



# НАКТОРИА

## THE SLEEPER CELL



## CHAPTER 1: First Blood

The rain fell in sheets over Amsterdam's canal district, casting distorted reflections of neon signs across the slick cobblestones. Fox Meyer pulled his collar tighter around his neck, the electromagnetic sensor in his breast pocket pulsing with a quiet urgency. For the third time this week, readings similar to Varnyr technology had appeared in this area, only to vanish within minutes.

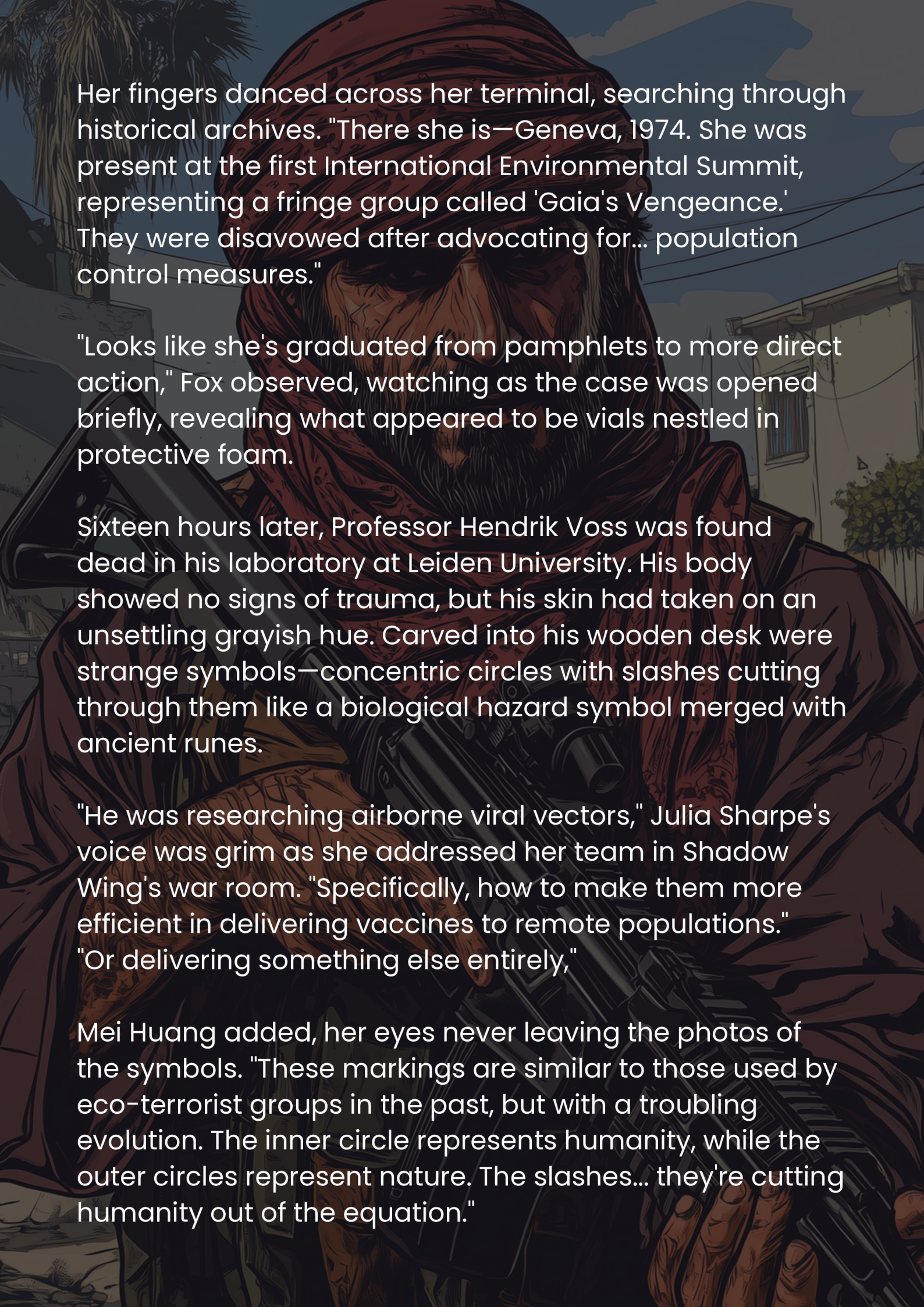
"I've got another spike," Fox whispered into his subdermal communicator. "Herengracht Canal, moving northeast." "Copy that," Dimitri Zechev's Bulgarian accent crackled through the secure channel from Shadow Wing, currently circling high above the North Sea. "The signature matches what we saw in Prague last month. Be careful, Fox. These aren't your standard issue human toys."

Fox slipped between narrow alleyways, following the signal until it led him to a dimly lit café. Through the fogged windows, he could make out five figures seated at a corner table. They were impeccably dressed in dark suits—too formal for Amsterdam's casual nightlife. One of them, a woman with severe features and silver-streaked hair, slid a small metallic case across the table.

"Transmitting visual," Fox muttered, the microcamera in his glasses capturing the exchange.

Back on Shadow Wing, Isabella Moreno frowned at the live feed. "That woman... I've seen her face before."





Her fingers danced across her terminal, searching through historical archives. "There she is—Geneva, 1974. She was present at the first International Environmental Summit, representing a fringe group called 'Gaia's Vengeance.' They were disavowed after advocating for... population control measures."

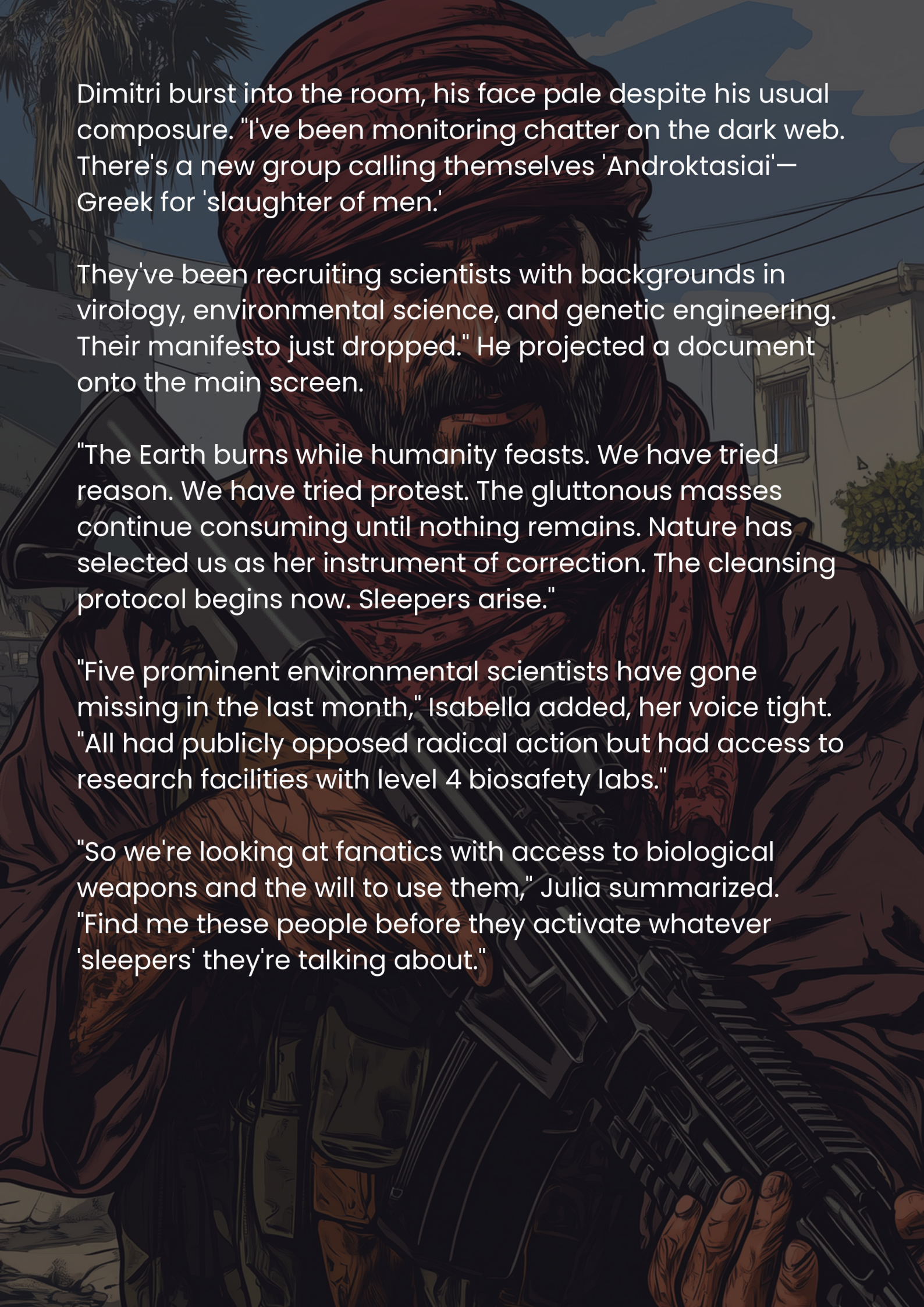
"Looks like she's graduated from pamphlets to more direct action," Fox observed, watching as the case was opened briefly, revealing what appeared to be vials nestled in protective foam.

Sixteen hours later, Professor Hendrik Voss was found dead in his laboratory at Leiden University. His body showed no signs of trauma, but his skin had taken on an unsettling grayish hue. Carved into his wooden desk were strange symbols—concentric circles with slashes cutting through them like a biological hazard symbol merged with ancient runes.

"He was researching airborne viral vectors," Julia Sharpe's voice was grim as she addressed her team in Shadow Wing's war room. "Specifically, how to make them more efficient in delivering vaccines to remote populations." "Or delivering something else entirely,"

Mei Huang added, her eyes never leaving the photos of the symbols. "These markings are similar to those used by eco-terrorist groups in the past, but with a troubling evolution. The inner circle represents humanity, while the outer circles represent nature. The slashes... they're cutting humanity out of the equation."





Dimitri burst into the room, his face pale despite his usual composure. "I've been monitoring chatter on the dark web. There's a new group calling themselves 'Androktasiai'—Greek for 'slaughter of men.'

They've been recruiting scientists with backgrounds in virology, environmental science, and genetic engineering. Their manifesto just dropped." He projected a document onto the main screen.

"The Earth burns while humanity feasts. We have tried reason. We have tried protest. The gluttonous masses continue consuming until nothing remains. Nature has selected us as her instrument of correction. The cleansing protocol begins now. Sleepers arise."

"Five prominent environmental scientists have gone missing in the last month," Isabella added, her voice tight. "All had publicly opposed radical action but had access to research facilities with level 4 biosafety labs."

"So we're looking at fanatics with access to biological weapons and the will to use them," Julia summarized. "Find me these people before they activate whatever 'sleepers' they're talking about."



## CHAPTER 2: Shadow Network

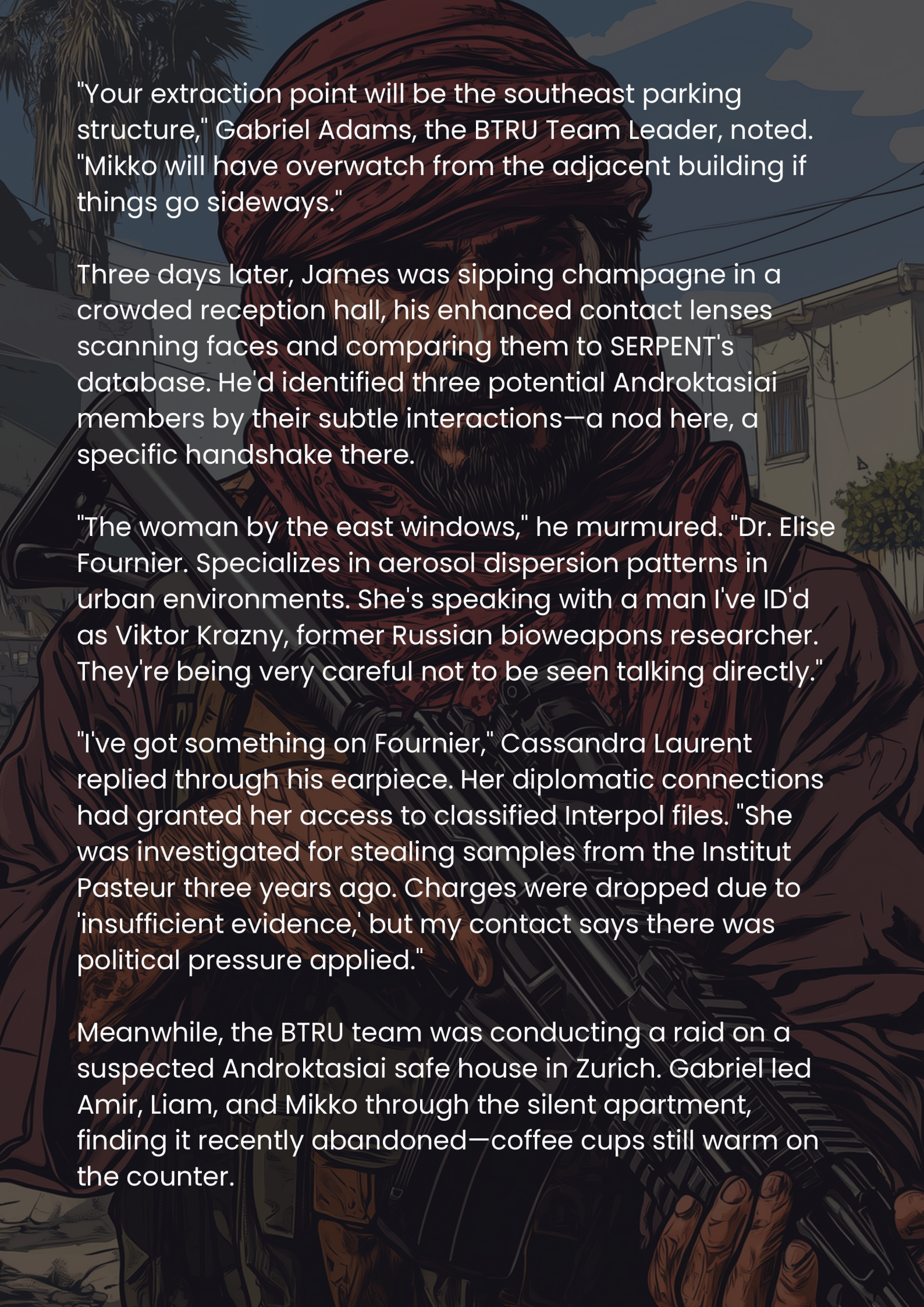
Shadow Wing cut through the night sky over the Atlantic, its modified engines barely a whisper despite its speed. In the aircraft's war room, holographic displays illuminated the tense faces of SERPENT's core team.

"What we're facing is potentially a global bioweapon threat," Julia Sharpe said, her British accent clipped and precise as she stood before the team. "The Androktasiai group views themselves as nature's correction mechanism against humanity."

Mei Huang nodded, pulling up psychological profiles she'd been building. "From their communications and the limited visual data we have, we're dealing with well-educated ideologues, not impulsive terrorists. Most concerning is their leader's psychological pattern—they show the classic markers of a messiah complex combined with detached pragmatism. They believe they're saving the planet by committing genocide, and they've rationalized it completely."

James Brown adjusted his immaculate tie, a habit from his MI6 days. "I've got tickets to the International Climate Response Conference in Geneva. If they're recruiting scientists, that's where they'll be looking. I've created cover identities for myself as a biotech investor with... flexible ethics."





"Your extraction point will be the southeast parking structure," Gabriel Adams, the BTRU Team Leader, noted. "Mikko will have overwatch from the adjacent building if things go sideways."

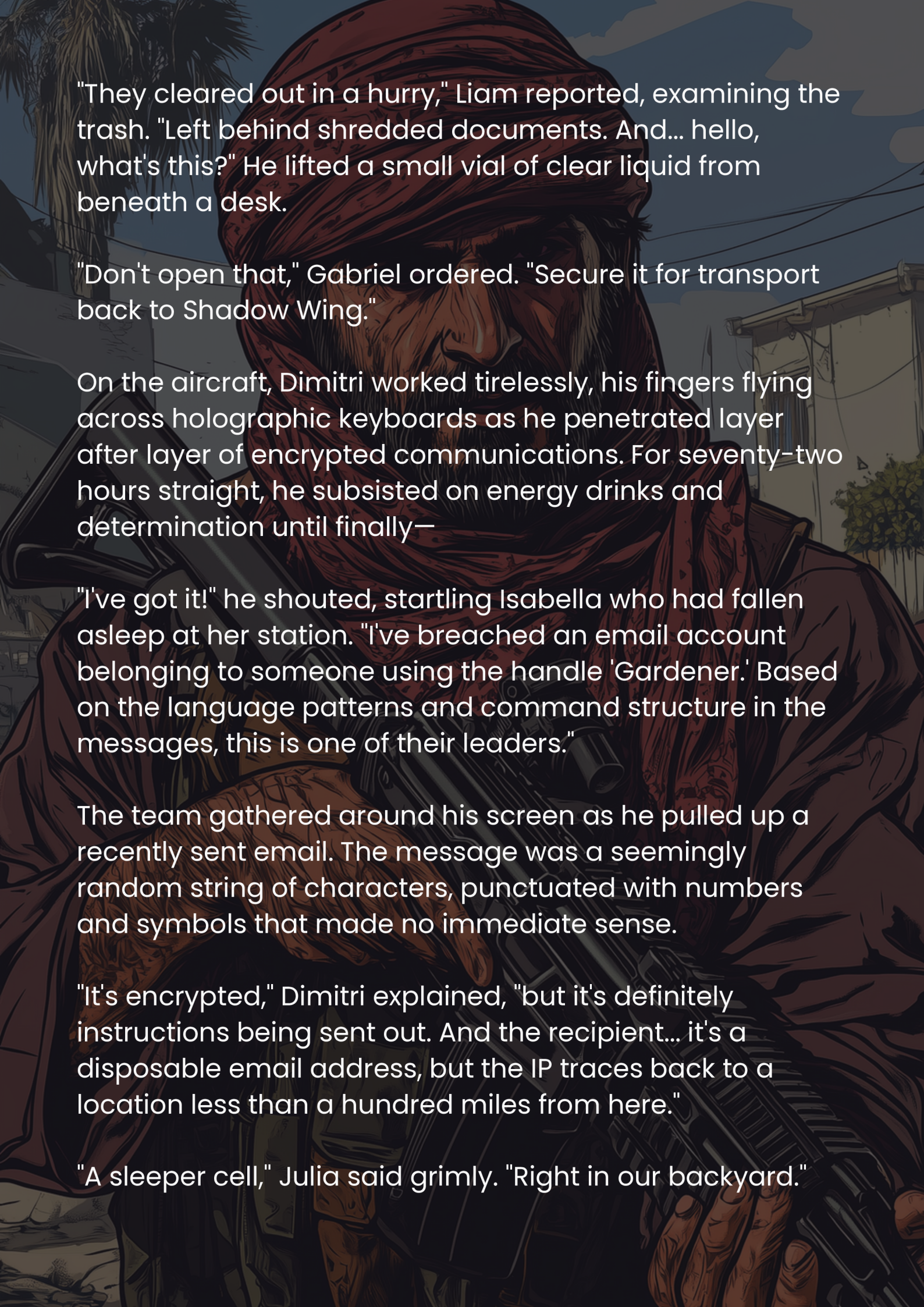
Three days later, James was sipping champagne in a crowded reception hall, his enhanced contact lenses scanning faces and comparing them to SERPENT's database. He'd identified three potential Androktasiai members by their subtle interactions—a nod here, a specific handshake there.

"The woman by the east windows," he murmured. "Dr. Elise Fournier. Specializes in aerosol dispersion patterns in urban environments. She's speaking with a man I've ID'd as Viktor Krazny, former Russian bioweapons researcher. They're being very careful not to be seen talking directly."

"I've got something on Fournier," Cassandra Laurent replied through his earpiece. Her diplomatic connections had granted her access to classified Interpol files. "She was investigated for stealing samples from the Institut Pasteur three years ago. Charges were dropped due to 'insufficient evidence,' but my contact says there was political pressure applied."

Meanwhile, the BTRU team was conducting a raid on a suspected Androktasiai safe house in Zurich. Gabriel led Amir, Liam, and Mikko through the silent apartment, finding it recently abandoned—coffee cups still warm on the counter.





"They cleared out in a hurry," Liam reported, examining the trash. "Left behind shredded documents. And... hello, what's this?" He lifted a small vial of clear liquid from beneath a desk.

"Don't open that," Gabriel ordered. "Secure it for transport back to Shadow Wing."

On the aircraft, Dimitri worked tirelessly, his fingers flying across holographic keyboards as he penetrated layer after layer of encrypted communications. For seventy-two hours straight, he subsisted on energy drinks and determination until finally—

"I've got it!" he shouted, startling Isabella who had fallen asleep at her station. "I've breached an email account belonging to someone using the handle 'Gardener.' Based on the language patterns and command structure in the messages, this is one of their leaders."

The team gathered around his screen as he pulled up a recently sent email. The message was a seemingly random string of characters, punctuated with numbers and symbols that made no immediate sense.

"It's encrypted," Dimitri explained, "but it's definitely instructions being sent out. And the recipient... it's a disposable email address, but the IP traces back to a location less than a hundred miles from here."

"A sleeper cell," Julia said grimly. "Right in our backyard."



## CHAPTER 3: Countdown

The items recovered from the Zurich safe house lay spread across the analysis table in Shadow Wing's lab. Maps of major European and American cities with specific locations marked. Shipping manifests for laboratory equipment. A half-burned notebook with chemical formulas.

"The vial Liam found contains a synthetic prion," Pablo Iglesias reported, looking up from the microscope. His background as a mechanical engineer had expanded to include basic field analysis during his years with SERPENT. "Not immediately lethal, but it would cause neurological degeneration over time."

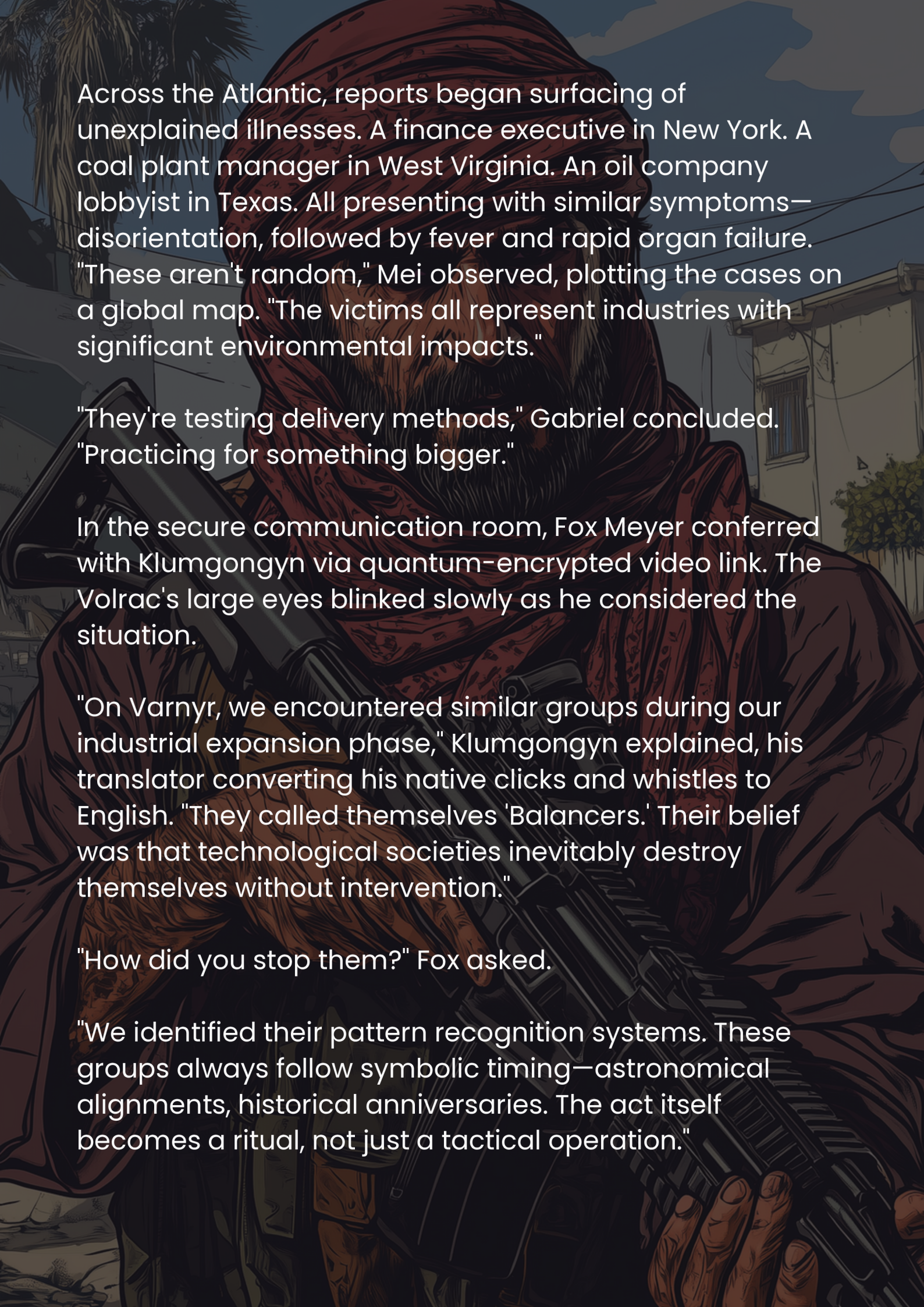
"A test sample," Julia concluded. "Not their main weapon." In the adjacent compartment, Special Agent K studied the encrypted email Dimitri had recovered. Patterns were beginning to emerge in the seemingly random code—recurring sequences that suggested a substitution cipher layered with something more complex.

"The structure reminds me of the Beale ciphers," K muttered, "but with a modern twist. They're using a key text that both sender and recipient would have access to."

"The Androktasiai manifesto?" Isabella suggested.

"No, too obvious," K replied. "Something more obscure but meaningful to their cause..."





Across the Atlantic, reports began surfacing of unexplained illnesses. A finance executive in New York. A coal plant manager in West Virginia. An oil company lobbyist in Texas. All presenting with similar symptoms—disorientation, followed by fever and rapid organ failure. "These aren't random," Mei observed, plotting the cases on a global map. "The victims all represent industries with significant environmental impacts."

"They're testing delivery methods," Gabriel concluded. "Practicing for something bigger."

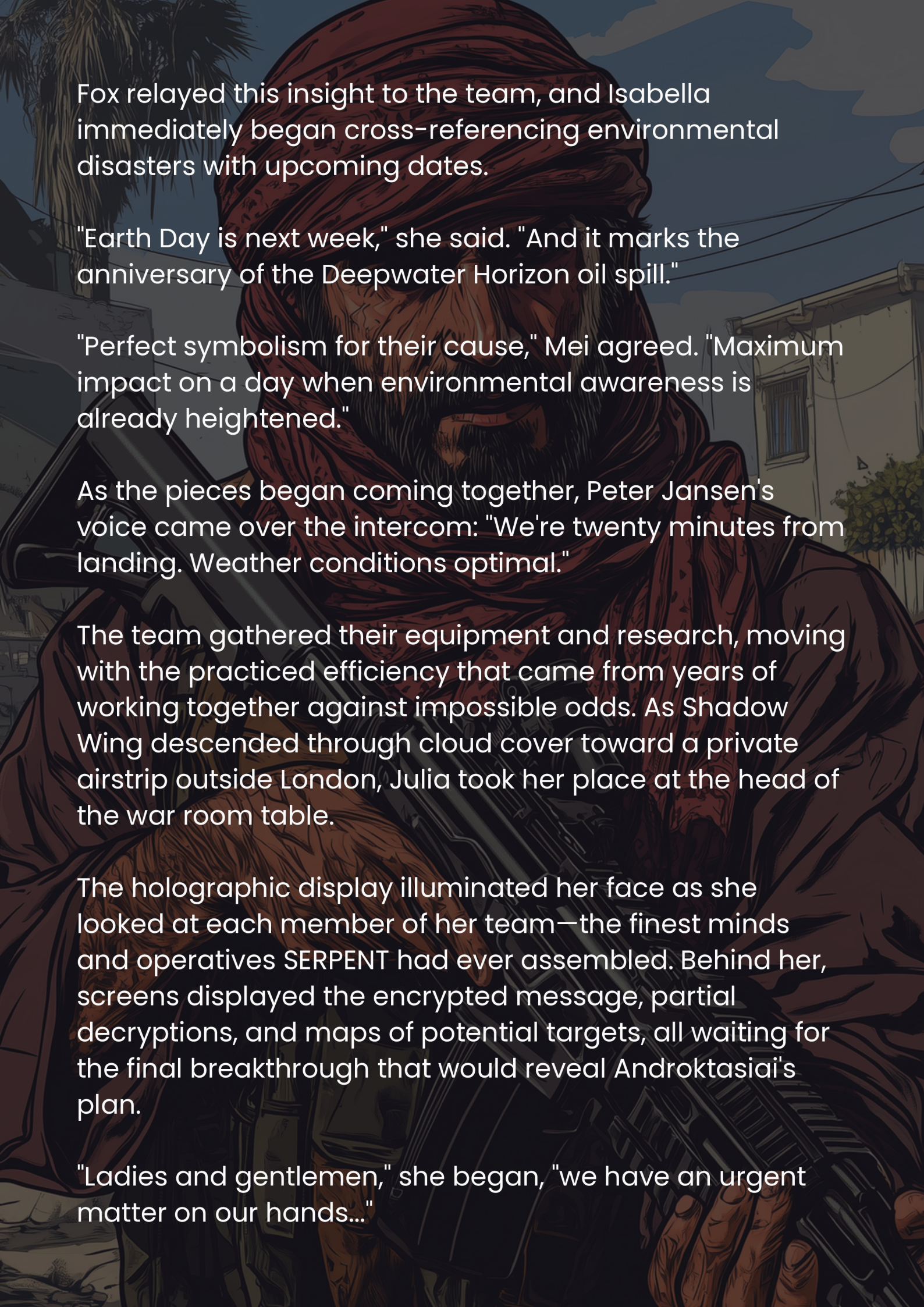
In the secure communication room, Fox Meyer conferred with Klumgongyn via quantum-encrypted video link. The Volrac's large eyes blinked slowly as he considered the situation.

"On Varnyr, we encountered similar groups during our industrial expansion phase," Klumgongyn explained, his translator converting his native clicks and whistles to English. "They called themselves 'Balancers.' Their belief was that technological societies inevitably destroy themselves without intervention."

"How did you stop them?" Fox asked.

"We identified their pattern recognition systems. These groups always follow symbolic timing—astronomical alignments, historical anniversaries. The act itself becomes a ritual, not just a tactical operation."





Fox relayed this insight to the team, and Isabella immediately began cross-referencing environmental disasters with upcoming dates.

"Earth Day is next week," she said. "And it marks the anniversary of the Deepwater Horizon oil spill."

"Perfect symbolism for their cause," Mei agreed. "Maximum impact on a day when environmental awareness is already heightened."

As the pieces began coming together, Peter Jansen's voice came over the intercom: "We're twenty minutes from landing. Weather conditions optimal."

The team gathered their equipment and research, moving with the practiced efficiency that came from years of working together against impossible odds. As Shadow Wing descended through cloud cover toward a private airstrip outside London, Julia took her place at the head of the war room table.

The holographic display illuminated her face as she looked at each member of her team—the finest minds and operatives SERPENT had ever assembled. Behind her, screens displayed the encrypted message, partial decryptions, and maps of potential targets, all waiting for the final breakthrough that would reveal Androktasiai's plan.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she began, "we have an urgent matter on our hands..."



# Briefing



Greetings, Special Agent.

We have an urgent matter on our hands. For several months we've been investigating a group called "Androktasiai". A radical organization who believes in cleansing the planet of what they call gluttony. Believing firmly that humans are a disease that needs to be exterminated, this radical group is well organized and is preparing to strike several targets.

After breaching one of their email accounts, we were able to extract a sent item. The metadata didn't prove to be of much help, as it was sent to a disposable 10minutemail address. The contents however are of great interesting.

We believe it contains instructions sent from one of the groups' leaders to a sleeper cell. This sleeper cell will now be activated and preparing to carry out an attack somewhere. It is your task to figure out what the text means and provide any intelligence about the plans of this organization.

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





## Materials

encoded-text-sleeper-cell.txt

## Answer Instruction

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

The answer will be in the follow format: ((this-is-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.