**BOOK 1:**

\*\*\*CHAPTER 1: THE DOPPLEGANGER\*\*\*

2:56 am

Tobias opened his eyes to see that time on his clock. It seemed his brain was determined to never miss that time even if it meant waking him up from a perfectly good sleep to do it. Ever since he had started working on his new AES encryption cracking algorithm, he always knew when the clock said 2:56.

After seeing that time, he couldn’t think of anything else but his encryption. So, he got up and walked into his computer room. He sat down in his chair and rubbed the sleep from his eyes, then loaded up his computers. All at once, 20 screens lit up and one asked for a password, which he gave in record time. 42/859/DeE/007/07/13!? It may not have been AES-256 grade, but at least it was AES-128 and he could remember it. 42 was the number of his favorite book, *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*, and 859 was the personal number he had chosen for himself. Everything else related to his distant relative: John Dee, with whom he shared his last name.

While many, if not all, people in the world have heard of James Bond in their life, most did not know there was a true one: John Dee. Born July 13 (hence 07/13), John Dee was a mathematician and astronomer, but most importantly he was an advisor to the court of Elizabeth I. At one point, it was said he acted as a spy and would mark all his confidential files with the mark 007. The 00 representing the eyes of the queen and the 7 being his personal mark (which is why he used 007 in his password).

As the generations passed down from John Dee, each descendant chose a number that was special to them and that was like a second name to them. Some stayed with the double-O's while others, like Tobias, chose something different. Tobias was 14 when he chose the number for himself. 5 was his birthday (July 5th), 8 represented 8-5=3, the age he was when his mother died of cancer, and 9 represented 5+9=14, the age he was when his father was killed on duty at MI6. After getting it, he noticed many more similarities but those he kept to himself.

As his computer loaded, he looked up at his wall to see the time. He knew it was just after 4:30am in England, but he also saw the times from other places too; 6 other places to be exact. After his dad’s death, Tobias knew he would go into MI6 to replace the position his father had left, but after a few years, he realized he could do so much more. So, he left and set this room up. He had such a great knowledge of computers, that he was able to completely scramble and conceal his location from even the best hackers.

Then, he reached out to the services of 7 countries: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the US—The G7. He introduced himself as Agent 859, utilizing his special number, and debated with each country to make them part of their top services. Immediately, he was able to get high security clearance at CIA (US), MI6 (UK), CSIS (Canada), DGSE (France), DGSI (France), BND (Germany), SIM (Italy), and kōanchōsa-chō (Japan). None of them could track him, even when they paid him, they couldn’t trace it.

He worked odd jobs between them and even traded secret files between countries with speeds that shocked them. But that was only because no country shared their Agent 859, and everything was confidential. All the better for Tobias though. It just meant 7 times the pay, from 7 different countries, for 1/7 the work. But this latest mission was different. MI6 and the CIA had sent him a file to decrypt, but it was from Russia, where he had no clearance. And it was encrypted with AES-256, the strongest encryption in the world. From what he figured you were 382688441861890570000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000000 times more likely to win the lottery than crack and AES-256 password. He figured he was screwed.

He knew brute forcing the password wasn’t going to work, but he might be able to unravel the password. But that was even more unlikely due to the XOR command of the AES password which could turn it into anything. Yet this week he was struck with an idea. If he could make a computer with recursive Storage, and recursive RAM, he could get the equivalent of billions of trillions of computers in one drive, which could brute force an AES-256 password in seconds. Coding the recursions was easy, and he had that code made in a couple of hours. Yet, he forgot to factor one thing in: drives overheated when they were under too much strain, and after running the equivalent of 50 computers, the drive was hot enough that it melted it, and the rest of the computer system. Luckily, Tobias was smart enough to use a dummy computer to run that test. But he had not given up, he just needed a new type of drive.

He started watching YouTube videos on computer engineering, and quickly got the idea and started building his own drive, which he finished last night, but was too tired to test. He figured out that it was just like a normal drive, except the pathway of data was streamlined and efficient so that it could take an infinite amount of data before reaching 1 degree room temperature. If this worked, he would upload his AI and wait.

He plugged in his drive into a new dummy computer and waited for it to load. It was up within a few seconds, and so he coded a fast-running recursion that would blow a normal computer in seconds (which he knew because he had used it as a virus on some computers as work for the intelligence agencies). He ran it, and the computer held... and held... and held. He figured it was working, but he would give it some more time to see if it could hold up the equivalent of what he needed.

He got showered, dressed, and generally made himself presentable and headed out the door, and decided to walk to him favorite breakfast restaurant, which was only a few blocks away. It should be open now that it was 6 in the morning. He sat down, and as he finished his meal; he noticed a person staring at him. He looked like a tough dude, but Tobias had honed his look for years and gave the man a poison stare that made people look away, even if he wasn’t looking directly at them. Yet, this man didn’t even flinch. Slowly, the man walked over, and Tobias became ready to grab the gun on his belt if this man was trouble.

“By the looks of you, I’d bet you’re the man I’m looking for.” The man said.

“Depends. Who are you looking for?” Was Tobias’s simple reply. No need to say anything suspicious.

“Well, that’s the problem. No one knows their name. Just a number.”

Tobias new that he had been traced, but how. He needed to be calm until he came got some answers.

“Oh. He sounds mysterious. Of course, my judgment might be biased since I’m him.” He stuck out his hand friendlily, “Agent 859. Nice to meet you...”

“Oh, I’m Jason, but the world knows me as Agent 952.” Jason retuned the shake.

“Really? What agency do you work for?” Maybe this man had just come across his file, looked at records, and unscrambled his Public IP address. That would get him pretty close to where he was, and he would just have to wait until Tobias came to the right place. With a stroke of luck, he did... though that meant he needed to update his scrambled IP system.

“No single entity in particular. You see, last month, I left the CIA after being threatened by a coworker a few to many times while on assignment. But I still needed work, and so I set up a system that hid my location, and presented my service to many countries and miraculously, all of the G7 accepted me. But they all asked the same question, ‘Do you know Agent 859?’ I of course had to say no, but after being given clearance, I looked through the files on you and traced you to this area based on your IP address, which was easy to unscramble, since we both scrambled ours the same way.”

Ah! So, Tobias was right! “Amazing. That is almost a perfect synopsis of my life. Only, mine was MI6, which I left because they didn’t give me much. How do I know you didn’t just track me down from the CIA, or wherever, to turn me in?”

“Because, my name, Jason Dare, is on every blacklist in the world after I left the CIA.” He holds out his hand, “Taken a scan of my fingerprints to see.” How, did this man know he had a fingerprint scanner on his phone? He must have one. Tobias pulled out his phone and opened the app that scanned the fingerprints and ran it through numerous databases. Immediately, he had over a hundred matches, most of which were from blacklists. He was who he said he was.

“Ok, Jason Dare-” He stopped. Dare. He had heard that name. “Wait, are you in any way related to Virginia Dare?” Virginia Dare was a girl from the lost American colony of Roanoke. There were rumors that she had survived despite the rest of the colony disappearing, and she lived on the land.

Jason smiled. “Why yes, though most people don’t make that connection. How did you?”

“Well, I like to know some of the more unusual people of history, after all I’m related to John Dee, the original 007.”

“Wow? You have these skills in your blood then.”

“Maybe even better than John did.”

“Well, then I came to the right man.”

“Why do you say that.”

“I oversold my abilities and now the agencies are on my tail. They think I’m a fraud and they banned my clearance. I need to clear my name.”

“Easy enough. What do you need to do?”

“Crack a Russian file’s password.”

Tobias chuckled. “Well, I could do that, but that might put me at risk. As they gave me the same project. And I’m almost done, assuming my new system works.”

“Would you help me clear my name, please?”

“Ok, I’ll do it. But only if you work for me. I could use an assistant.”

Jason didn’t even take a second to think about it. “Deal. You don’t even have to pay me. Once my name is cleared, they will pay me again.”

“Good. But I wouldn’t have paid you even if they didn’t clear your name. Come with me.” Tobias stood up left a tenner on the table for a tip and left. They walked back to his house and let the man in. He wasn’t worried. Here was home base, literally, and he could get hurt here. He led Jason to his computer room, and showed him his setup, then he turned his attention to the recursive code he had run before leaving, and it was well over 8 hundred times more than what he needed, and it was still running easy. He had done it.

“Ok, so this is what will crack that password. Use my credentials to momentarily clear your name, while I crack the file, and we’ll send it in.” Tobias said.

“That’ll do it?”

“It should. Just make sure to cover up my trail.”

“Will do, boss.”

They each set up on their tasks. Tobias looked in a drawer for a thumb drive that had an experimental AI on it, but it would do the job. The AI was designed to make other AI based on the commands that were given. He had more work to do in order to put the natural language processor in, but it was good enough to run the code to crack the password. He broke the recursion of the program and cleared the resulting data, and then plugged in his AI. It quickly loaded up and asked for his prompt. He told it to create an AI that would run the equivalent of billions of billions of computers with the purpose of cracking a password.

After the AI built itself, Tobias reached in the drawer again and pulled out a thumb drive that would upload the file into the system. Within seconds it was cracked. He had done it. He was the first person to ever brute force an AES-256 within seconds. He smiled to himself as he thought about going to buy that lottery ticket.

He sent the file containing the password to his main computer, which Jason was working on. “There it is. How close are you.”

“I think I almost got it. I just need your clearance number, and I can’t remember how to get it.”

He walked him through it again, and soon the file was sent. While they were waiting for someone at the CIA to notice that Agent 952 had actually come through and give back the clearance, Tobias and Jason started building an Operating System for his new drive. Jason built everything from a new browser to a Microsoft Office equivalent file system. Tobias worked on adding the natural language processor and updating his AI.

\*\*\*CHAPTER 2: THE ESCAPE\*\*\*

“Jason, do you realize how big this project is?” Tobias said, cutting the silence.

“What do you mean.” Jason said, looking up from his screen.

“We are creating a computer with infinite drive, infinite RAM, and able to do anything. This is more powerful than quantum computers. This is computer history.”

Jason stopped and leaned forward. “Wait, you're telling me that you went out of your way to create a new computer so that you could crack an AES password?”

“Hardly out of my way. This is the only way to crack one.”

“Didn’t you do it before?”

“Nope. The agencies I was working for were all just requesting files from other agencies I was working for. I just sent them the copy of the file from the other agency.”

“Oh. That’s good thinking.”

“You really haven’t been at this long, have you?”

“Like I said. I only started last month.” As Jason finished saying that his phone rang, a CIA agent was on the other end. The call was short—Tobias estimated 45 seconds—and then Jason hung up. “They renewed my clearance. I’m good to go. Thank you.”

“No problem. But just out of curiosity. Have they ever called you before?”

“Well, no.”

“Is you phone secure.”

“I think so.”

“Let me see.” Jason held out his phone and Tobias started looking through the security: it was so lax he was certain a 12-year-old could crack it. But that also meant it could be traced. “This is bad.”

“It is?”

“Yes, we need to keep our identity a secret. Our location is part of our identity.”

“And?”

“It takes 40 seconds to trace a call. That call was over 40 seconds, which means they traced you here. MI6 will respond since we’re in England.” Now Tobias seemed to be talking to himself. “Their response time to here will be about... 32 minutes.” He shakes Jason on the shoulder. “Get up and follow me.”

Tobias starts running up the stairs and they enter a room that looks like a study, with bookshelves full. Tobias walks towards one and pulls out book, and there is a click, releasing the bookshelf forward. “Maybe a little cliché, but it gets the job done.” He walked through the doorway that was now open and Jason followed him in. There is a ladder just inside the door leading down, which Tobias quickly scales.

They emerge in what looks like an abandoned sewer. “I didn’t know they had these here.” Jason said.

“It’s kind of weird they do. This city isn’t that old, but if it’s here, let’s use it. Look in that corner.” Tobias said pointing at one wall of the dried-up sewer. Jason walks over and then stops as he bumps into something. He reaches out his hand and feels a smooth sheet, which he pulls down, revealing a new tunnel in the sewer. “I am lucky enough to live just above the intersection of these sewers. Making this easy. Inside that tunnel is two motorbikes and two bulletproof suits—with a lot of surprises—along with a handgun and a rifle for each of us. Suit up I’ll be there in a minute.”

Tobias looked at the wall in front of him and ran his hand along it. Then suddenly a brick shifts and a panel pops out of the wall. Inside there are a bunch of switches and USB ports. Just then Jason walks up behind him.

“What’s that?”

“Command center.” Tobias said simply. “All my work on the computers is centered here.” He plugs a thumb drive into one of the USB ports. “I’m loading up all my data and programs from my computer onto this drive. Then I’m going to destroy the computer. They can’t find that data.”

“How will you destroy it?”

He pulls out another Thumb drive and plugs it in. “This one contains a virus that will blow up the entire drive and will even make the monitors explode. If I time it right, it will explode in the faces of the MI6 officers.” Tobias then turns and heads toward the other tunnel. “Wait here while I suit up.”

When Tobias revealed himself again, he was suited in a total black suit, with a handgun at his waist and a rifle on his back. Then Tobias turns his head lifting his ear. “Hear that.” Faintly, there was a sound of banging above them. “MI6 arrived and they’re trying to break down the door. Should hold them for a couple minutes.”

“Wait, back up. Did you say everything in the room will be destroyed?”

“Yes, why.”

“Does that include the drive we were just coding.”

Tobias cussed under his breath. Then starts thinking again. “Ok, listen closely. I’m going to go retrieve it. I should have enough time, but I won’t be able to run the explosion. Our suits have a radio, so I’ll let you know when, and you’ll press this blinking red button. Is that clear?”

“Yes.” Jason said, but Tobias was already heading back up to his house.

Tobias emerged from behind the bookshelf and could still hear the MI6 trying to break down the door. He rushes into his computer room, grabs the drive, and hears the door splinter and MI6 run in. He headed back to the stairs but heard a shout behind him. “Freeze.” Tobias knew it was always better to freeze, because it gave you time to think, and revealed less of your path. “Are you 952?” The officer continued.

“Who?” Tobias played with them.

“Don’t play dumb. Agent 952 was traced to this address. You’re him aren’t you.”

“No. Agent 952 is much... dumber... I’m his boss.”

“Who are you.” The officer demanded.

“Who are we all, really?”

The officer took a couple steps forward, and Tobias realized that one more step would put him inline of the explosion for the computers.

“Don’t play with me.”

“You think philosophy is play? I’m sure many scholars will not be happy with that view.”

“Ok, that’s it.” He stepped forward, pulling his gun on Tobias, and Tobias made a slight shift in his shoulder.

“Now.” Tobias said.

“What.” The officer froze, puzzled.

“I. Said. Now.” Tobias said, and all the sudden a blaze of fire burst from the computer room, right into the face of the officer. Tobias ran back up the stairs, behind the shelf, down the ladder, and into the tunnel. “The house will only stand for another half an hour, then this tunnel will be visible. We need to go.” He jumped onto one of the motorcycles and started it up, and waited for Jason, nearly matching him in outfit, to do the same.

Tobias kicked off the ground and headed at high speeds down the tunnel. “Where are we headed?” Jason asked.

“I have a hideout in Germany, we’ll head there.”

“On bike?”

Tobias turned gave him an exasperated look. “How are we going to cross the English Channel on a motorcycle.”

“I’m sorry, but that’s exactly my point.”

“We’ll use a motorboat. It will hold the bikes and when we hit land, we’ll be off again.”

“How will we get past border customs?”

“Passport in your pack. Top military grade. Immediate entry, no search.”

“You really thought this through.”

“Had to.” Then they didn’t speak, the rest of the way down the tunnel, which opened directly into the freeway.

“Wait. Won’t we need gas eventually?”

“Nope. Solar powered. Plus, it gathers a lot of power from the motion of the tires too. Very power efficient.” They kept on the road, until they reached a dock on the eastside of England. Within minutes, they were on the speedboat which Tobias had stored there, and they took off.

“Going straight eastward will land us in the Netherlands, somewhere near Amsterdam. We’ll use the passports to enter the country, then find a lodge before heading to Germany the next day.” Tobias informed them. “My base is in Emden, Germany. It’s a port city, and very resilient. It was destroyed once during World War II.”

“Seems like a nice place.”

“Probably is. I haven’t been in it long enough to tell though. Not that it matters.”

\*\*\* CHAPTER 3: THE SUPRISE \*\*\*

The rest of their trip went smoothly, and they were let over the borders easily. By nightfall the next day, both agents pulled up to a large, empty lot.

“This is it.” Tobias said.

“This is it?”

“Yes, look at the center of the plot.” In the middle, there was a relatively large rock. “That rock is the handle for a door that leads beneath to the base. However, we won’t take that entrance.” He kicked off and headed down the street, with Jason just behind him. Quickly, he circled back and hit a control on the bike. Slowly a door large enough to fit a military jet opened and they slipped through it just before it closed again. The chamber dropped steeply as they rode down, but it was lined with lights all the way down.

“I built this place myself awhile back. Figured I would need a better setup.”

“This seems to be a good one. What’s all in here?”

“Numerous things. More weapons, ammo, a huge computer system, living quarters, cars, F-35 jets, and the command center of a hijacked satellite.”

“Wow, wait. Did you say jet*s*. Plural.”

“Yes, 4 of them. The F-35's are great planes. 5th-gen stealth, top speed Mach 1.6, smaller than the F-22, great in all weather conditions, 1350-mile range, as well as air-to-surface missiles and air-to-air missiles. Not to mention normal ammunition.”

“Holy mother. How did you get them?”

“Lots of clearance and a lot of money sent to Lockheed Martin.”

“Dang, I’d love to fly those.”

“Maybe we’ll have time once we get settled and I teach you a few things about being a secret agent.”

“I’ll hold you to that.”

“Well, I can always kill you if I need to.”

“You wouldn’t.”

“I might.”

Jason was trying to come up with a reply when they entered to the chamber that housed the jets. He looked up at them in awe, even though they were only 14 feet high. They were still a shocking sight. They rode the bikes against the wall to be beside the other ones in the base. Then Tobias, out of paranoia, started examining the ships.

He just circled to the front of the first jet when he felt the barrel of a rifle against his neck.

“Don’t move.” A strong voice said.

Tobias didn’t listen. He jerked his head backwards toward the gun and he heard the gun go off. But Tobias had planned for that. His motion had signaled a Super powerful magnet to shoot up from its place on his back and pull the bullet against the barrel, freezing it in place and jamming the gun. If he shot again, it would hurt him more than Tobias.

Tobias swirled around, using his foot to kick the gun to the floor, and swing his own rifle from his back to point at the man, who was now pinned against the wall.

“You don’t attack me in my own base.” Tobias said.

“Y-your b-b-base?” The man said stuttering, clearly not expecting Tobias to retaliate so quickly.

“Yes. Now why are you here?”

“I stumbled across it one day. I’m a multinational agent-MNA for short. Agent 756. I thought this was a new but abandoned Air Force Base that was kept secret. I was using it for my work.”

“You’re an MNA too.” Tobias was shocked. He had met two in the course of a couple of days, while the most advanced agencies in the world could barely track one. “What’s your real name.”

“Machiavelli. James Machiavelli.” He said it like James Bond would, but a little higher pitched out of fear.

Now Machiavelli was a name he knew. Niccolò Machiavelli was an Italian Renaissance author and philosopher. He was famous for many works, even if his name didn’t ring a bell to most people right away.

“Just my luck.” Tobias said, lowering his gun. “I meet two secret agents, and both are from historical families. At this point, it wouldn’t surprise me if I came across Alex Flamel.” He heard a door open at the back of the room. A women walked into the room.

She stands by James, who now has his head down while trying to hide a smile. “Who are these.” The women ask.

James is the first to respond. “This is the owner of this complex. I haven’t got to their names yet.”

“Let’s introduce ourselves.” Tobias said. “We’ll probably be interacting with each other a lot. I’m Agent 859, Tobias Dee. Descendant of John Dee.”

Jason piped in, “Jason Dare. Descendant of Virginia Dare. Agent 952”

“James Machiavelli. Descendant of Niccolò Machiavelli. Agent 756.”

“Alex Machiavelli.” The women chimed in. “Descendant of Nicholas Flamel. Agent 757.”

Now Tobias was the one trying to hold his laughter. So, *this* is Alex Flamel. Just married so she lost the name.

“Well, ain’t that a surprise.” Tobias finally said. He started walking towards the door, then turned around and said to James, “You better not have messed with my computer.”

“Well, I duplicated all the files and put the originals on a drive in a drawer, then used the duplicates.” James responded.

“Well, that’s close enough I guess.”

\*\*\*CHAPTER 4: THE PICKPOCKET\*\*\*

Tobias continued into the room, where an even bigger setup than the one he had at his house. That’s why he didn’t miss it; he wouldn’t lose anything. He looked in one of the drawers and found the drive James told him about. He quickly plugged it in to the computer and all the files were still there. He took a few seconds to add the files from his home computer and removed the duplicate files.

Jason followed him in. “Well, James and Alex are newlyweds, and they certainly act like it.”

“Had to leave before barfing, huh?” Tobias chuckled.

“Pretty much. What’s up.”

“Computer system is intact. It doesn’t look like they’ve done much with the satellite or jets. Those were pretty encrypted though.”

“How did you get control of the satellite?”

“I told you. I hijacked it.”

“Why?”

“I can control what it sees and get uncensored images of anywhere in the world in almost real time. Or I can turn it around and stargaze for a while. I have complete control.”

“You really have everything now that you have that drive.” Jason sat down in a chair next to Tobias. After a silent moment, he asked, “Why did we have to run? Weren’t we helping the agencies?”

“First reason we had to run is because we are secret agents. Emphasis on Secret. Nobody should know who we are, not even government. You must have known that when you used an Agent number.”

“Well, I used an agent number because my true name is blacklisted.”

“Oh, that’s right.” Jason said, remembering that part of their conversation. “Well, besides that we are committing several crimes. We are supposedly hacking into government information databases to steel information. If anyone catches us, they will have to throw us in jail.”

“Then why do they keep us as their agents.”

“Because, on the flip side of the coin, they need the information. Every single document they had us retrieve or decrypt had some information that was important to them, and they couldn’t get it themselves. They look past the ethics and the law to get what they want.”

"Don’t they have agents who do the same thing?”

“Yes, but they are government, we are technically civilian. That’s what makes us different.” Tobias then stood up, seemingly down with his work on the computer. “Come on.”

Jason got up and followed Jason through the complex. They went through a large hallway, then turned into a small one with 11 doors, 5 on each side and 1 at the end. “These are the bedrooms. I wonder which one they took.”

“Probably the end room. Easiest to remember.” Sure enough, when Tobias opened the door to that room, it was filled with clothes and decorations, and was obviously lived in.

“Well, I guess we take the ends then. At least I made them all the same.”

“You want left, or right?” Jason asked.

“Left.” Then turned around and went into that room.

From inside the room, he could hear Jason mutter “’Left’ he said as he left.” Tobias thought that the narrator of his life wouldn’t have worded it that way, but it was amusing, nonetheless.

In this room, everything was as he had left it. It was a simple room with a bed, closet, TV and connected bathroom. His clothes were in the closet, and there were some on top of the bed, which he guessed were from the other room. Well, this isn’t what he imagined moving in here would be like, but it wasn’t that bad. At least he could never say he was alone. After settling to the new idea of everyone—which took him longer than it would seem—he walked into the lounging room area with the large TV and the pool table and a few other games. At least they hadn’t rearranged that.

James and Alex were snuggled together on the couch watching something on TV. It looked like one of the sitcoms that all told the same story in different ways. As he walked past, he saw the kid on the show was doing a math problem with his father. He was struggling with it, but almost had it.

“The answer’s 3,” Tobias said even though he had never seen the show before and couldn’t see the problem. “It’s always 3.” Sure enough, a minute later, the kid figured out an answer and it was 3.

“How did you know that.”

“I told you, it’s always 3. 3 is the number used in all stories for all sorts of reasons. 3 little pigs, 3 blind mice, and many more.”

“Smartass.” Alex said.

“Thank you.”

“That wasn’t …. never mind.”

“Well, this is my TV, so.” He waved his hand, and the TV automatically changed. An American baseball game flicked on, and Tobias jumped over the back of the couch to watch it.

“Actually, we need some things from the store. Would you mind getting them.” James said.

“Why should I go?”

“Because we’re guests, and you wouldn’t want to disappoint guests.”

“Technically you’re intruders. You’re lucky I didn’t kill you, and I had a good shot too.”

“Then why didn’t you take it?” Alex chimed in.

“Because you could be useful.”

“So, you let us stay. Which makes us guests.”

“Do fight with her on this. She was a lawyer before a secret agent, and a good one.”

Tobias saw there was no changing their mind. “Fine,” he said as he got up. “What do we need.”

“The list is on the fridge.” Alex said. Tobias walked into the kitchen and saw a small piece of paper stuck with a magnet on the side of the fridge. He skimmed it and saw it was mostly normal stuff. He was headed out the door that leads to the lot when he stopped for a second then turned back around.

He briskly walked into the computer room and took his new drive. He didn’t completely trust them yet and he needed to make sure this didn’t get lost. He stuffed it into his back pocket and left.

He drove a small sports car to the store, one he could start with a key fob in case of a quick escape, which he doubted he would need. As he walked in, he looked out of place in his tough, black uniform while pushing a cart through the store. He reached an aisle he needed and squatted down to get a better look at the bottom shelf.

Slowly, he registered a movement in his back pocket where he put the drive. He quickly reached back to make sure it was still there. But it was gone. He jolted up and looked at the aisle around him. He turned to the end of the aisle just in time to see someone run around the corner.

He set off after the man, but he was fast. Tobias wasn’t able to keep up as the guy ran out the door. He saw the guy jump onto a bike with the engine running at start to take off. He pulled the key fob out of his pocket while running towards his car. The engine had already turned before he reached it, and Tobias was able to jump in and take off. He saw the bike as it left the parking lot. Time to see what this car could do.

He hit the gas and remembered the acceleration on it was pretty good, 0-60 in 3.5 seconds, but what happened after that was great. The car quickly rose in speed to almost 200 miles per hour as he left the parking lot, which easily closed the gap between him and the bike with a top speed of 160. But the bike had a few more tricks.

Tobias was going so fast that he didn’t have time to register the bike make a sharp turn, and Tobias blew right past him. In his review mirror his saw the bike come back out and head towards the autobahn. Tobias turned at the next street and circled back and headed towards the autobahn himself. He saw the bike pass by on top of the road, and Tobias saw a truck that gave him an idea. It was a tow truck meant to carry multiple cars, but it would make a great ramp.

He drove up and the ramp and landed on the road just in time to knock into the bike’s rider. The driver fell off and Tobias grabbed the small gun he had stashed in the glove compartment of the car. He got out and pointed the gun at the man.

“Give me back that drive.”

“No. It belongs to me know.”

“I don’t know who you are-”

“Agent 722.” He interrupted.

“Who do you work for?” This couldn’t be another agent like him... not a 4th one in a week.

“The United Nations.”

“The UN doesn’t have a military force. They’re a peace organization.”

*“Si vis Pacem, para bellum.”* Which Tobias new meant “If you wish for Peace, prepare for war. *“*Sometimes agents are needed to keep the peace. Like against people like you.”

“And what am I, exactly?”

“A spy. You threaten the peace by giving top secret information to other countries.”

“Well, maybe it ensures the peace.” Just then, Tobias heard the sirens and turned to look at where they were. Still a way off. He turned around just in time for a black gloved fist to connect to his temple and knock him unconscious.

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When he came to a few minutes later, the sirens hadn’t reached him, but Agent 722 was already gone. He went to get into his car and noticed the tires were slashed. No leaving in that thing. He stepped into the car for a second to grab a few things from the glove compartment and steps out, turning the key to the ignition as he leaves. He slowly walks away from the car, facing the opposite direction.

After a minute he stops. He pulls the gun from his pocket and fires a shot over his shoulder, not looking where he was aiming. Less than a second later, the explosion told him he had hit his target. He left the ignition of the car running so his shot would blow it up. No evidence from it.

\*\*\*CHAPTER 5: THE TRIP\*\*\*

When Tobias arrived back, his anger had only risen. James came to greet him.

“Need help getting things out?”

Tobias just looked at him for a second. Then out of nowhere, his fist flies into the wall next to him, puncturing a large hole. He walks past James, knocking into his shoulder and slams the door to his room, where the sounds are evidence of a few more holes he punched.

After a few minutes of silence, Tobias walked out again.

“Are you alright?” Alex asked.

Tobias ignored the question. “Get ready, we’re taking the jets out in an hour. I have to get something, and I need speed, and help.” He walked through the rest of the complex and told James and Jason the same message. Within the hour everyone was standing by the four jets.

“When I left earlier, I took the drive with me for safekeeping.” He had mulled over how to say that for the last hour and figured that this was the best way to say it, though he figured they knew what he meant. “I guess I wasn’t as good at safekeeping as I thought. It was stolen. I ran him down, literally, and got some information. He was working for the UN, and now that’s where we’re headed. Let’s go.”

“Should we really be trying to break into the UN?” Jason asked.

“No, we won’t be breaking in. We’ll be storming it. There’s a difference. This way is more likely to get us killed. Now get in.” Tobias jumped in the seat and was thankful to be in something familiar, and to be the leader again.

He watched everyone get in and get ready. He would lead them out and they would circle the port before heading to America. After everyone radioed that they were clear, Tobias fired up his engine and slowly taxied it down the hall until it picked us speed. He could hear everyone else behind him doing the same. He accelerated faster and faster until the lights on the hallway became blurred lines.

He signaled the gate to open and saw the light appear at the end of the tunnel. He slowly inched the plane off the ground and raised the landing gear. Then at precisely the right time, he jerked the control column up sending his jet nearly vertical as it raised into the air. He quickly leveled out to avoid passing out from the g-forces. One by one, Alex, James, and Jason filed out of the hole in the ground and joined him in the air. He signaled again for the door to close.

The F-35's stealth came in handy as they flew over the German port and didn’t show up on any radar, even though they knew people were watching. It would suck getting these things back again. They hit the throttle and headed towards the Atlantic Ocean, even though that was not the normal flight plan. Normally, a jet would fly over the north pole, as it is the shortest distance, but they wanted to keep off the common paths. Their planes flew quick over the waters, going at their fastest speed, which was over 1 and a half times the speed of sound. Their speed should have drained their fuel, but he had made sure Lockheed Martin, the manufacturer had put in a large tank and added solar power to allow the plane to fly long distances, such as above the Atlantic Ocean, without a problem. If worse came to worse, they would have to glide the planes to New York.

About halfway across the seas, they realized that several F-22's, a similar jet, were trailing them. Looking down they saw they had recently passed a United States aircraft carrier. He knew his best chance was to just tell them to back off, though that was unlikely to happen.

He flipped a couple of switches to turn on communication between the jets. He heard them mid-sentence, “on communication. Land your planes or we will be forced to shoot you down.”

He guessed that the ‘on communication’ meant ‘turn on communication.’ Stupid though. If you don’t have comms on, you can’t hear them say to turn comms on. Well, these were pilots, not logicians.

“Negative, US. Turn back. We mean you no harm. We are on a... diplomatic mission and have no qualms with you. We will fire only if it is necessary for the safety of this crew.”

“You are in an unregistered United States Air Force fighter, a crime by international aviation law. Please land.”

“This ship has been authorized by Lockheed Martin. We are independent of the United States Air Force and all other government and military forces. Please stand down.”

“I didn’t want to do this,” was the last transmission Tobias heard before they shut of communication. He saw the jets settle into attack formation. He switched on comms with the other agents.

“We don’t have a formation, so just attack, stay alive, and protect the rest of us. Do anything you can to keep them from taking us down but let them fire the first shot.” Just then the top of his jet was skimmed by regulation ammo from the F-22. “Never mind that last part.”

The F-22’s attacked in a dog fight formation, and when they attacked, they nearly threw Tobias out of control on more than one occasion. He shot down a couple of planes, making the numbers even. Then he heard Jason pop on comms. “Sir, they’re lining up more jets to take off.”

“Thanks, 952.” Without explaining to anyone, he slowed his throttle. He needed someone on his tail to do this. Falling for the bait, an F-22 was soon behind him, lining up a shot. He slowly increased the throttle, forcing the jet to follow him to line up the shot. Then... patiently... he waited until they were in the right place.... he pulled back the throttle, which forced the F-22 in front of him. One of the first things he had learned in air-fights is to get behind the enemy; that is the best way to win. And now the enemy was in perfect line of a shot, which he took.

The shot connected in the first try. It plummeted... and it crashed into the edge of the aircraft carrier, damaging the edge of the ship’s runway into the ocean with the plane. Now the runway was too short to let any more planes take flight. “Nice aim, 859.” he heard Alex comment. Well, that was the nicest she’d ever been to him.

It was up to these four pilots to take down the three that were left. It would be a piece of cake. He tilted the jet’s nose skyward and sent it nearly straight up. He immediately felt it as the g-forces smashed him back. His eyes slowly closed.

He snapped them open. He couldn’t let himself black out. Slowly, he raised his altitude to dangerously high levels then pointed the nose of the plane straight up, forcing it to stall. It was shocking to see the fight below him as he fell. His agents were holding their own.

The jet fell forward as the air beneath it swirled and lost control. The plane broke into a downward spiral. As he fell, he released a torrent of bullets that struck one F-22 down, making the odds 4-2 in their favor. He continued his decent, taking his time to pull out of the stall. Doing so was routine, but could still go wrong, and forcing you plane to stall was unheard of, but it served his purpose right now. He wanted to make them think he couldn’t pull out of it. Make them think that he was going to crash...

He increased the drag on the plane, which should have slowed him

Just minutes before contacting the water, Tobias turned off the throttle, and turned into the direction of the spiral, giving him control over the plane again. He increased his throttle one more time and waited... he had just seconds more to wait... he was losing altitude fast now and was almost at sea level... almost there... finally he pulled up and felt the edge of the water skim the bottom of the jet before he lifted back into the air show.

He saw them shoot one more F-22 out of the sky and he noticed that the last one was looking nowhere near him. He had fallen for the trick and now Tobias was in place. A hailstorm of bullets erupted from his plane and found their target on the body of the remaining F-22. He saw the pilot eject before crashing, but he was still in the middle of the ocean. The aircraft carrier would send out a helicopter for him later, but for now they would risk making anything else fly for fear of being shot down.

“We’re done. Let’s go.” He heard James say over the comms. They all headed their jets back to the west, and increased throttles to Mach 1.2, just enough to break the sound barrier. The shockwave left behind was great enough to disturb the waves and rocked the aircraft carrier for a second.

\*\*\*CHAPTER 6: THE UNITED NATIONS\*\*\*

Their flights continued without hick-up as they flew throughout the country. As they were several miles from New York City, home of the United Nations building, they started to notice they were almost out of fuel. He figured they had about 50 miles to go before they had to land... which meant about 4 minutes before they would land. He hoped they could make it that far.

Soon, they could see the UN building looming in front of them. They landed in an open area of land just as their plane’s reserves of fuel dried out. “Well, I think we made good time. But Agent 722 should have beat us here. He had a good head start and didn’t get into a fight in the middle of the Atlantic.... as least that we know of. Plus, he would have taken the shorter route over the Pole. There is no way we beat him here.” Tobias told the crew as they exited the planes. They could see many people were starting to swarm the areas the planes were at. No doubt that there several UN secret agents were in the horde. “Let’s go. Follow my lead.”

They purposefully march straight in the office. A guard tried to stop him, but Tobias tripped him, and he fell to the ground, the impact knocking him unconscious. The other guard unholstered his gun, but Tobias just kicked the guards hand, disarming him, and then used the heel of his shoe to crush the gun’s barrel. That was easy. After they entered the building, all of them pulled out a small handgun. Tobias pointed his at the receptionist, she wouldn’t know the safety lock was still on. No more lives would be taken than necessary. “Which one of these offices belongs to the head of the UN Secret Service.”

She gave her trained reply. “Sir, this establishment has been devoted to world peace. We do not have any Secret Service.”

He parroted what 722 said. “‘Sometimes agents are needed to keep the peace.’ I was attacked by one of your agents earlier today.” He looked at his watch and realized it was actually after midnight now. “Er, rather yesterday. So, I know you have a military force. Now, I have a gun to your head, - and several missiles on those jets outside, so you better tell me where the office is, OR I WILL BLOW THIS BUILDING TO ASH!”

The receptionist flinched. “Office 859, Sir.” Was that a coincidence that it was the same as his number, were they messing with him? He didn’t care, he could take down this building with a tap of his neck, where he hid a transmitter that could release the missiles instantly. He would die, but so would everyone else. He walked toward the elevator and only seconds passed before the elevator opened up and let them in. Tobias signaled for the 8th floor as Jason, James, and Alex fell in step behind him.

They got let out and right in front of them were rooms 849 to the left and 850 to the right. The set of right and found room 859 at the end of a hall, just before it turned around a corner.

Tobias didn’t break stride, as he opened the door, gun leading the way. “Where is the damn drive!” Tobias shouted before he could even see where he was. It seemed to be a conference. Several UN top brasses were present. On the walls, there were several charts and maps, clearly outlining attack plans for many parts of the world.

“Sorry, sir. The man at the head of the table. This is a private meeting. We have to ask you to leave.”

“I came in here pointing a gun. Do you think I didn’t have a purpose and would just leave when you asked me too?”

“Please, go.” The man repeated. Tobias shot a bullet at the table, sending papers flying.

“Where is my DAMN DRIVE!”

“Well, you must be Agent 859. The independent agent. We’ve been expecting you.”

“That’s why this is room 859, right.”

“No, that was a happy coincidence, but we sure weren’t going to change it after we started tracking you down.”

“What have you done with the drive?”

“Oh! Agent 722 was successful? Sadly, our friend Brian Alighieri has arrived yet, so he probably still has it. We’ll return it to you, as soon as we’re done here.” So, Dante Alighieri was the guy’s ancestor. He would have to run the probability of running into 4 people with famous ancestors and became secret agents. That had to be astronomically low. He was shaken from his thoughts as the man spoke again. “Please take a seat while we discuss a few matters.” Tobias and the remained standing, but the rest sat down.

The man broke into a monologue. “Well, the first thing you might be wondering is how we tracked you down. That answer is simple. We were able to trace that a satellite that was hijacked early last year was under your control. When you activated it, we were able to trace its movements, and when you glanced over several paths to the same place, we were able to infer that’s where you were. We then sent agent 722 to retrieve you, or something that you would want, and draw you here. Truthfully, we weren’t here to harm you, we are, after all a peace organization. We just needed you because we want you with us, for this.” He clicked a button on the desk. All the screens on the walls showed a version of the UN logo, but modified to be a little more militarized, and had the Latin phrase *Pax et Lux de Morte et Tenebris*. The man continued, “There is an old roman saying, which says, *Si vis Pacem, para bellum*. ‘If you wish for peace, prepare for war,’ which is why though we are a peace organization, we have a highly advanced secret service. However, we are falling apart due to lack of leadership. We need to reorganize our forces, into the United Nation Military Intelligence Force, UNMIF, with the slogan seen here ‘Peace and Light from Death and Darkness.’ We want you to lead us though. You are a strong leader, we want you.”

Tobias looked at the rest of the brasses at the table. They were all staring at him intently and nodding when the man said something important. “If you want to join us, you can just sign here.” He said handing him a paper. “We also made papers for your friends here.” Handing some to his friends.

“Well Alex, you’re the lawyer, do you see anything sketchy in these papers?”

Alex was flipping through the pages as she talked. “I don’t see anything out of the ordinary or unexpected. You will become leader in chief, or essentially general, of the forces, being able to pick your own teams—which you better pick us—and you can organize the force anyway you want. You just have to keep the force completely secret and keep them well trained, and they will provide full funding for food, housing, equipment and luxuries. It all looks good.”

“Really, I wasn’t looking for this, but I’ll take it. As long as I can get my drive back.”

Alex interrupted him. “Well, the drive will be yours, but to fulfil your duties to keep the crew well trained, you will be required to use it here. So, it will be shared. Still, with your position you’ll have optimum control over it.”

Tobias thought for a moment. “Fine. I’ll do it. Though I want to start tomorrow morning, and I want Brian fired.”

“A meeting setting up the force can be arranged and set up.” The man said. “And once you sign, you’ll have complete control over the military, meaning you’ll be able to fire him.”

“Once I sign, I thought I would get control of UNMIF, not the secret service in place. How does that work?”

Alex was the first to answer, “it says that from the moment you sign, the secret service will be immediately turned into, and be referred to as UNMIF, just unorganized until you set that up.”

“So, instead of disbanding it, they are just transferring power to a different source.”

“Correct.”

“Ok, so I'll already have many people working for me.” He signaled for a pen, and gave his signature, one so unique and crazy that nobody could have copied it even if they traced it. “Let’s go.” He got up and started out of the room.

Just then Brian burst into the room, waving the drive in the air. “I’ve got it! I’ve got it right here!”

He stopped when he saw Tobias there. Tobias walked up and plucked the drive from his hand. “Thanks, I’ve been asking around for this all night. Nice to know you didn’t lose it.” He examined the drive for any tampering's but found none. He looked up. “Oh, and by the way, you’re fired.” Tobias was pleased with the shocked look on Brian’s face. Tobias then walked out, and just before he left, he turned to the brasses again, “Oh, and can you fuel up those jets? I’d hate for them to be there at daybreak and give people the wrong idea.”

He continued out and back down the elevator. He saw the receptionist still at the desk, and she stiffened when she saw him. “Don’t worry.” He said, as he held up the drive. “I got what I came for. And more. But, as leader of the military forces, I will have to teach you how to identify a gun with the safety catch on. Maybe if you had seen that, we’d still be yelling down here.” He smiled as he walked out the doors, and down the street to a motel to get a good night's sleep.