

## Bradford

### Chapter 12 - Family

**“He hadn’t heard their generator while it was working, but for some reason he noticed the sound stop, as the EMP devices fried its circuits.”**

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Gillian and Greg were spending a lot of time together. It was only natural, they’d worked together for years and the rest of Mike’s lab team had been giving them the cold shoulder. Or rather they were giving Greg the cold shoulder and Gillian was suffering from the fallout. They’d eaten in his cottage and were enjoying a glass of wine in the outdoor eating area.

“Have you told Mike about these alterations ?” She asked.

“After the last fiasco ?!” Answered Greg. “No, you’re the only person to see them. Am I going crazy, or is this design as perfect as I think ?”

“You’re trying to work too fast Greg, cutting too many corners.” She said.

“I know, I know..... I just want to give Mike what he wants and get off this island. Look at the plans Gillian, that’s all I ask.”

He’d spread the plans over the wooden table and the outside lighting was far from perfect. Gillian brought a portable light out of the cottage and set its LED light to full.

“Ok, I’m taking it seriously.” She said. “Now we’ll both be eaten alive by mosquitos.”

Greg chuckled as she looked over his revised plans for a delivery device for the pathogen. He’d designed something far too quickly and taken the plans to Mike, claiming it was the best thing since sliced bread. It had failed completely and Mike Lakey had been upset, so upset that Greg now had an eye going a nice shade of blue. The new version was brilliant though, too brilliant.

“Damn you’re right about the mosquitos.” Said Greg.

“I know they see you as an all you can eat buffet.” She said. “There’s some repellent in my bag.”

He picked up her bag and began to rummage.

“Don’t use it all, just rub a bit over your neck, it’s good stuff.”

Yes his plans were brilliant and no other bio-tech person in the world would have solved the problem in that way. They’d have used larger batteries and better shielding. They’d have used explosives that could be detected. Greg’s design was..... awful in its simplicity..... But it was also pure genius. Greg had finished rubbing insect repellent all over his neck and arms.

“Well ?” He asked. “Am I crazy, or is that what we need ?”

It was too soon, she had to give Bradford more time to arrive. There were constant rumours about the government gearing up for something massive. Mike Lakey was relaxed, thought that PD489 were about to attack Samuel’s bases. Gillian knew a few things Mike didn’t and she was certain that the something big, was an invasion of Lakey Island. How to gain time though ? She could tell Greg his design was crap, but he’d probably show it to Mike anyway. He knew the design was a bit special, he just needed a little external validation.

“Clockwork dispersal.” She said. “So no explosives to be detected.”

He was grinning at her, like Alice’s Cheshire Cat.

“Tiny power supply, so looks like a toy to scanners.” She continued. “And so light that anyone could carry it.....Genius Greg, pure genius.”

He had his hands on her shoulders, beaming at her.

“Easy to assemble.” He said. “And ten separate cells for the pathogen. If five fail, the remaining five can still deliver enough pathogen.”

Enough pathogen to wipe out an entire district of San Pablo, she thought. Greg was happy and leant in to kiss her, but she pulled away.

“Sorry.” He said.

“No problem. I’m fed up with wine.” Said Gillian. “Come to my place and I’ll make some frothy coffee, with a good measure of brandy.”

Greg locked the plans into the wall safe and they both walked the short distance to her cottage. He obviously thought she wanted to be in her own territory, for things to go further between them. All his body language was that of a man expecting to get laid. She did nothing to dispel that idea; she wanted him relaxed and docile.

“It’s too warm to go inside.” She said. “You sit out here and I’ll get the coffee.”

“A lot of brandy in them, we’re celebrating.”

His attitude was contagious and she found herself smiling as she made the coffee. It wasn’t exactly cappuccino, but she did produce two pretty good frothy coffees. She had the top off the brandy bottle, when Greg joined her.

“Go on Gillian, a good triple measure.”

She poured a lot of brandy into each cup and took them out to the table by the ocean. She sat near him, even ran her hand over his arm as she placed the coffee near him. None of it made her feel guilty; Greg was as bad as Mike Lakey in many ways.

“I’ll assemble a test device in the morning.” Said Greg. “Then a live test in San Pablo the day after. Mike has yet to decide on a target, but it’ll probably be a shopping mall.”

A shopping mall, probably full of mums and kids. Greg talked about it as though he was discussing a test using lab rats. He sipped at his coffee and yawned.

“Do you ever wonder who Mike’s client is?” She asked. “This mystery person or government, who needs to kill thousands of harmless people.”

He drank his coffee and shrugged, the bastard actually shrugged at her.

“You’re always like this, it’s why Mike no longer trusts you.” He said.

So a few glasses of wine and a little brandy and Greg was being honest with her. A few home truths that he obviously wanted to get off his chest.

“What am I always like Greg?”

“A bleeding heart, a pain in the backside. Always worrying about the ethics of our work. You’re paid a small fortune and think of the good that Lakey had done! Even Bradford..... oh forget it.”

The conversation wasn’t going the way she’d intended, but she had to know what Greg really thought of her.

“Tell me Greg.” She said. “What about Bradford?”

“Ok, you have this fantastic asset given to you. The government even suppressed his curiosity and empathy since he was a kid. Instead of using him properly, you encourage him to have a conscience..... a fucking conscience isn’t a good thing for him to have Gillian.”

She drank her own coffee and watched him yawn and fidget about. Body fat was a factor with what she’d given him and it had taken longer to work than she’d anticipated.

“I’m sorry Greg.” She said. “You’re a complete bastard, but I’m still sorry.”

“Oh, instead of having sex, you’re chucking me out. Say something you don’t like and it’s sod off Greg.”

He finished his coffee and tried to get up, but his body wasn't co-operating. He thrashed about, breaking his coffee cup. Good, that would add credence to a sudden seizure, followed by cardiac arrest.

"Damn, I'm too drunk to stomp off Gillian." He said. "You'll need to help me to my cottage."

"You're dying Greg, I poisoned you. Nothing painful, just a little discomfort."

He was glaring at her and then he looked at the broken coffee cup.

"No Greg, not the coffee, or anything in the food." She said. "Mike is too paranoid, he's likely to check everything and he has the lab to do it. It was in the insect repellent that you rubbed into your neck. So greedy with it Greg, I did wonder if you'd die too soon."

Greg was calm now, sat back in the chair and watching her. His breathing sounded a little slow, but he still seemed to be alert.

"Why?" He asked.

Why! So many reasons and he still had the nerve to ask why.

"He's on his way, the perfect asset, Bradford. I told him everything, even gave him the location and passcode for a Cherish Vault."

She could see hate in his eyes now. Greg knew that all his work was for nothing. Bradford would arrive and destroy it all.

"I needed a few extra days and your design is just too good. Mike will spend tomorrow questioning everyone and having all sorts of things analysed. His paranoia will give me one day. Then he'll ask me about the design in your safe and I'll say it's good, but needs a larger power supply. And clockwork is silly, it really needs an explosive dispersal mechanism."

Greg was still now, he might even be asleep. No matter, she'd still tell him everything.

"He'll believe me and I'll say the design work needs two days and then a day to construct a test device..... Bradford will be here long before that is built."

She fetched a few tissues from the kitchen and used them to take the insect repellent from her bag. She threw it into the ocean. A pity, but Mike was so crazy that he might have it tested. The toxin was almost undetectable, it would look as though poor Greg had overdone things and his heart had packed up.

"A pity." She said. "It was part of my escape kit, just in case I couldn't tolerate being part of the madness."

She went to look at Greg and there was no sign of life in his eyes and he was no longer breathing. He might have been dead before she'd told him everything, but it didn't really matter. They were in her cottage, well away from the locked safe and Greg's plans..... no reason for Mike to suspect that she'd even seen them.

Gillian thought of the puppy her parents had bought when she was about eight. They'd ignored all the advice and bought it from a dealer. The poor thing only lived for about a month and seemed to be riddled with every disease a dog could have. Gillian had even needed treating for ringworm. She'd loved that puppy though, it might even have influenced her decision to become a physician of some kind. Gillian brought back the memory of finding it dead on her bed and concentrated on it, until her eyes began to fill with water. She then rubbed her eyes a little and kept on thinking of poor Jangles, the runt of the litter. She went to the phone and pressed nine for the security office.

"Oh please help! This is Gillian McBride and something terrible has happened."

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The military VTOL had flown about three times around the island, at a height guaranteed to be out of the range of any sensors that Samuel might have. The flight engineer was pointing at various yellow spots on a screen.

"These are animals, quite a few of those, but all quite small." He said. "These though, a little to the left of where we'll be putting you down. They're two people, probably guarding a boat and the only jetty on the island."

"And the clump of orange blobs?" Asked Maria.

The engineer zoomed in the image, but it just made the blobs less well defined.

"A large wood built house, with a couple of outhouses." He said. "There's about half a dozen people there, maybe as many as eight. Difficult to be precise when they're all in one place."

They could feel the craft slowing down to drop them off, so Bradford picked up his back pack and helped Maria to get hers comfortable.

"There's an uninhabited island a mile away." Said the engineer. "We'll put down there and wait for your call to pick you up. If we don't hear from you within three hours....."

"I know." Said Bradford. "You'll assume we're dead and go home."

They didn't even feel the VTOL land, the doors opened and they were out of the craft.

"Good luck." They heard behind them.

The vessel rose into the air with hardly a sound and was gone, leaving them to find and neutralise at least eight or nine subversives.

"We'll tackle the two on the jetty first." Said Bradford. "Then they'll have no way to escape."

The vegetation was semi-tropical, which meant thick undergrowth and an overgrown path. They could see where the subs had used machetes to clear the worst of the bushes and vines. Out of the air conditioned VTOL, the humidity had to be over ninety percent and they were both soon feeling the strain.

"Can we go somewhere comfortable one day Bradford? Please."

"If we're feeling fed up with it." Said Bradford. "Think how the subs are feeling, after a couple of days in this hell hole."

Being quiet was difficult, but the subversives didn't seem to notice them approach. They found two bored and fed up subversives guarding the jetty. One even has a set of earphones on, obviously listening to his favourite music. Bradford followed his own advice about not shouting warnings.

"I'll take the guy on the left." He whispered.

Both of the subversives died without realising they were even under attack. The boat they were guarding looked expensive and capable of crossing large oceans. It didn't look like the kind of boat that terrorists would use, which was probably why Samuel had chosen it.

"It's beautiful." Said Maria. "It's a pity we have to destroy it."

"We can't have him escaping again."

Bradford had a few grenades in his back pack. He picked a thermal device and set it for thirty seconds. He threw it into the craft and they ran back the way they'd come, covering several hundred yards before the device went off.

"Well....." Said Bradford. "They'll know we're here."

There had been a flash of bright white light and then an explosion, followed by several others as the boat blew apart. They could only see the flames above the trees, but that was impressive enough.

Bradford looked at a map of the island and chose a long and scenic path to get to the building where they hoped to find Samuel. Not the obvious and quite wide path, that was almost certain to have been mined.

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Amoe loved being a cop, but being young, pretty and female, did tend to mean she was always chosen for the civic functions. The police force might now have a good racial mix, but the majority of the guys at the top were just that, guys. So she was put at the front of every public occasion, just to show that young women did have a place in the modern San Pablo police service. Today she had to smile at a lot and shake hands with a lot of kids. They'd won a competition to design a new police uniform and Amoe had been picked to give out the award. No one would ever wear the uniforms in real life of course, but Amoe had to wear the 'Barbie goes cop,' outfit all day.

"Yours looks fine." Chet had said. "Mine makes me look like a gladiator on drugs."

Her skirt was a bit too short and they'd given her a gun holster on her thigh, but Amoe quite enjoyed twirling about for the news people. Chet's uniform had far too many pads and bits of armour. He really did look like the world's most eccentric gladiator. She had a suspicion that her father engineered her into a few of these things. It was good politics; she was always mentioned in the media as the daughter of Kealani Lee.

"Have you seen that guy before?" She asked Chet.

"Which guy?"

"The blonde haired guy near the door, in the tan leather jacket. I'm sure I saw him outside the precinct office this morning."

It was late, all the kids had been dragged off by their proud parents. They'd been asked to stay to go through various staged tableaux for the media. The Civic Centre was a public building, but the guy looked out of place.

"No." Said Chet. "I just think you've got an admirer."

There'd been a woman too, she'd seen her three times and a dark haired middle aged guy, who'd changed jackets to look different. Amoe was good at recognising and remembering faces, a gift she'd had since she was a kid.

"You're probably right." She told Chet.

No use in involving Chet, she'd mention it to her father and Bradford, when he finally showed up. She was giving her lover a lot of tolerance of bad behaviour, but she did now see him as some kind of hero. How far heroes were allowed to mess you around, was a decision she'd put off for a while.

"Need a lift?" Someone asked.

"My car is quite close."

"It's late, I could drop you at your car."

"No, I'll be fine, but thanks."

It was a warm night and the rainy weather looked set in for a while. The radio guy with the shark oil had got it wrong for once. She needed a coat to keep out the rain and cover the Barbie uniform, but it made her far too hot, so she left it open at the front.

"Walking my way?" Asked Chet.

"No, I'm parked in Canal Side South."

A few seconds later and she was alone on the street. Not that she was worried by that, she had a very real gun in the holster on her thigh. Fifty yards and she saw the woman sat in a car. The woman, the one who'd been with the middle aged guy, the woman following her. Amoe realised that it sounded crazy, even to her. Yet she knew it was the same woman.

"It's you, I know it." She muttered.

Amoe slowed down and looked in a shop window, trying to ignore the rain. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw the woman turn to observe her. It was her, no mistake.

She could be brave when she needed to be, even aggressive. No red mist, which in a way made her more dangerous. She pulled the gun from its holster and ran to the car, pulling the door open.

“Right Bitch !” She shrieked. “Who the hell are you and why are you following me ?”

The woman looked terrified, as Amoe held the Henriksen 80 a few inches from her face.

“I’m going to count to three.” Said Amoe.

“One.”

She never got beyond one. Something hit on the back of her neck and she fell forward, right into the woman’s lap. Amoe cursed herself for refusing a lift to her car and then she felt a needle in her arm.

“Stupid, damn stupid.” A man’s voice. “She mustn’t be harmed.”

Whatever she’d been injected with worked and Amoe fell into unconsciousness.

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It was only two miles from the jetty to the building, but it had been a tough two miles. The path they’d taken circled around a bit, so they’d probably walked the best part of three miles. Lights were out of the question and they’d had to hack through the undergrowth in places. Hacking with a machete, using image intensifier glasses, is an acquired art. They were both hot, wet and tired, by the time they reached the wooden structure. Maria was busy using infra-red and ultra violet, to examine the building.

“Nothing.” She said. “No outside lights, no signs of guards.”

They’d seen no lights on the way, no one seemed to have been tempted to investigate their boat being blown up. It was strange, very strange.

“If that was your boat, you’d be darn angry at having it blown up.” He said.

“Sure would.” She replied.

Time was ticking away though and it didn’t look like the subs were coming out to play.

“How many in there ?” He asked.

“Five in the front room and one out the back, probably a kitchen area.”

He had equipment for this mission, a whole heavy bag full of it. He pulled out two EMP devices and saw Maria’s face drop.

“Six Maria.” He said. “We’ve faced far worse than that.”

“You at the front and me at the back ?” She asked.

“No, both of us in the front door.”

“Samuel might run !” She said.

“Where to ? We blew his boat up.”

Old electronic electromagnetic pulse devices had made a popping sound, which sort of spoiled the whole purpose of using them. No point in scrambling all of their electrical devices, if the familiar popping sound, told them you were on the way. The new ones were quiet, completely silent.

Bradford set the timers to five seconds and threw one towards the left of the building and another to the right.

“Go the instant they go off.” He said.

Their own equipment was screened and there was a chance that Samuel had bought screened military equipment. It was just an extra advantage and with six against two, they needed it. He put on his night glasses and saw a slight blue flare as the EMP devices fired.

“Now !” He said.

He hadn’t heard their generator while it was working, but for some reason he noticed the sound stop, as the EMP devices fried its circuits. He ran towards the front door of the building, Maria by his side. They kicked together and the door flew open.

“What the fuck !?” Someone shouted. “Get the lights going.”

There would be no getting the lights going. Bradford saw the man perfectly with his night vision glasses and fired his blaster. A neat hole appeared in the man’s forehead and he went down. The subversives still seemed unaware they were under attack.

“Who’s firing ? There’s no target ! Get the lights back on.”

Bradford remembered Schneider and the words carved into his flesh.

“I came myself this time !” She shouted.

“Fuck.... Get him.”

It was like shooting fish in a barrel, in a way it was too easy. Another subversive went down with a steaming hole in his head and so far none of them had fired a shot. He heard Maria grumble as she ran into a chair, but she kicked it away and killed the sub in front of her. Ten seconds, maybe twelve and they were left with a two against two fight. Were these Samuel’s elite ? It all seemed wrong.

“Duck !” Shouted Maria.

He did and Maria killed the sub who was about to blow off his face. Bradford killed the last man in the room, with two shots in the centre of his chest. It just left the back room and Maria was on her way there. He grabbed her arm.

“Check them before we move on.” He hissed.

She should have known, done it automatically, but a fire fight was always different to a simulator. In a simulator the adrenalin doesn’t flow, you don’t get the high from surviving, from being alive. You never left enemies behind, without making sure they were dead or secured. A guy with a gut wound and a fully charged blaster has nothing to lose. You don’t want him coming up behind you.

They were all dead, so they approached the kitchen door. Bradford kicked it open to find Samuel.

“I surrender ! I am unarmed and offer no resistance !” Samuel shouted several times.

It was wrong, he never had any intention of fighting them. Bradford looked around the room and it was just an ordinary kitchen, with Samuel sat on a simple wooden chair. Maria was running various detectors over Samuel.

“He’s clean.” She said. “No traps, no IEDs about to go off, no communicators.”

The subs hadn’t been his elite, they’d been the usual street trash that inhabited the Badlands. It was a setup of some kind, he just didn’t understand it yet. He aimed his blaster at Samuel’s face, itching to pull the trigger. It took Maria to stop him, touching his arm.

“He’s unarmed Bradford.”

“Whatever.”

He lowered his blaster and looked over the room, while Maria took her camera equipment from her bag. There had to be pictures of the arrest, or at least of the infamous Samuel. They’d just be a bit of hand or foot at the edges of the screen.

“We’ll need decent light for this.” She said.

He’d almost forgotten he was seeing everything through image intensifiers. He had an emergency light in his bag and Maria had one in hers. Bright LED lighting that lit up the kitchen like day.

“Not on the floor, the lighting angle distorts his features.”

She was right, he looked like a villain from an old movie. He put the lights up a bit, one on a kitchen unit and one on the stove.

“Perfect.” Said Maria.

Bradford used plastic ties to lash Samuel’s arms to the chair. Maria gave him one of her looks, but he wasn’t taking any chances. It was all too easy, he’d wanted to be captured. Maria attached the camera to her shoulder and began to run it over the kitchen and Samuel.

“Arrest of subversive leader Samuel.” She said for the record.

“I have a full name, it’s Samuel Marroquín.”

She nodded at him, but he wasn’t finished.

“And I’d like to introduce agents of PD489, Bradford Scott and Maria Gonsalves.”

She turned off the camera system.

“They’ll edit it out, no one will hear it.” She said. “If you want your words on record, be sensible.”

“We could just gag the bastard.” Said Bradford.

He saw the look of triumph in Samuel’s eyes.

“Gag me if you like, I’ll tell my lawyer everything and it will all get out.” He said. “A lot of thought went into this trap and you walked right into it. I really did think you’d come alone, but that doesn’t really matter.”

“They’ll never let our names get into the media.” Said Maria.

Samuel was enjoying himself, he’d obviously been looking forward to gloating.

“It’ll be a show trial of course, the media from all over the globe will cover it.” He Said. “Your names might remain secret in San Pablo, but half the planet will know all about Bradford and Maria. Quite soon your names will be on graffiti that decorates the walls of San Pablo.”

He grinned at Bradford.

“Your careers are over !”

Bradford exchanged a look with Maria, Samuel was right.

“So, we end up with backroom jobs.” He said. “At least we’ve got a future. You’ll hang or end up facing a firing squad.”

Samuel was laughing again, actually laughing at them.

“That would make me a martyr.” He said. “They’ll put me in prison and when your testimony is questioned I’ll be freed. It might take ten years, but I am a patient man.”

“Ok.” Said Maria. “Tell us it all, you obviously want to.”

“Bradford shacks up with a subversive, the mother of my child no less. The media will love that. There’s a lot of conflict of interest there Bradford, a lot of reasons for you to want me behind bars.” Bradford understood, though he should have realised sooner.

“Sofia is your daughter ?” He asked.

“Yes, from a long time ago. Mateo is nothing to do with me, probably the son of the guy you killed. I haven’t seen Camila in years, don’t really care if she lives or dies. But I did send a couple of guys to bring Sofia to me.”

“They failed, Camila killed them.”

Samuel merely shrugged.

“They were hardly the best of my guys. I’ll soon be seeing Sofia again.”

Maria removed the memory cube from her camera and shattered it under the heel of her shoe.

“I’ll put in a new cube.” She said. “Looks like we need to gag him.”

“That’s not all !” Shouted Samuel. “The investigation will look at Bradford’s bank account and wonder how he can afford some of his fancy kit. Has a lot of cash hidden away does Bradford. Then even Bobby Laszlo might be persuaded to talk about how Bradford spends his cash. You’re finished, you were my biggest threat and now you’re fucked !”

He heard Maria fire her blaster three times and Samuel was dead, with three steaming holes in the centre of his chest.

“I’d normally go for a head shot.” She said. “But we need his face for the pictures.”

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Roland was stressed, but he couldn't remember not being stressed, since Bradford had been his boss. He had the interns, but a lot of equipment was arriving and he had no idea what it was intended for. He logged it and put it into store, though the stores were filling up fast.

'Operation Janus.' It said on all the paperwork.

He'd called the military and had even managed to speak to someone at the president's office.

"Bradford knows all about it." The woman had told him.

A lot of the more sensitive deliveries were arriving in the early hours of the morning, when the streets were empty. Roland didn't have to be there, he just felt it was his duty. His sleep was suffering and a military truck had just arrived at three thirty in the morning.

"Six barrel for you." Said the driver. "They need to go in the flammables store."

"That's full, they can go in the garage." Said Roland.

"Ewwwww." Said the driver sucking his teeth.

Roland looked at the barrels and read the label on one.

'NP 1807 - Gelling agent, fire accelerant and oxidising agent.' The label said.

'Hazard level 1.'

Hazard level 1 for a few innocent looking barrels.

"They used to call it napalm, but it's been improved a lot." Said the driver.

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Bradford cut the plastic bonds; they'd ruin the story that Samuel had attacked them. He went into the main room and brought back a blood soaked blaster, laying it across Samuel's lap.

"It looks staged." Said Maria.

"Well it would be. He attacked us in the doorway, so we shot him and put him in the chair for the pictures."

Maria nodded and dug in her bag, bringing out a new memory cube.

"Does Amoe know about this Camila?"

"It's not like that, she has her own apartment in my block."

"But you pay for it?"

He didn't understand it himself, how the hell could he explain it to Maria.

"It's complicated." He said. "She gave us Jimmy's Shoes and Samuel's location."

Maria was looking serious.

"This location Bradford, where he wanted you to come."

"I trust her, she didn't know that."

Maria put the camera back on her shoulder, but she didn't turn it on.

"We arrived and he attacked us and died." She said. "No one ever mentioned Camila or Bobby Laszlo and I never killed an unarmed man."

He simply kissed her on the cheek and let her get on with the recording.

"Record of the death of subversive Samuel Marroquín." She began.

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Amoe regained consciousness twice on the journey and each time she was on the back seat of a fairly old electric car. Her hands were tied and she was gagged, but someone gave her another injection as soon as she showed any signs of being awake.

The second time she remained still and listened, picking up that the woman was from San Pablo by her accent and had a kid she was worried about.

".....I just hope my sister remembers to pick her up from school....."

The middle aged man had the twang of San Sebastian when he spoke but she never learned anything about him.

“..... Steady, keep just below the speed limit.....”

None of it told her much, but Amoe realised she'd screwed up their plans. They were obviously now making things up as they went along and that meant they'd make mistakes. They must have noticed her eyes were open and gave her another injection to make her sleep again.

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“Some bright spark might try to check our story.” Said Bradford. “And Samuel might have all sorts of information hidden somewhere.”

He pulled the adhesive strip off the back of the squib and stuck it above the kitchen door. It would destroy the entire structure, leaving nothing but a little charred rubble.

“How long did you set the timer for ?”

“Forty five minutes, we should be almost back at the pickup point by then.”

Maria nodded and called the VTOL, telling them the mission had been a success and to pick them up in about forty five minutes. They'd already transmitted the pictures of Samuel to Roland.

“It'll make his day.” Bradford had said. “And he'll send them on to all the right people.”

The right people would send them to the media of course and all of San Pablo would see them within twenty four hours. Samuel was dead; it was a good day to be one of the good guys, or on the side of the government, depending on how you looked at it.

The journey back was much quicker, they'd cleared the path on the way up and most of the route was downhill. The VTOL was on the ground, waiting for them as they arrived near the jetty. Bradford waved to the flight crew and then a bright white light lit up the night. Bradford had no idea what went into a squib, but it burned hot and bright.

“What the hell was that ?” Asked the VTOL pilot.

“I think an animal must have triggered a trap.” Said Bradford.

“We saw a lot of wires across the main path.” Added Maria.

“Then let's get you out of here.” Said the pilot. “I have orders to take you to see the president. It appears that he's quite impressed with you two.”

They strapped themselves in and enjoyed the feeling, as the powerful craft climbed above the clouds and headed towards San Pablo. They'd been in the air for about fifteen minutes, when Roland's name came up on Bradford's comms unit.

“I believe congratulations are in order.” Said Roland.

“Thank you, we're both pleased. Pity there's no champagne on board.”

Maria held up a cup of coffee she'd been given and grinned at him.

“I hope they're looking after you ?”

“Yep Roland, decent coffee and we get to keep this thing. Any problems your end ?”

He shouldn't have asked, he'd already picked up that slight edge in Roland's voice.

“I don't like to complain.” Said Roland. “But we've had a lot of equipment delivered for Operation Janus and I've no idea what that is.”

There was a pause, he was obviously expected to join the conversation with information about the operation, but he didn't know much more than Roland.

“What sort of equipment ?” He asked.

“Enough weapons to start a small war, bio-chemical weapons and to top it off..... several drums of what I can best describe as super napalm.”

“I'm sure we'll easily sort it all out..... er anything else ?”

“Mr Lee called for you, Amoe’s father.”

Damn ! Amoe he hadn’t called her for quite a while. The last thing he needed was her father chewing him out.

“Did he sound annoyed ?”

“No, Amoe isn’t answering her phone and he wondered if she was with you.”

He felt relieved, Amoe was always forgetting her phone, or dropping it, or destroying it in several other odd ways.

“I’ll call him when I land Roland, I’m sure it’s nothing to worry about.”

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