremely dangerous.

Julia paused at the door. "Special Agent K, what's your assessment?"





K turned from the display.

"This killer wants recognition, but more than that, he wants to prove his superiority—over Maison, over law enforcement, over everyone. He's leaving these breadcrumbs deliberately, challenging us to follow them."

"So it's a trap?"

"Almost certainly," K confirmed. "But it's also our only way to find him before he kills again."

Julia nodded gravely. "I'll see you in the briefing room. It's time to accept this contract."

As the team filed out, K took one last look at the digital web they'd begun to unravel. Somewhere in this maze of data was the path to a killer who believed himself to be an artist. And like all artists, he craved an audience for his work.

They would need to become that audience to draw him out—a dangerous game with lives hanging in the balance.



# Briefing

A dark, horror-themed illustration serves as the background. It depicts a hooded figure, possibly a killer, with a face covered in blood and a menacing expression. The figure is holding a large, blood-stained knife diagonally across the frame. The overall color palette is dark, with shades of brown, black, and red, creating a chilling and ominous atmosphere.

Greetings Special Agent.

We've got a chilling case on our hands. The CSI Department has contacted us for assistance in a particularly gruesome case: the CopyCat Killer. This deranged individual is recreating the infamous crimes of Maison, a notorious serial killer.

The TFBI has secured one of the CopyCat Killer's laptops, and they've tasked us with analyzing the web browsing history. We need to understand the CopyCat's digital footprints to track them down and prevent further atrocities.

Your Mission is to investigate the CopyCat's Chrome browser. We've provided a .zip file containing the browser's history, bookmarks, and cache files. Your mission is to extract three key pieces of information, each hidden in a different location.

Remember, the fate of innocent lives rests on your shoulders. This is not a game.

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



# Materials

copycat-killer-chrome.zip

## Answer Instruction

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

Format: FLAG{solohanisgood}

## 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 Joaquin Iglesias, artwork by Frank Diepmaat.