



HATCHET

THE SPY WHO VANISHED

Chapter 1: Shadow of the Past

The amber glow of London's streetlights reflected off the rain-slicked pavement as James Brown adjusted his tailored suit and checked his watch. Piccadilly Circus buzzed with nightlife, tourists capturing photos beneath the iconic screens while locals hurried past with umbrellas tilted against the drizzle. From his vantage point at a corner café, James sipped his espresso, his eyes never leaving the entrance of the Criterion Theatre.

"Anything yet?" Julia Sharpe's voice came through his nearly invisible earpiece.

"Negative, Overseer," James replied softly, setting down his cup. "But three MI5 agents are positioned around the square. Whatever's happening tonight has their full attention."

The intelligence that had brought him to London had been sparse but compelling: unusual movement in the black market for classified information, whispers of a high-profile broker returning to the scene. As a former MI6 operative himself, James had connections that even SERPENT couldn't officially access.

"I've got eyes on a potential," he murmured, straightening as a woman in a burgundy coat emerged from the Underground station. She moved with deliberate casualness, but James recognized the calculated awareness in her movements—the way she clocked the undercover agents without appearing to notice them.

The woman stopped to check her phone, and in that moment, one of the MI5 agents made his move, approaching with his hand inside his jacket. James tensed, ready to intervene, but what happened next left even him impressed.

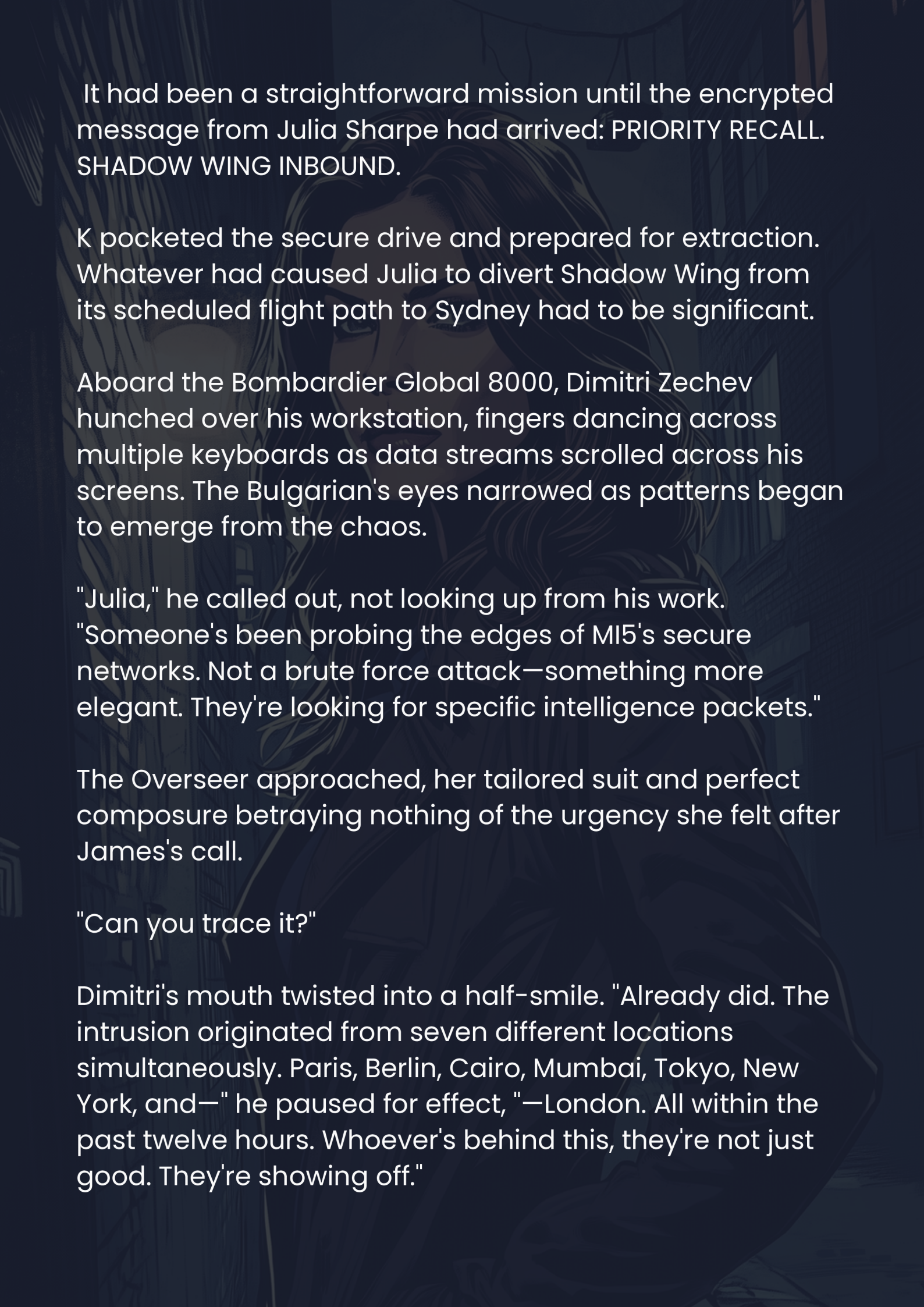
In a sequence so fluid it appeared choreographed, the woman dropped her phone, creating a distraction that momentarily pulled the agent's attention. As he glanced down, she disappeared into a passing tour group, emerged on the other side, and ducked into a shop. When the bewildered agent followed, she was already exiting through the back, leaving behind a confused shopkeeper and a small black card on the counter.

"She's good," James admitted, moving quickly to intercept the card before the MI5 agents could recover.

Once safely away, he examined his prize: a simple black business card with only a small embossed image—a tree branch encased in ice. James felt a chill that had nothing to do with the London weather.

"Julia," he said, his voice tense. "I need immediate extraction and a secure line to Shadow Wing. I've just seen Deloris Frozenwood."

Six hundred miles away, Special Agent K crouched on a Prague rooftop, the gothic spires of the city creating a jagged silhouette against the night sky. The data transfer was almost complete—intelligence on an arms dealer with ties to extraterrestrial technology smuggling.



It had been a straightforward mission until the encrypted message from Julia Sharpe had arrived: PRIORITY RECALL. SHADOW WING INBOUND.

K pocketed the secure drive and prepared for extraction. Whatever had caused Julia to divert Shadow Wing from its scheduled flight path to Sydney had to be significant.

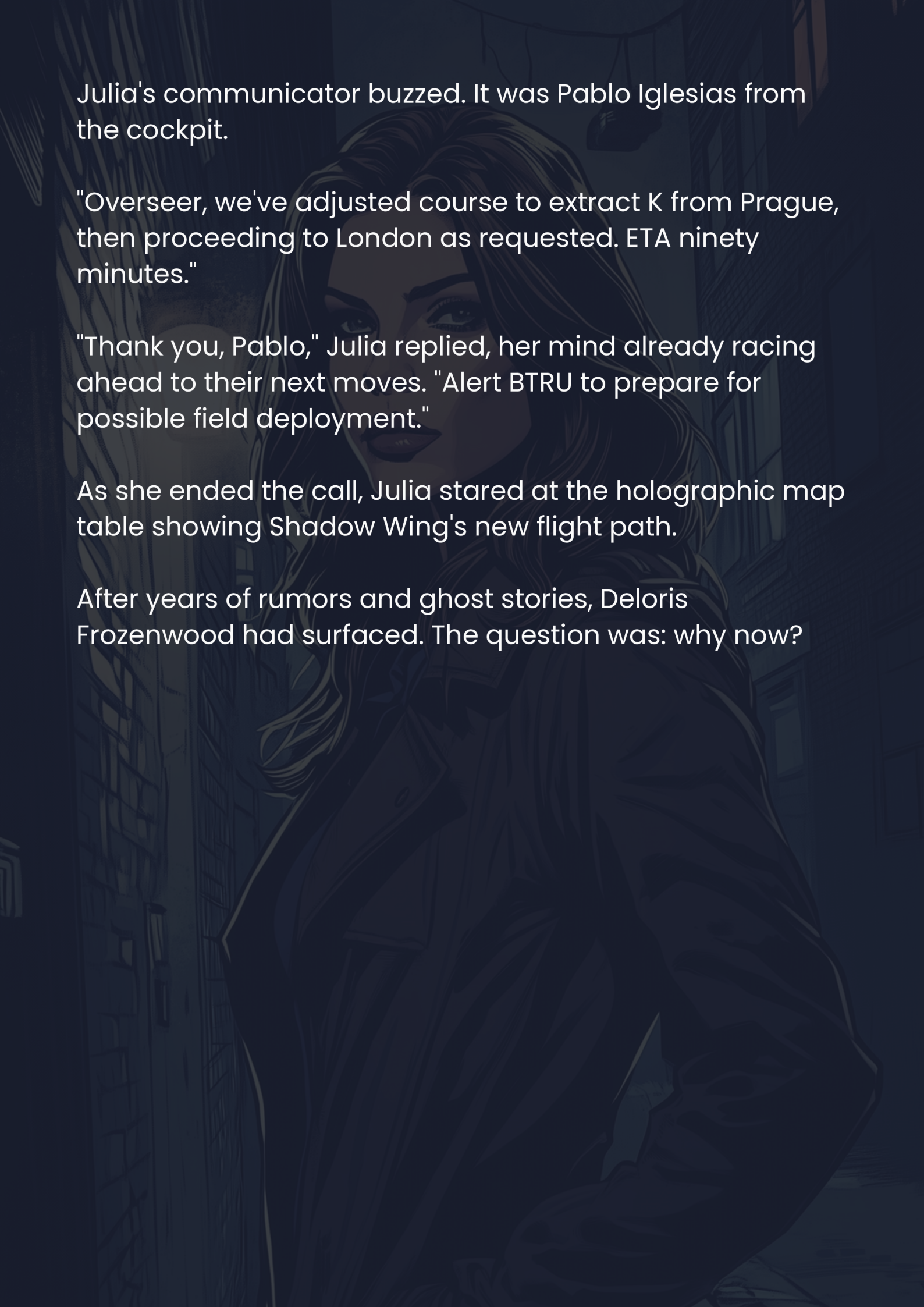
Aboard the Bombardier Global 8000, Dimitri Zechev hunched over his workstation, fingers dancing across multiple keyboards as data streams scrolled across his screens. The Bulgarian's eyes narrowed as patterns began to emerge from the chaos.

"Julia," he called out, not looking up from his work.
"Someone's been probing the edges of MI5's secure networks. Not a brute force attack—something more elegant. They're looking for specific intelligence packets."

The Overseer approached, her tailored suit and perfect composure betraying nothing of the urgency she felt after James's call.

"Can you trace it?"

Dimitri's mouth twisted into a half-smile. "Already did. The intrusion originated from seven different locations simultaneously. Paris, Berlin, Cairo, Mumbai, Tokyo, New York, and—" he paused for effect, "—London. All within the past twelve hours. Whoever's behind this, they're not just good. They're showing off."



Julia's communicator buzzed. It was Pablo Iglesias from the cockpit.

"Overseer, we've adjusted course to extract K from Prague, then proceeding to London as requested. ETA ninety minutes."

"Thank you, Pablo," Julia replied, her mind already racing ahead to their next moves. "Alert BTRU to prepare for possible field deployment."

As she ended the call, Julia stared at the holographic map table showing Shadow Wing's new flight path.

After years of rumors and ghost stories, Deloris Frozenwood had surfaced. The question was: why now?

Chapter 2: Whispers in the Wind

Shadow Wing cut through the night sky, its sleek form barely visible against the clouds. Inside, the mobile command center hummed with activity as Special Agent K settled into the war room, fresh from extraction in Prague.

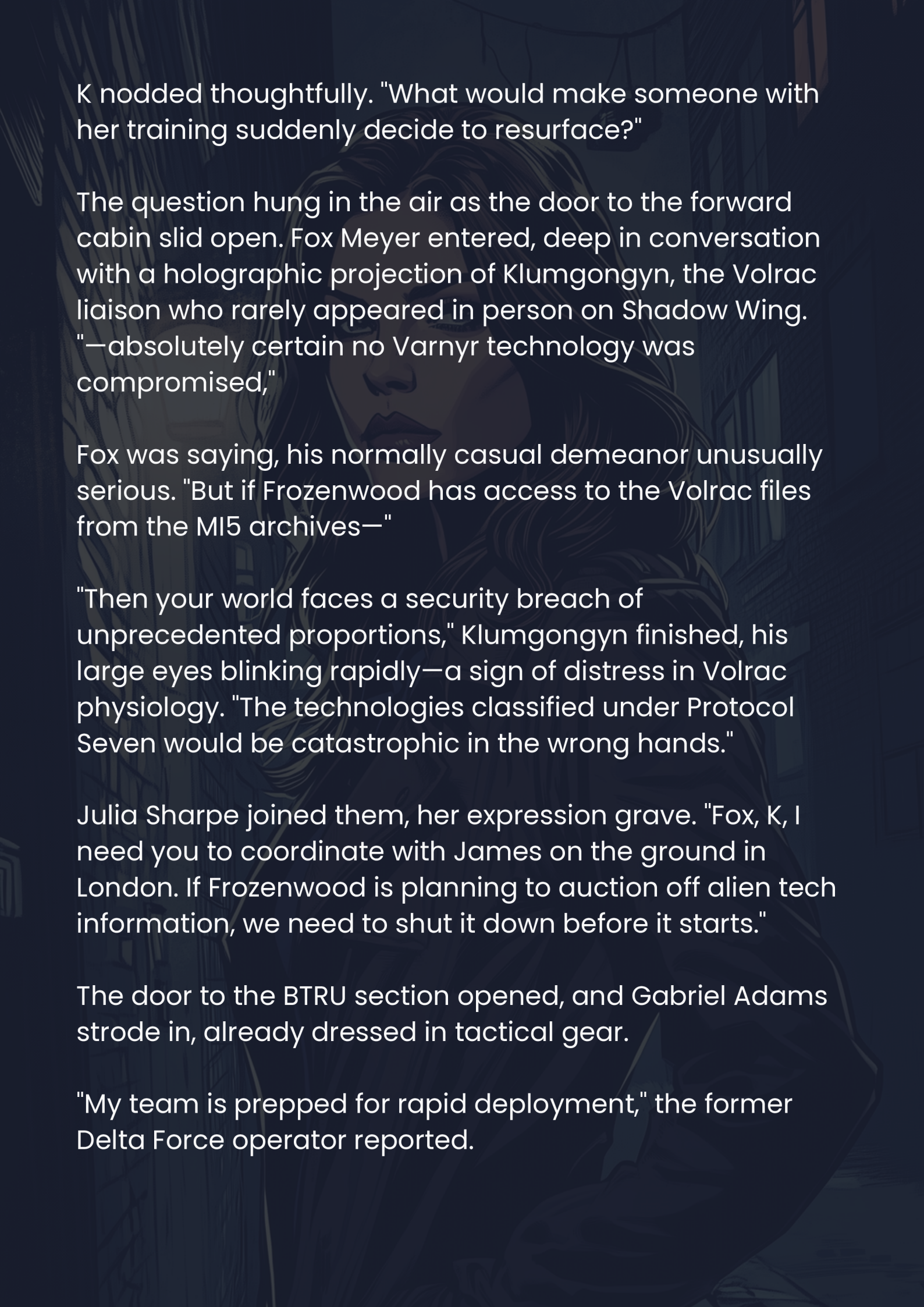
"Glad you could join us," Mei Huang said, sliding a tablet across the holographic table. "I've been analyzing the psychological profiles of MI5 agents who've gone rogue in the past decade. Frozenwood's case stands out."

K reviewed the information. Unlike other defectors motivated by ideology or money, Frozenwood's pattern suggested something more complex.

"She's not running away from something—she's running toward something," Mei continued. "Her actions show a consistent pattern of calculated risk-taking and performative appearances. She wants attention, but only on her terms."

Across the cabin, Isabella Moreno was deep in her own analysis, surrounded by historical records and intelligence reports.

"The timing isn't coincidental," Isabella said, tucking a strand of hair behind her ear. "Three of the recent intelligence leaks that Dimitri traced correspond to operations Frozenwood was involved in during her MI5 days."



K nodded thoughtfully. "What would make someone with her training suddenly decide to resurface?"

The question hung in the air as the door to the forward cabin slid open. Fox Meyer entered, deep in conversation with a holographic projection of Klumgongyn, the Volrac liaison who rarely appeared in person on Shadow Wing. "—absolutely certain no Varnyr technology was compromised,"

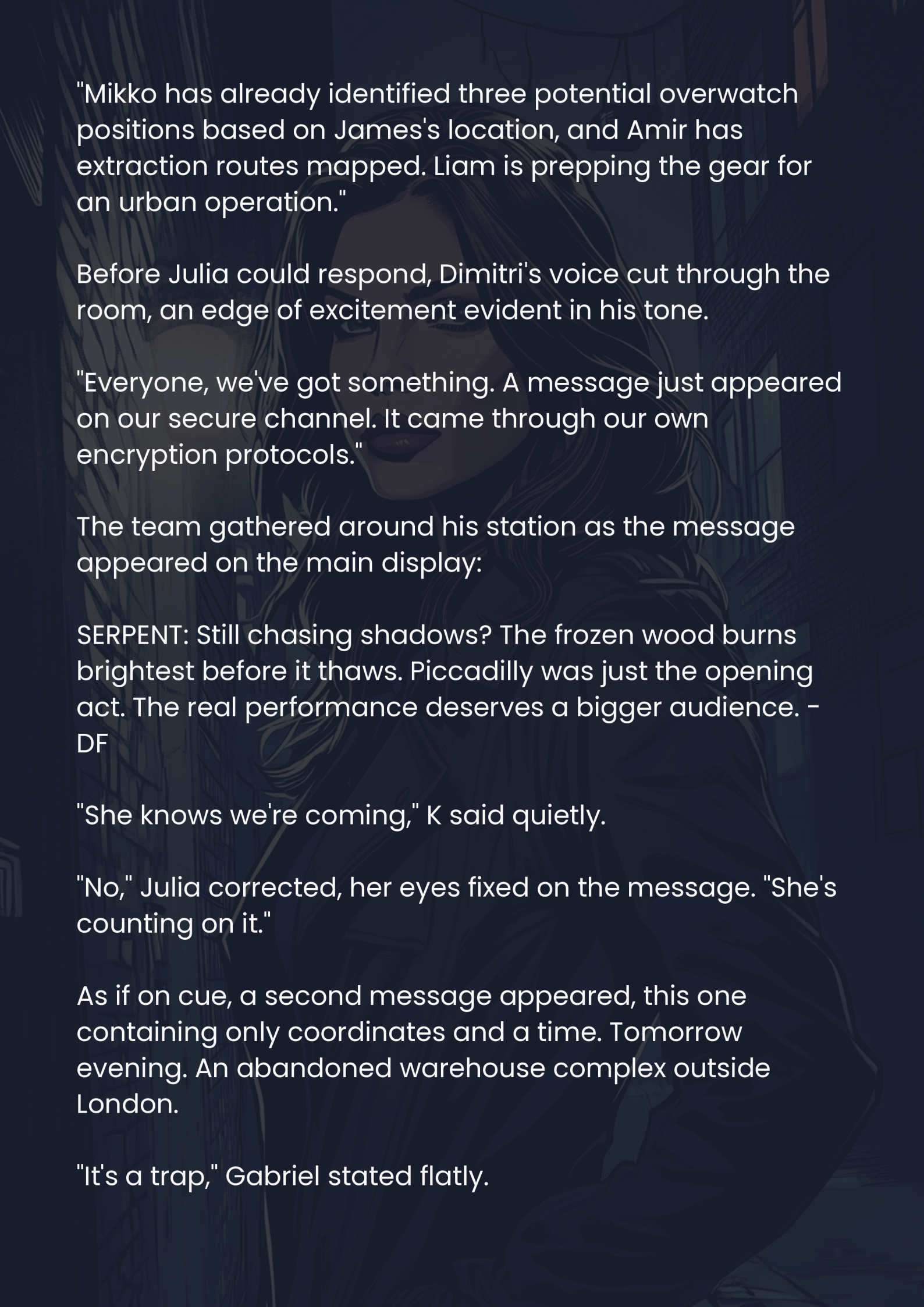
Fox was saying, his normally casual demeanor unusually serious. "But if Frozenwood has access to the Volrac files from the MI5 archives—"

"Then your world faces a security breach of unprecedented proportions," Klumgongyn finished, his large eyes blinking rapidly—a sign of distress in Volrac physiology. "The technologies classified under Protocol Seven would be catastrophic in the wrong hands."

Julia Sharpe joined them, her expression grave. "Fox, K, I need you to coordinate with James on the ground in London. If Frozenwood is planning to auction off alien tech information, we need to shut it down before it starts."

The door to the BTRU section opened, and Gabriel Adams strode in, already dressed in tactical gear.

"My team is prepped for rapid deployment," the former Delta Force operator reported.



"Mikko has already identified three potential overwatch positions based on James's location, and Amir has extraction routes mapped. Liam is prepping the gear for an urban operation."

Before Julia could respond, Dimitri's voice cut through the room, an edge of excitement evident in his tone.

"Everyone, we've got something. A message just appeared on our secure channel. It came through our own encryption protocols."

The team gathered around his station as the message appeared on the main display:

SERPENT: Still chasing shadows? The frozen wood burns brightest before it thaws. Piccadilly was just the opening act. The real performance deserves a bigger audience. – DF

"She knows we're coming," K said quietly.

"No," Julia corrected, her eyes fixed on the message. "She's counting on it."

As if on cue, a second message appeared, this one containing only coordinates and a time. Tomorrow evening. An abandoned warehouse complex outside London.

"It's a trap," Gabriel stated flatly.



"Of course it is," Julia replied. "The question is: why does she want us there?"

Before anyone could speculate further, Peter Jansen's voice came over the intercom from the cockpit. "Preparing for descent into London airspace. Secure for landing in ten minutes."

As the team dispersed to prepare for arrival, K remained at the display, studying Frozenwood's message.

The spy hadn't gone rogue on a whim. Something had driven her away from MI5, and now something was pulling her back into the open.

Whatever game Frozenwood was playing, SERPENT had just been invited to the table.

Chapter 3: The Board is Set

The private airfield outside London was shrouded in early morning fog as Shadow Wing touched down, its engines winding down to a whisper. Rain pattered against the tarmac as the SERPENT team disembarked, met by James Brown in a nondescript black SUV.

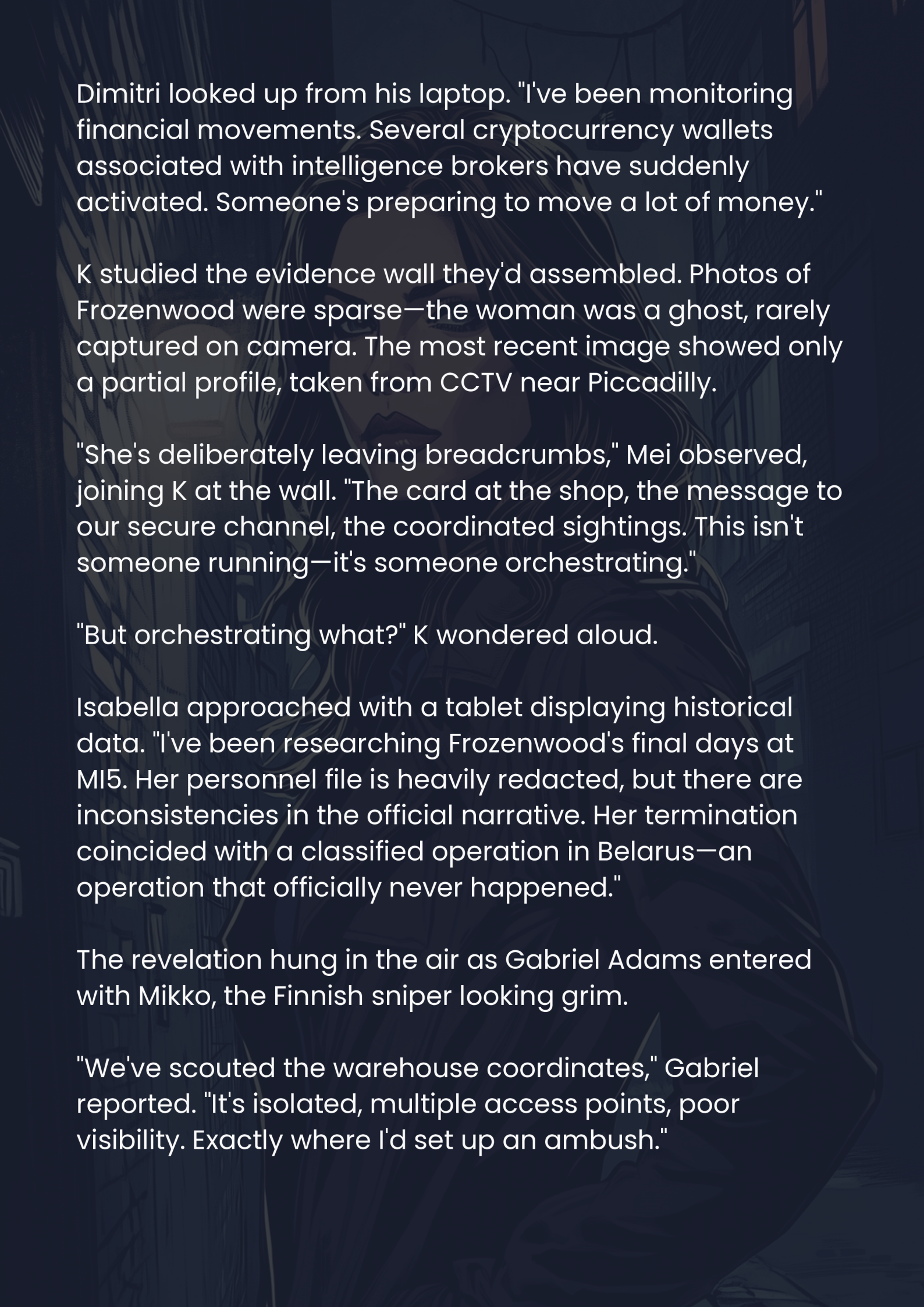
"Welcome to London," he greeted them, his usual charm subdued by the urgency of their mission. "I've secured us a temporary base of operations."

Twenty minutes later, they were inside an unassuming townhouse in Kensington. The elegant exterior belied the hive of activity within as SERPENT transformed the space into a forward command post.

"MI5 is officially denying any Frozenwood sightings," James explained as he spread documents across the dining table. "But unofficially, they're in a panic. Three of their surveillance teams lost her in the past week alone. She's toying with them."

Cassandra Laurent entered, removing her rain-speckled coat. The diplomatic expert had been meeting with her contacts across London since dawn.

"The diplomatic channels are buzzing," she reported. "There's talk of a major intelligence auction scheduled within the next forty-eight hours. Bidders from at least six countries are already in London, along with private interests."



Dimitri looked up from his laptop. "I've been monitoring financial movements. Several cryptocurrency wallets associated with intelligence brokers have suddenly activated. Someone's preparing to move a lot of money."

K studied the evidence wall they'd assembled. Photos of Frozenwood were sparse—the woman was a ghost, rarely captured on camera. The most recent image showed only a partial profile, taken from CCTV near Piccadilly.

"She's deliberately leaving breadcrumbs," Mei observed, joining K at the wall. "The card at the shop, the message to our secure channel, the coordinated sightings. This isn't someone running—it's someone orchestrating."

"But orchestrating what?" K wondered aloud.

Isabella approached with a tablet displaying historical data. "I've been researching Frozenwood's final days at MI5. Her personnel file is heavily redacted, but there are inconsistencies in the official narrative. Her termination coincided with a classified operation in Belarus—an operation that officially never happened."

The revelation hung in the air as Gabriel Adams entered with Mikko, the Finnish sniper looking grim.

"We've scouted the warehouse coordinates," Gabriel reported. "It's isolated, multiple access points, poor visibility. Exactly where I'd set up an ambush."

"Or exactly where someone would go if they didn't want to be overheard," K countered.

Julia Sharpe, who had been quietly absorbing all the information, finally spoke. "We're missing something. Frozenwood was MI5's top operative. She had access to resources, connections, and enough secrets to disappear forever. Why play this elaborate game now?"

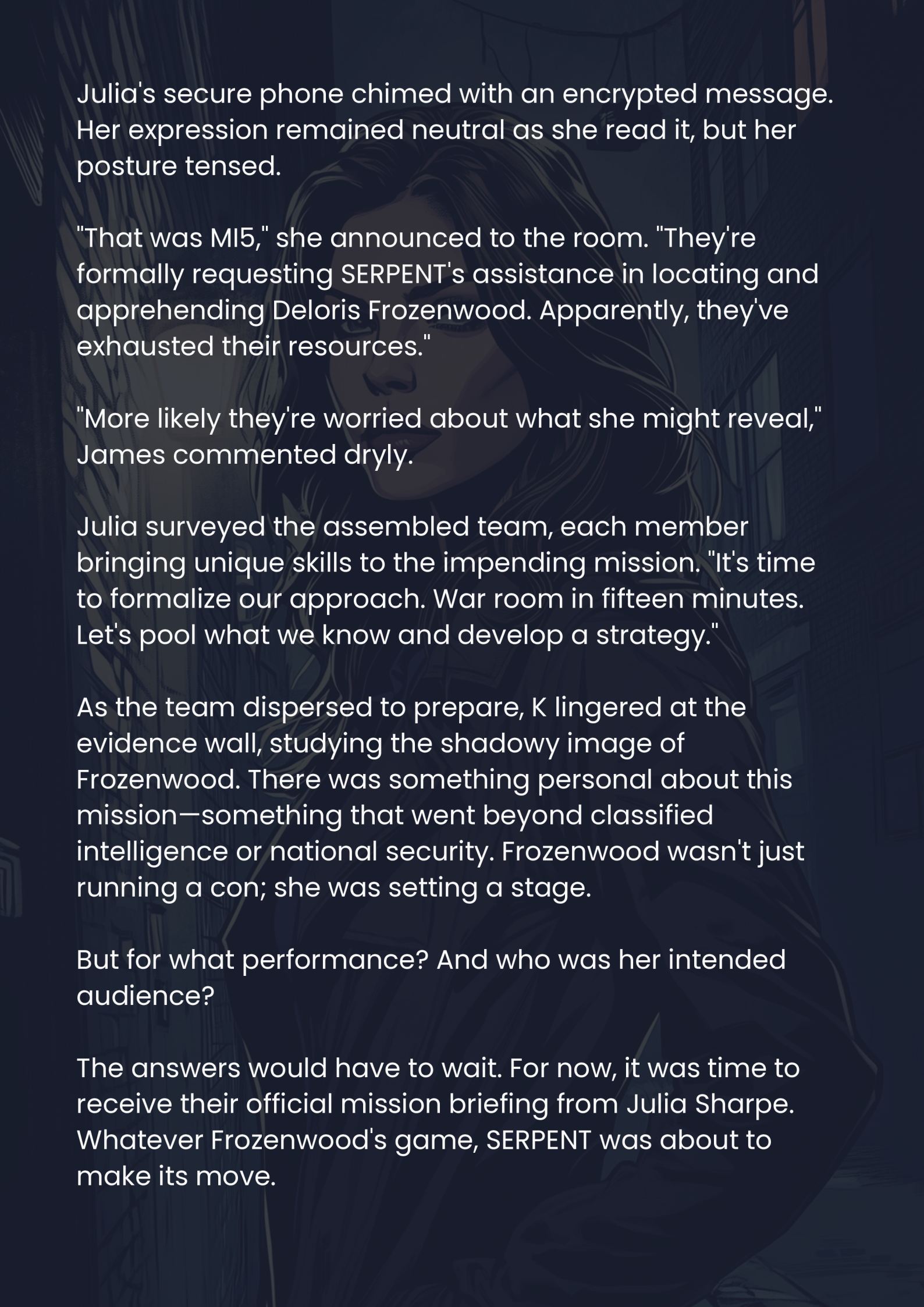
The answer came unexpectedly, from Fox Meyer. The extraterrestrial liaison had been cross-referencing dates with Klumgongyn's help.

"The Belarus operation," Fox said, his expression troubled. "It coincided with a Volrac technology exchange—one of the early collaborative projects between our species."

The pieces began falling into place with alarming speed. "Dimitri," K called across the room. "Check social media platforms for any profiles matching Deloris Frozenwood or D Frozenwood created in the last six months."

The tech expert's fingers flew across his keyboard. "Multiple hits. Instagram, Twitter, even a LinkedIn profile. All created within weeks of each other, all with minimal content but growing follower counts. They're establishing digital footprints."

"She's building her brand," K realized. "Creating a public persona before something big."



Julia's secure phone chimed with an encrypted message. Her expression remained neutral as she read it, but her posture tensed.

"That was MI5," she announced to the room. "They're formally requesting SERPENT's assistance in locating and apprehending Deloris Frozenwood. Apparently, they've exhausted their resources."

"More likely they're worried about what she might reveal," James commented dryly.

Julia surveyed the assembled team, each member bringing unique skills to the impending mission. "It's time to formalize our approach. War room in fifteen minutes. Let's pool what we know and develop a strategy."

As the team dispersed to prepare, K lingered at the evidence wall, studying the shadowy image of Frozenwood. There was something personal about this mission—something that went beyond classified intelligence or national security. Frozenwood wasn't just running a con; she was setting a stage.

But for what performance? And who was her intended audience?

The answers would have to wait. For now, it was time to receive their official mission briefing from Julia Sharpe. Whatever Frozenwood's game, SERPENT was about to make its move.

Briefing

Greetings, Special Agent.

We have received information regarding the long lost spy from MI5, Deloris Frozenwood. She went missing in action a few years ago, never to be seen again. From what we understand, she went on to provide services to whoever the highest bidder might be.

Before she went rogue, Deloris was a revered operative within MI5. Taking on some of the most dangerous assignments and quickly working her way through the ranks. Discontent with management, she took matters into her own hands. Often skirting the lines between rule of law and criminal behavior. She was eventually terminated from MI5.

What happened after her career at MI5 remains shrouded in mystery. She showed up on the radar several times, but only for very brief moments. Having become a target of the organization she once worked for, she's even gotten arrogant. Often making deliberate appearances for a brief moment, before vanishing to the shadows once again. Our colleagues at MI5 have asked us to obtain any information on Deloris Frozenwood we can find. They're particularly interested in social media profiles. For reference, Deloris often appears as "Deloris Frozenwood", or as "D Frozenwood".

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

Materials

She must have left online traces, she's out there...

Answer Instruction

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

Perhaps she had some social presence?

You will know it when you see it, there will be no doubt.

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.