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Running on XM






Her fingers paused over the keyboard, hovering in the air just above it. Devra thought long and hard about even using Christie's computer. She wasn't sure of the extent of ADA's reach.

She had witnessed the algorithm in action many times before, and the connectivity and speed with which ADA could collate and process data was still astonishing to Devra. And now she knew that ADA was capable of so much more. Maybe even murder, if that was her plan for Jarvis. Yet here was Devra, still alive and sitting on a sofa in one of the nicer apartments in Zagreb. ADA had something else in mind for her.

Christie, her current savior and one of the most brilliant men she had ever met, had put out pillows and blankets and had left Devra his laptop on the coffee table. There was no one







else in the apartment but the two of them. The chemical engineer was a bachelor, thankfully. Less people to lie to.

Now, as she heard him snoring in the next room, the screen of the laptop stared blankly back at her. Although she felt safe here, she also knew that the computer was an open portal – one through which ADA could reach out and find her.

It was a risk she had to take. Devra needed to start lining up her other contacts. Any communications she was about to make now would look like they came from Christie, she assured herself. And she would refrain from trying to access anything personal – her email, or online banking, or cloud storage. She was sure ADA would be waiting there if she did.



Devra's fingers hit the keyboard. She started by installing an onion router encryption service on Christie's computer. She had used this before in previous projects to ensure anonymous communications with other researchers, especially those who had emails and chats that were logged by their university IT departments.



Satisfied that her IP and information were now hidden, she set about searching for the first piece of data she'd need. The contact number for a colleague she had worked with in Milan. Then, she searched for any stories she could find about what had happened in Zurich. It now appeared to be some type of street theater that had gone awry, according to the most recent article.

Devra smiled to herself, thinking Jarvis would probably appreciate the fact that his murder was now considered a piece of performance art.

There was other information to be found about Niantic on the web. The leak within the project was an insider – of that much Devra was certain. The details were too accurate to be

suppositions. Maybe they had bigger problems than her, Devra thought. And maybe that would buy her some time.

For her plan to work, Devra was going to need to set up her own operation. That meant she needed talent, like Christie, and facilities, or access to them. And money. Always money. And if there's one thing governments of the world are great at losing but intent on keeping complete track of, it's money. Devra knew that any source of funds was going to require the utmost discretion, at least initially.

Once she had things in motion, Devra would go public, and trust that daylight would keep the NIA in the shadows. That was the plan. At least the one she had conceived over beers with Christie two hours ago.

But big picture would have to give way to small details for now. First things first. Save yourself before you save the world. She looked at the time on the computer. It read 3:49 AM. Had they been at the pub that long, Devra wondered?

Her eyes scanned Christie's living room searching for a clock. She found one sitting on a shelf in the bookcase against the wall behind her. Although it looked antique, its mechanism was battery operated. 2:23. Or maybe 2:25. The hands and dial were abstract enough to allow for a little room in either direction.

When Devra looked back at the computer, the time now appeared as 8:55 PM. The discrepancy had barely registered in her mind when a pop-up window opened in the bottom corner of the screen.

You're up early – :)

The message was from a woman named Katalena.

This is not like you. I hope everything is okay.

Devra wasn't sure what to do.

Say something. Or type it anyway. :) I know you are there.

Devra typed back...

I'm good. Just a lot of work to get through.

...hoping that whoever was on the other end of the chat didn't have a close, or even intimate, relationship with Christie. If so, then she wouldn't be able to sustain the facade for very long. Better to try and end it now, she thought.

Can we talk tomorrow? I will call you, ok? Very busy at the moment.

K. Bye.

Devra shook her head. Another detail overlooked. Why didn't she set Christie's status to offline? These little mistakes would catch up with her. Then, another message. One that Devra stared at for a long time before she closed the laptop.


How will you call me without your phone, Devra?

Farlowe pulled his car to a stop at the front of the Zagreb Train Station. He felt both tired and energized at the same time. Having driven for hours, he stretched as he watched people come and go from the front of the building. The sun was just starting to rise, and commuters and travelers swarmed the place.

Something had brought him here. Instinct. Senses heightened by the events of last night. That is why I punched this location into the car's GPS, he thought to himself, even though he couldn't remember doing so. Another side-effect of the XM, perhaps.

Farlowe intently watched for Devra. He knew that any moment she would appear. Every fiber of his being told him he was right until...

No. He hadn't paid close enough attention to the GPS.




He hadn't set it for the train station. What was he doing? He was certain that he had set his destination accurately. He must have. There was no one else in the car but him. He would have to learn how to control these XM blackouts, Farlowe thought.

Maybe instinct had brought him here, but the technology he couldn't remember interacting with said he should be looking somewhere else.


This was a company car, so anything punched into the GPS could be seen by Phillips. No need for an update then.

Farlowe studied the GPS screen. A green path snaked across a map of Zagreb, from his current location to Marshal Tito Square. His senses had gotten him close after all. Only a couple of turns.

He could be at the university in six minutes.



855's numerical designator gave him wide latitude and discretion once he had received the kill order on Bogdanovich and Farlowe from Phillips. Collateral damage was anticipated. Expected. There would be no paperwork or explanations required.



The two mobsters had given their lives to provide Karl with some of the tools he needed to finish his assignment once he had reached his targets. Next up was information, and Dr. Christie Novosel. Karl watched him from across the courtyard of the University of Zagreb. What happened next would decide the doctor's fate.

Devra Bogdanovich had come to Zagreb for a reason. And from the file Karl had reviewed, Christie had to be that reason. They had worked together for a couple of years on a project back in the 90's and had kept up a correspondence ever since. So far, Devra had made the right moves, but this was a very

visible mistake.

It was one that he was sure Farlowe would catch as well. Find her, find him. Simple, really. Two birds, one bullet.

Karl put on his recently obtained sunglasses, tucked the book he had earlier stolen from the library under his arm and rushed up behind the doctor, moving unnoticed through the crowd of students until he was directly behind him. He studied the man for a moment before making his move.

"Excuse me," Karl said in perfect Croatian as he grabbed Dr. Novosel by the arm.

Novosel practically jumped out of his skin, turning around flustered to see Karl behind him, looking intimidating in his sunglasses.

"Sorry. I didn't mean to startle you. I thought you had dropped this..."

Karl extended the book in his hand to the doctor.

Christie tried his best to recover, but Karl had already seen what he was looking for. Novosel was under extreme duress, and not the kind that comes from submitting papers for review or hiding an affair with a naive undergrad. The doctor had seen Bogdanovich and was at least aware of the trouble she was in.

"Uh, no... it is not mine," Novosel answered.

"My manners. Excuse me," said Karl as he took off his glasses, acting as if he realized he was being rude hiding his eyes. Novosel opened the book, looking inside the cover.

"It is from the library. I can return it."

"Don't trouble yourself. I will do it," Karl said as he took the book back.

"Are you a student here?"

"Meeting. Can you point me to the Economics building?"

"That way. Just down the path to the right. Large building