

A Hard Night's Day

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Shameless plug for my band of which you should you should all go out and buy my CD immediately.

CHAPTER 1:

Philip Salisman was in the centre but to one end of the dance floor, surrounded by computers and computer based equipment. Strapped across his shoulder was a portable strap-on keyboard instrument upon which he was playing a solo. The crowd were jumping and jiving to his computer generated beat. Most were tranced out on zonk, the latest designer drug, said to possess the properties of both Ecstasy and LSD but mostly harmless. Accidentally discovered, zonk could be made by mixing a combination of over the counter herbal medicines. Some countries had tried to ban its use. Which was usual when the younger generation discovered a new way to get high. Some countries had tried to ban the substances from which it was made. Others just banned the possession of the combination of chemicals. But here, in Iceland, zonk was perfectly legal.

Philip was from Nova Scotia in Canada. He had come up to Iceland for the annual Nordic summer solstice rave festival. People come from all round the world. Philip had played here before but this year, 2005, was special. It was the first year that his friends and collaborators from a band called 'All Electric Kitchen' were in Iceland. They were a feature attraction. Later, after their individual sets, it was planned that Philip and AEK would play together on the big stage in front of an estimated crowd of forty thousand people. But Philip had another reason for being in town. Being this far north at this time was ideal for him to pursue his other secret passion. A secret passion that would land him in more trouble than he could have imagined. And trouble that would prevent him from performing with all electric kitchen after all.

Philip finished his set. The crowd were into the groove and were disappointed but that was his lot for the evening. His roadies came out and helped him pack up and lock down his gear. In the booth over the dance floor a head appeared. It was the head of DJ Gronk who immediately started thrashing out beats on vinyl. The zonked out crowd began zonking again. Picking up where they had left off although the mood was different. Now they were in the complete trance like control of DJ Gronk.

The gear was packed up and stowed in the back of the truck. It was now in the roadies hands to put it into safe storage till it was required again tomorrow night. It was a pleasant change to have roadies to help with the gear, thought Philip. Especially in two days time for the big event. For now though, Philip was free. He walked to the bar taking pats on the back from the audience who had really gone off. They had gone off far more than he was use to with his usual home town Nova Scotia audiences. He sat on a bar stool and ordered Jack on the rocks. He was waiting for his friend from the All Electric Kitchen to arrive. He had something to show him. It was nearly 3 am. It wasn't advisable to drink and take zonk but one or maybe two wouldn't hurt thought Philip.

He spotted Psylem Lampoon from across the dance floor. Psylem was looking for Philip but had not spotted him yet. Philip instinctively waved his arm high above his head to attract

his attention. It had the desired effect and Psylem began to work his way around the dancing zonks. It also had the effect of attracting many of the zonks who were now waving back to Philip in a similar fashion in time with the music. He seemed to have accidentally invented a new zonk dance craze as within seconds the entire crowd of dancing zonks were back in their own reality. Waving their respective arms at each other and swaying in time with DJ Gronk's beats. "Gronks on Zonks" Thought Philip as his friend approached.

"How 'n' hell are ya doin'?" shouted Psylem over the noise.

"Fine, fine," said Philip. "It's a shame you missed the set. I really like playing to zonked out people." Psylem attempted to order a jelly bean from the Icelandic barman. The barman had no idea what he was talking about.

"It's Ouzo and you mix it with lemonade and raspberry cordial," shouted Psylem but the barman still didn't get it.

"Forget it," said Philip. "They don't do Jelly beans."

Psylem looked at him disappointedly. "But it's all I drink."

Philip sculled the rest of his Jack and said. "Don't worry about it. Lets get out of here I've got something to show you."

The two spaced out techno heads stood and prepared to leave. Philip slipped his jacket on and they were off.

"Where are we going?" asked Psylem.

"Back to my hotel room," said Philip.

Psylem was puzzled but shrugged his shoulders and tagged along regardless. Life was one big adventure to Psylem.

Iceland being so far north, although it was 3 am in the summer it was still quite light. So as the two men walked from Cafe Reykjavik where Philip had been playing, to the Borg Hotel where Philip had a room, the city was bathed in a permanent twilight. The land of the midnight sun they called it. They reached Philip's hotel and approached the desk clerk.

"Room 201 please," said Philip. The desk clerk retrieved the key and hand it to him.

"Thanks" he said. The young woman said something harsh and Viking-like in return. Philip didn't understand and just nodded as he moved off. As they headed for the elevators Psylem noticed two men in the lobby get up and saunter in their direction.

"Lets take the stairs" he said.

"What?" said Philip.

"I said. Take the stairs." Psylem said it under his breath and between gritted teeth in such a forceful manner that Philip couldn't help but comply. When they reached the first step Psylem said.

"Now run like hell." He grabbed Philip by the shoulder and pulled him forward. They both ran as fast as they could to the first floor. Psylem grabbed Philip's shoulder again and pulled him to one side. Instead of going round and up to the next floor, Psylem found a nook where they could duck into and wait.

"What are we doing here for?" said Philip part out of breath and part stunned.

"Just wait, you'll see," said Psylem. And as the two men caught their respective breaths, two black suited gentlemen came flying up the stairs after them. They didn't stop but kept going. Round and up the stairs to the next floor.

"Come on," said Psylem and he was off after them. Psylem expected Philip to be lagging behind. Still thinking he wouldn't have caught on. But half way to the top Philip was passing him. Not even looking back in any spirit of competition. Now Psylem was the surprised one.

They reached the second floor to see two black suited gentlemen scratching their heads and looking around. Philip walked straight up to one of them who had now seen him. The two men had the guiltiest looks Psylem had ever seen.

"You looking for me," said Philip in a very challenging manner.

"Arr. Umm. No we err were."

"Well, just fuck off then. Go on piss the fuck off," said Philip in a threatening manner that Psylem could not understand. He wouldn't have credited the normally reserved Philip Salisman with such forceful behaviour. Without another word the two black suited gentlemen indeed, fucked off. Back down the stair case from whence they came. If they had tails they would have been well tucked up between their respective legs.

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"What was that for?" Said Psylem, now following the strutting Philip to his hotel room. "Hell it's only the press. Probably looking for another anti zonk story. You know what they're like. No need to . . ."

But Salisman cut him off short. "I don't suppose you noticed that thirty eight packed in a shoulder holster underneath that coat did you?" said Philip.

Psylem stopped dead. "What?" he shouted.

"Keep your voice down. People are trying to sleep here," said Philip as he continued to his hotel room door.

"Look come inside I wanna show you something."

Psylem approached the door as Philip was unlocking it. He swung the door open but as Psylem was about to enter Philip put his hand up against the door frame barring his entrance.

"Wait." Philip felt for the light switch and turned it on. As he did so, Psylem stepped back from the door as the reality grabbed him. He'd seen this kind of behaviour in B-grade movies but he never thought he'd be living it. There was no-one in the room and nothing seemed disturbed. Philip looked around a bit and Psylem looked at Philip looking around a bit. Pennies were still dropping in Psylem's mind and the noise was disorienting him. Philip made a beeline for the bedroom. He scooped his lap-top up from the bed and brought it out into the living room. He placed it on the table and opened it up. It played a portion of the opening theme to 'Thunderbirds'.

He pointed to a small, tacky, portable CD player sitting on a cupboard at the other end of the table. "Press play on the CD player will you."

Psylem had to look around. He still wasn't oriented but in a few moments he located the play switch and pressed it. Not a second later it began to spew forth a guttural woman's voice singing some kind of modern blues with an electronic backing.

"I didn't know you were into Stalk," said Psylem instantly recognising the opening bars. "God I hate this crap. It's a total bastardization of electronic music. People like this should be banned from playing synthesizers."

Philip typed away on his computer a little more and without looking up said: "Yeah, I hate this crap. It's so much commercial hype."

Once again Psylem was confused. He felt like he was trying to pick up the threads of a movie he had started to watch from half way through. "So why are we listening to it then?"

"We're not," said Philip almost before Psylem had finished his own sentence. "Could you eject it please and give it to me. Be real careful with it."

Psylem pressed eject. The music stopped and a second later the lid of the CD player popped and the CD was available. He extracted it handling it only by the edges. He passed it to

Philip in such away that he could grab it and also not have to touch the bottom of the disk. As he passed it to him he thought how amazing it was that professional people always did things like that automatically. It was like it was pre-coded in their brains.

"Notice anything odd about this disk?" Said Philip as he showed the label to Psylem like he was endorsing a product.

"Err no?" said Psylem. "Looks like a piece of crap commercial CD to me."

Philip turned it over, and prompted Psylem again. The disk had a slight bronze tinge to it but nothing unusual. Then Philip placed it into the CD drive of his lap-top and it suddenly dawned on Psylem what was wrong.

"That's a re-write, isn't it?"

"Yup," said Philip nodding his head.

"Nice job on the label," said Psylem. "How 'n hell did you get it to look like that?"

"Ahh. Now that would be telling," said Philip as he punched in some information. "It's a special multi-mode CD I blew on the new re-write burners at work."

Now it was Psylem's turn to nod. "So what are you doing now?" said Psylem.

"The data is PGP encrypted with a one hundred and twenty eight word key. The key it self is too hard to remember so I've encoded that with a forty bit key. I've hidden them all in a file with two thousand bogus keys and which is encrypted with my phone number and in turn with an easy to remember secret number. There are two other people who know how to get into this file and it would take both of them to do it. Just a minute. As you can imagine, this takes a little bit of unlocking."

"Why all the secrecy?" asked Psylem but all he got in return was a.

"Shhhhhh." From Philip. He looked around the room whilst Philip did his work. He noticed that the CD cover for the bogus Stalk CD was sitting on the far side of the CD player. He picked it up and instinctively started to inspect it.

"Oh that's the real cover," said Philip. "I reluctantly bought a real copy of the CD and used it as a drink coaster." Then he took one final key stroke on his lap-top keyboard and said.

"Ok we're in."

He looked up at Psylem who was coming toward him to see what all the fuss was about. Philip continued: "Like I said there are only two other people who know how to access this stuff if they need to. They would only need to if I died. It's in a couple of relatively safe places on the Internet. Disguised as some of those Unix files that no-one knows what they do."

Psylem was no longer surprised by anything Philip said now.

"I've been following this stuff for the past five or six years. I was out at my brother's place in Newfoundland and I tell ya, I seen some weird shit, Psy."

Right then, a fuzzy picture of what looked like some kind of boat off the coast somewhere appeared on the lap-top screen. Philip looked back at the laptop and then back at Psylem.

"Back then I didn't have a digital camera and I wasn't sure what it was I was seeing."

"What's this s'pose to be?" laughed Psylem. "The fucking Loch Ness monster."

"Oh I'm sorry," said Philip. "I didn't have a digital camera but my thirty-five mil had a zoom lens on it." The next picture rolled down to reveal the weirdest looking submarine on the surface of some ocean or other. Perfectly sharp looming large on the screen.

"Now that's impressive," said Psylem. "That's gotta be one of the best renderings I've seen."

"Oh that's no computer generated picture," said Philip. "I took that with my camera. The one thing this particular file doesn't include is the location of the negatives. But suffice it to say

they're in a safe place."

"You're kidding," said Psylem, then he noticed the look of deadly seriousness on Philip's face. He said more slowly and detached.

"You're not kidding are you?"

Philip was shaking his head.

"That is the wickedest submarine I've ever seen," said Psylem "That's assuming that it actually is a submarine."

Then Philip turned to the computer again and flipped to the next image. A silver disk object in the distance. Fuzzy and not very clear.

"This was a couple of hours later." Another shot and the silver object was closer. Now it really looked like a flying saucer.

"What 'n fuck is that?" said Psylem.

"That my friend is a bonafide non-existent unidentified flying object. You know those things they say don't exist." There was another shot appearing on the screen. Even closer than before. Now Psylem could see the detail.

"It was pretty close by that stage," continued Philip as Psylem took in the implications. Still not knowing whether to believe his eyes.

"Now check this out," said Philip as he flipped to the next shot. A strange looking dark coloured object with wings in the distance. Then another shot of it closer, flying on the same flight path as the UFO. A dark green colour or so it seemed. It was the strangest looking air craft Psylem had seen. Like a cross between an army tank and NASA's aging space shuttle. Philip looked up for approval and then flipped some more photographs. First an even closer shot of sky one. Then a shot from the rear after it had passed over.

"These things were actually dog fighting right around me. It was incredible. But they didn't see me hiding in among the rocks. See here." He pointed to a sort of blurred rock formation in the foreground of this new shot. The next photo flipped up The UFO again in the distance. Then another shot with the UFO on the right of the photo and the black winged object on the left. Another shot as they both headed out to see again. Only this time there was a streak of light in the photo. Like a line drawn from the aircraft to the space craft. Finally another shot with the air craft in the distance and fiery debris falling from the sky.

"Damn. The good guys never win do they," said Psylem.

"Oh don't worry. Those were definitely the bad guys. The good guys wear dark green in this story."

He flipped back to the first photograph again and left it there.

"So after that I started to wonder what it was I'd just witnessed. I thought it was some kind of military experiment but it didn't make much sense. Only the Americans could have pulled off something like that and why would they be off the coast of Newfoundland. There's not even one of our military facilities within five hundred Ks of there. So I got curious and I started following things up. I had my comms test rig back in the truck so as soon as they were gone I tore off to see if I could hear anything."

"And did you?" said Psylem.

"Yup I heard plenty. But that didn't tell me anything exactly. It was all digitally encoded. Much like the encryption I've used here. But I recorded this stuff with the scanner and kept it till later. I messed with it but there wasn't much I could do with it."

Psylem butted in. "So how can you be sure what you recorded was from that. That... Whatever it was?"

"Actually it was a flying saucer being pursued by a secret military organization called SHADO. But I'll get to that.

"Now I didn't think too much more of it but I was sitting at work one day. It was a weekend as I recall. I was the only one rostered on so I was there alone. I was flipping through the comms channels. We some times do just to make sure everything is going OK. There was something bugging me. Every time I'd switch through a couple of bands it sent a shiver up my spine. I couldn't work out why but then I realized it was the same sounding signal I'd recorded that day."

"I thought you worked for a telephone company?" said Psylem.

"Yeah, I work in what could be best described as the telecommunications division. It's a fairly sizable up/down station for satellite comms. Everything goes through there."

Psylem understood to an extent. "So what kinda stuff?"

"Oh we get everything coming though there. Some of the stuff we don't have a clue what it is. I know that some of it is military but I always figured it was low security stuff. I mean I would have never thought they'd put top secret stuff multiplexed in with the telephones but it would seem not the case. Anyway I heard this sound and eventually it dawned on me that it was the sound I recorded. Now strictly speaking we're not supposed to listen in to anything. Not even the television broadcasts that pass through the station. But we have to because it's the only way we can make sure everything is going OK. We have around twenty thousand links in and out of the place. And that doesn't include the multiplexed telephones and the new vid phones. We're not sposed to have anything to do with this stuff but we've got all the equipment to hear it or display it or view it. We always watch the news feeds and the Internet and stuff." He laughed and raised his eyebrows. "The Porn channels... Why do you think I have time to send you all that E-mail and pirate software."

Psylem was smiling a very naughty smile. It was contagious.

"So anyway I started messing with this signal. Actually there were four such signals. They were all similar but after a while of looking at them on the scope I could see they were pretty different. The thing is that they were encrypted with a rotating key. But the silly buggers hadn't counted on anyone just sitting there and looking at them. it took me another three weekends. Nearly six weeks went by to decode it. I wasn't rostered on every weekend so I just had to wait till I got the opportunity. It was pretty scary stuff but I started to pull the signal apart. I could see where the key was rolling over so it wasn't hard to work out what was going on. There were actually two pairs of signals. One was the key and the other one was the data. Kind of like a synchronization signal. They probably thought that someone like me, with a scanner, would only be able to pick up the data signal and there's no way anyone could break that. But there, In the stat-link exchange, all the signals just happened to be together. Once I realized that, all I had to do was work out a base key, synchronize the two and Bob's yur auntie's live-in lover."

Philip paused for a moment very pleased with his explanation. More pleased though was that Psylem was the first person he had ever talked to about this that would understand the technicalities of his work.

"But even cracking the base key would have been hard. It's hard enough to crack a forty bit key," said Psylem. "You couldn't do that with a domestic computer." Philip was holding his finger up in the air in an exclamation gesture.

"But. But but, at work, guess what. We just happen to have a super computer. Now it's actually got quadruple redundancy. Which as you know means there are actually four super

computers working in parallel. They all do the same job but if one breaks down or makes a mistake, there are three others to back it up. So what I did was work out how I could take one of them off line for maintenance. To do that I had to first work out how to falsify the logs. That was tricky enough. But I gotta tell ya. It's so much fun rooting round in these super computers. They do most of the stuff for you it's incredible. In the end it was a simple matter of throwing the thing back on-line. Or on-line in test mode. Then the other three machines told it. You're crazy. And they dumped all the correct operating data back into it. Including the correct logs." Now Philip was becoming really pleased with his own ingenuity.

"God I never through of you as a hacker, Philip," said Psylem.

"I'm not," said Philip. "But it was something I just had to do." Philip was now almost giggling excitedly and becoming more animate than Psylem had ever known. Psylem was caught up in the story also by now.

"So anyway I crunched the base key and then with the signals synchronized I could extract the data. It was actually easier than I thought. So easy that it only took me half an hour or so to do every time I wanted to set it up."

"Yeah I was gonna ask about that," said Psylem. "You'd have to crunch the key every time otherwise once you broke comms you'd loose the key."

"Yeah that's right." Continued Philip. "Anyway, the hard part came demodulating the data. Working out what was audio and what was video and so forth. There weren't many clues to go on. It took me about three months but I eventually sorted it out. Ha! By that time I had got so good at it that I had a little program written for the prism, that's the super computer, which I inserted on a cart and it crunched the key and then bounced itself back on line. And all transparently. The program being wiped out the moment it got kicked over by the other machines."

Psylem was now concerned about something. "But what if it hadn't have re-booted or whatever it was spose to be doing?"

"Oh once it didn't. I nearly shat myself but I went through the procedure manually and it dumped back on line again. Man I was really packin' it."

Then Psylem had another query. "But didn't the other machines register an error every time the box was kicked back on line again? I mean don't they have error logs." Philip just laughed. To him this was the funniest part of all.

"You see the software we run on these boxes quite often gave different answers. There's only one error code. The same code is generated if a calculation error occurs or if the box just plain up and dies. What's worse is that the error only logs when the machine comes back. So in essence, As long as I rotated the box I picked on each time, the error logs just looked normal. Not that anyone ever bothered to read the damn things anyway. The only time they'd ever do that is if there was some catastrophic failure. It was a total scam."

Philip stopped to catch his breath. He put one hand poised over a key on his lap-top.

"So anyway it took me three months work to figure out how to decode everything but this says it all." He hit the entire key and the SHADO logo appeared on the screen.

"What's SHADO?" said Psylem.

"Supreme Headquarters Alien Defence Organization," said Philip. "Stupid acronym but quite cool don't you think?" He smiled at Psylem but he seemed as yet indifferent to it.

"Ok so once I cracked that nut I stared recording. Every chance I could I've got data and text and video. I've got shit loads of stuff you wouldn't believe. These guys have got bases on the moon for Christ sake."

"What? You're right I don't believe it," said Psylem. "But what about..." There was a knock at the door.

"We'll continue this later," said Philip. He quickly ejected the CD then a porno picture appeared on the lap-top. A particularly tasteless lesbian bondage photo, grainy and not very appealing. He handed the CD to Psylem and gestured towards the CD player. Psylem nodded and turned toward the player as Philip rose to answer the door. As he approached it he turned to Psylem and said: "It's alright I can hear laughing."

Now Psylem could hear it too as he closed the CD door of the CD player. It sounded like a man and several women. Psylem rased his eyebrows. Philip opened the door quickly still half expecting to find something more ominous out side but was relieved with what he saw.

"Philip, me ol' pal." Came the drunken voice. There in the doorway, bold as brass was his tour manager, his arm round two women either side of him. An almost empty bottle of vodka in one hand and a lit cigarette in the other. Behind him he could see one of the roadies similarly adorned. And what he thought were two more women standing behind them. "Philip Pal. I brought you a present."

CHAPTER 2:

"Whaaat!" shouted Commander Adrianna Pilgrim into her computer screen. "So how much does this guy actually know?"

A man in a black suit with another black suited gentleman standing behind him was on her screen. The man spoke. "He pegged us straight away. I know. I know. This kind of thing isn't meant to happen but the guy must be seriously onto us somehow."

Pilgrim thumped the desk. "Look. We can't just rub this guy out. He's got some kind of fail safe. If anything happens to him the information will get leaked."

"He could be bluffing," said the black suit.

Pilgrim turned her head to her chief of security, and mumbled. "Jesus H Christ. Where do we hire these idiots?"

She turned back to the black suit. "Look just keep an eye on him. Just so that we know where he is if we wanna talk to him. But don't cap him, you got that? I don't want anything to happen to him. In fact if anything at all looks like it's going to happen to him I want you to protect him. You got that dumb ass?"

She could see the black suit behind place his hand over his mouth laughing at the first black suit. "And what are you laughing at dick wad? Now get lost and do your jobs. And don't foul it up this time." Pilgrim thumped the keyboard so hard that the light weight colour LCD monitor screen bumped off her desk and onto the floor. Pilgrim was now smiling as she surveyed the wreckage. Frogleberg was smiling too. They both saw the funny side for the moment.

The six foot two Frogleberg moved in to try and straighten out the mess. He had a tough but good looking exterior, business like but with a heart of gold. He was ex Swedish Military intelligence. A very different breed of military intelligence. Ruthlessly efficient yet with an un-characteristically caring and practical nature for a security man. Just the kind of person SHADO now needed in this position.

"It looks a bit scratched but otherwise OK," he said as he placed it back on the Pilgrim's desk. There was still a comms window open on the screen and it seemed to be functioning.

"Mmm," she said as she sat back down behind her desk.

"Bjorn. I think it's time you got out there and find out what's going on." Frogleberg nodded. and headed for the door.

"Oh and Bjorn," continued Pilgrim. "I wanna know how this guy managed to tap our comms. I know he worked for some telephone company up there but I wanna know how our security could have been so compromised." Frogleberg once again turned to remove himself and get on with business.

"Oh and Bjorn. Find out how much dope he's got on us." Frogleberg stood there and waited. He was sure that the moment he tried to exit she was going to call him back again.

"Well what are you waiting for? Get going." She said and waved him off. They were both smiling realizing what she had done.

* * *

Frogleberg stopped at the communications bay in the control room. He spoke to one of the operatives there. "Do you know where Keith Ford is please?"

The operative, a young woman of just nineteen turned to her data display and said:"I'll see if I can find out for you sir." She punched up some information and zeroed in on his location. His security badge betraying him. "Colonel Ford is in the comms lab Sir." She said, smiling

slightly, pleased with her efficiency.

"That's what I like to see," said Frogleberg. "Service with a smile. Do you think you could send him a message, that I'll be round there to see him in a few minutes please?" He paused and patted her lightly on the shoulder. "Thanks" He said and moved off. Thinking to himself. "I shouldn't have done that. Patting her on the shoulder like that."

Even SHADO recognised sexual harassment in the work place. But where Frogleberg came from, people were slightly more affectionate towards one another than the stiff upper lip English attitude. On the other hand the young communications officer wouldn't have minded if he had frisked her and patted her down. Frogleberg was a catch and more likely to be harassed himself than the other way round.

He exited the control room and headed down the corridor to ballistics. He stepped inside but couldn't see anyone. He politely knocked on the office door and heard a voice say: "Come in."

He stepped through to see a man sitting at his desk with both feet up on it, a disassembled hand gun of some kind next to him and his face buried in a book of some kind. He looked up and as soon as he saw Frogleberg, immediately tried to smarten up his act. His feet dropped from the table and he straightened up in his chair. Lowering the book to his lap.

"Err sorry sir I was just trying to work out how you calibrate this err..."

Frogleberg was raising his hand. "It's alright. Not a problem. You carry on. What ever works best for you. I just have to go out in the field and I need to talk about some weapons with you. I'm not sure what would be appropriate." The man put his book on the table with the pages facing down so that it would hold itself open to the page he was reading. He stood up and said.

"Certainly sir. What sort of mission is it?"

"Well that's the funny thing," said Frogleberg. "I'm not entirely sure. The guy we're after would seem harmless to us but if something happens to him then he has some information about SHADO that may get a little publicity. So I'm not sure if this is more for his protection than mine."

The gunsmith was now rubbing his chin. "Where are you going, exactly?" he asked.

"Well initially Iceland but the guy lives in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Could be anywhere really. Plus we've got those two thugs on the ground up there at the moment."

The man paused for a moment to think. "What you mean? Petrov and Snypes?"

"Yup" Said Frogleberg. "None other."

The gunsmith made a long whistle. "So basically what you're saying is that on top of everything else, you're flying up there to protect him from them as well?"

"Yup. looks like it," said Frogleberg. "So I'm not entirely sure what would be appropriate?"

"Well there's appropriate and there's appropriate," said the gunsmith. "If you really want appropriate I'd suggest you're in the wrong department. You want medical. They might be able to perform a couple of lobotomy's for you."

Frogleberg laughed. "Ha Yeah. Unfortunately we occasionally need the services of a pair of thugs."

"So why don't you just recall them?" asked the gunsmith.

"Well I will do but unfortunately they're all we've got on the ground up there at the moment."

The gunsmith shook his head. "OK then how are you getting up there?"

"I'll take a Lear X and fly in as a business delegation. I'll take a couple of guys with me. First chance we get we'll send the idiot brothers home."

"Mmm Ok then," said the gunsmith. "I was going to suggest the new range of ceramics we've got but since I assume you won't have too much trouble with customs that way. Err if you're going as a tourist or something but it doesn't sound like you'll need 'em."

Frogleberg thought about it for a moment. "Well maybe a few might be a good idea. We'll hardly need any plasma weapons. I think we'll just need some appropriate hand guns. Perhaps one of those new tiny machine pistols? What are they called again?"

"S P Sixteen?" said the gunsmith.

"Yeah that's the one," said Frogleberg.

The gunsmith stepped past him and went out into the main ballistics room. He unlocked and opened one of the many weapons lockers to reveal rows of larger than normal hand guns mounted barrel first in foam rubber holsters. He placed his fingers round the grip of one and pulled it out. Frogleberg now approached from behind.

"This be your baby, sir," said the gunsmith and he handed it to Frogleberg. "That's your magazine there." He said pointing to the strange handle. "It's not actually loaded at the moment but it can hold fifty point two two calibre projectiles. It's pretty well balanced all things considered. Rapid fire at five rounds a second. Which is pretty respectable given the guns size. The only thing you have to watch is that you don't shoot off a clip, replace it and keep blowing off clips. Eventually the thing will cease up if you do that. Especially with the silencer attached. Probably half way through the second clip. You have to make a trade off on a gun this size, sir. Oh and that's only the sixteen round clip there by the way. The fifty round clips are down here and substantially larger."

Frogleberg inspected the SP16 all over. He got the feel for it and waved it about a little.

"Do you want me to load up a clip for you sir?"

"No that'll be alright. We'll take 'em. I want a box each of fifty round clips and sixteens." Frogleberg inspected the weapon some more and then turned his attention to the next matter.

"I want some assault rifles, perhaps some AKs? Maybe some standard Israelis too."

"You mean some Desert Eagles?" said the gunsmith.

Frogleberg nodded his head. "And we'll need some stun grenades. What have you got in the way of small decoys and smoke bombs? Got anything we can carry in our pockets and not be too bulky?"

A smile beamed across the gunsmith's face. "Check these out. Err if you don't mind me saying sir. This is in house. I designed them myself."

He unlocked another locker. and pulled out a box. "Check these little puppies out." He pulled out a small silver cigarette lighter. "Here's your percussion grenade. Small enough for you? And down here..." He handed the box to Frogleberg and bent down to retrieve a box from a lower shelf inside the locker. "Down here we have your smoke bombs." He pulled a small white plastic circular object. Like a thick plastic coin.

"Sorry we couldn't disguise that one yet but they're pretty small and effective. You just throw one on the ground and stomp on them. You just need to break them open. Between five and ten seconds later they ignite. ten or fifteen seconds after that you've got a room full of smoke. Err, depending on how big the room is of course."

Frogleberg tossed it round in his hand a little as if to get the feel of it's aerodynamics.

"Err please don't do it in here, sir," said the gunsmith in a tone that betrayed his concern. Frogleberg laughed.

"Only the fire crews get really pissed off when that happens."

Frogleberg could see from the gunsmith's expression that this had happened at least once before.

"Ok then we'll take a box of these suckers. Some of those grenades the rifles and the SPs. Better load up a kit of standard alien killers as well. Not the heavy stuff just the close quarters kinda thing. The Israelis. Oh and you'd better give me some conventional concealable twenty twos. If you could get 'em out onto loading bay two sometime in the next half hour it would be good."

The gunsmith nodded and pulled out a small organizer, upon which he started making notes. "Righty ho Sir. Loading bay two it is."

"Thanks," said Frogleberg and stepped towards the door. Where upon he turned back to the gunsmith. "Oh and umm. Do you may as well throw a couple of launchers in with that lot as well? Thanks."

"Toasters? Yeah, no problem. Would you like fries with that?" said the gunsmith now punching away again at his organizer.

Frogleberg laughed. "Yeah better throw in some fries. Enough for a few chip butties and some marshmallows could be useful too. You never can be too careful," said Frogleberg, who smiled and left the room.

* * *

Next he had an appointment with Colonel Ford in the comms lab. As he approached the communications lab he caught Keith Ford exiting.

"I was just coming to look for you," said Ford. "I heard you wanted to see me."

"Yeah that's right," said Frogleberg. "I need to borrow one of your boys to ride shotgun in the back of an air plane."

"Going on a field trip are we?" said Ford in an unusually excited manner.

"Uh yes, we are," said Frogleberg, slightly confused about Ford's slight excitement.

Ford turned and immediately back to the door of the communications lab.

"I got just the man. And I've got something else we've been dying to try out." Ford rushed back into the comms lab and shouted. "Anthony, Where 'n' hell are you. We've got a gig for you." At the far end of the communications laboratory, a head raised up from behind the glass wall of an office. The head of Anthony Appleyard. He was sitting at a desk facing out, soldering iron in hand and wearing a headband with a pair of magnifying glasses attached to it. He placed the soldering iron back in its holder and slowly rose from his seat, not entirely sure that he was wanted or not. His expression clearly stating. "Do you want me?" He stepped from the office where he was working and out into the main room. He met Ford and Frogleberg half way.

"Colonel Frogleberg, This is Captain Anthony Appleyard. He's a whiz with electronics and communications. We've been working on a little package that is ready for a field trial and this is a perfect opportunity." Appleyard extended his hand and shook hands with Frogleberg.

"Yes, I've seen you around, Anthony," said Frogleberg. "Usually behind something with bits and pieces hanging out of it up in the command centre but I've seen you before."

Appleyard just smiled.

"Anthony, you're going on a field trip," said Ford. "Tell Colonel Frogleberg about the G pack."

Appleyard smiled and became animate. He walked away from Frogleberg and Ford and expected them to follow him. Looking over his shoulder to see that they were as he reached a

bench with a high back on it. As Frogleberg rounded the back of the bench he could see that sitting on it was a control panel. It looked like an elongated or stretched lap-top. About the same width as four lap-tops with three large LCD screens. There were buttons and joy sticks where the keyboard should have been and sitting next to it was a computer keyboard and another LCD monitor. It was inanimate and dark. Appleyard reached down to a tower box underneath the bench. A housing for some electronics. He hit a button on the front of it and the whole set up sprang to life. Frogleberg noticed a number of other computer like boxes also under the bench.

"This is only set up as a test rig," said Appleyard. "But we have two prototype systems ready to go out into the field. Normally we'd have a large transceiver box as well but in here we just use the test rig."

Frogleberg was still in the dark. He let Appleyard continue in the hope that he could pick up the thread. Appleyard stepped to another bench behind the bench holding up the consols. He pulled down a silver flight case from above it and placed it on that bench. He opened the flight case and pulled out some instruments. He handed Frogleberg a small box with a belt clip. As Frogleberg accepted it in his hand he noticed it was a small portable CD player. He was puzzled but saw that Ford was smiling at the proceedings so He just accepted the toy. Without speaking, Appleyard gestured that he should strap it on. Then he pulled out what looked to be a small suppository microphone. Then another and yet another. Each one was a small black cylinder about four centimetres long and one centimetre in diameter. There was a small alligator clip designed to fit onto one's clothing. Handing them to Frogleberg he said: "Here. Clip these on somewhere. One on the front. One on the back of you and put the last one almost any place you want." Finally Appleyard pulled out a pair of sun-glasses.

"We have a normal framed version of these as well and we could make a prescription lens if need be. But these one's are sunnies." He offered them to Frogleberg and waited till he had clipped the last cylinder on and could accept it.

"There are a few other bits and pieces but this is the main stuff."

Frogleberg placed the sunglasses on his face. The room suddenly became darker.

"Now what?" said Frogleberg with a slightly excited smile as the tension mounted.

"Oh I almost forgot," said Appleyard. "Stick this fish in your ear." He retrieved a flesh tone coloured ear plug from the flight case.

"Now, go for a walk somewhere," said Appleyard.

"What?" said Frogleberg in surprise.

"I mean go for a walk around the base for a bit."

Ford nodded with a knowing smile.

Frogleberg shrugged his shoulders and strode off, leaving the communications lab and off down one of the corridors. He heard a slight tweak sound in his ear. Then a bleep. He was approaching a tee junction when a voice in his ear said: "Stop. We don't know what's round that corner."

Frogleberg was slightly surprised but he complied.

"Now take that clip off your sleeve where you've got it clipped and poke the end of it round the corner. Don't let anyone on the other side see it."

Frogleberg was getting the idea. He complied and poked the end of it round the corner, holding it against the wall.

"Ok there's a couple of women up ahead. Guards or technicians. I can't tell which. Hold on. Hold it very still and I'll do a closer scan. Oh! Would you like to see for yourself?"

Suddenly there was a picture before Frogleberg's eyes. A colour television screen off in the distance. The view was impossible but he guessed it was somehow projected inside his glasses. Then next to that a transparent data display appeared. Once Frogleberg focused he could see that it was a picture of the two female SHADO operatives. The picture zoomed in and he could see that they were indeed guards. They were wearing weapon holsters. The picture zoomed again to a two-shot of their faces as they talked.

"Let me see if I can scan what they're saying," came Appleyard's voice in the ear piece.

There was a screech followed by a tweak sound in Frogleberg's ear. He jumped and scuffled. As he moved the clip against the wall where he was holding it, there were more noises in his ear. The picture on his personal display showed some part of the corridor's structure.

"No No no. Hold it still no matter what," came the voice in his ear again.

"I am holding it still," said Frogleberg softly. The picture zoomed out and in again onto the guard's faces. Now he could hear them talking. One was looking in his direction.

"Did you hear something?" she said.

The other one turned to look. "I'm not sure" Then they both noticed the strange shadow faintly on the floor from Frogleberg's form.

"There's someone there," said the first guard and she began to move in his direction.

"They've clocked you," said Appleyard. "Run and I'll try and guide you." Frogleberg took off down the corridor trying to make sense of the images in front of his eyes.

"Take the next left," said the voice in his ear. He took the next left and ran down the empty corridor. He ran past a door.

"Back up," said the voice. "What's in that door?" Frogleberg didn't know but he wasted no time in finding out. He made a bee line for it.

"Put the telemetry clip somewhere so I can monitor the corridor," said the voice as Frogleberg opened the door. He looked for somewhere. There wasn't much cover. Then he saw the lock of the door. There was just enough surface to clip it on and just enough time to slip inside. It was dark but suddenly Frogleberg could see down the corridor.

His head felt like it was being twisted off his neck as the camera rotated upside down, then twisted so it could see back in the opposite direction. Two guards appeared at the other end of the corridor and they split up. One came down the corridor towards the door. The other ran on. Frogleberg saw the guard run past. The camera flipped over again just in time to see her back track with her gun drawn. Her hand loomed large as it reached for the door handle. Seemingly not to notice the clip. The door opened suddenly in front of Frogleberg and he was faced with a very efficient guard.

"Probably ready to blow my head off" thought Frogleberg.

"It's me," he said. "We were just testing you."

But she apparently couldn't see him properly. "Step out or I'll blow your head off," came the officious voice.

"I was right," said Frogleberg as he stepped forward into the light. The guard lowered her weapon and sighed.

"I hope this works better than this out in the field," said Frogleberg apparently into thin air. Then she saw him turn and pick the clip back off the door lock. He turned to the guard now and said.

"Thanks. You've been most helpful." The guard didn't have a clue what he was talking about but she knew better than to argue with her superiors. As she walked to the end of the

corridor with him she realized he must have been talking to someone else on a radio link of some kind.

"How did you manage to listen in like that? It wasn't a conventional microphone was it?"

"No it wasn't," said Appleyard. "It's an ultrasonic holographic microphone. It picks up high frequency interference patterns and down converts them into audio. It uses a tiny emitter array which is focused along the same line as the camera. The beauty of ultrasonics is that you can make the sensors absolutely tiny."

Frogleberg butted in. "Ok Ok I get the idea. It's a cool device right." He laughed and returned to the Comms Lab.

CHAPTER 3:

There was a mess in Philip's hotel room. Various empty bottles of alcoholic substances, packets of crisps and peanuts, CDs, dead flowers and a racoon hat. Philip wondered where the hat had come from. His head hurt from too much booze. An unhealthy thing to do whilst still having zonk in once's system. A situation not helped much by various bodies strewn around the room. Snoring and grunting in their sleep.

"I'm really disappointed in you, Philip," came a female voice from within his bedroom. "Come on. she'll never know."

As much as Philip may have wanted to sleep with this woman, and she was incredibly beautiful, he couldn't help thinking of his wife and daughter back home. He had often wondered what he would do in this situation on the road. But now between thoughts of his family, the zonk, the booze and a desire not to catch something nasty off a woman he'd only met a few hours before, he had no desire to get laid. He'd encountered a few groupies in his time but never anyone as desperate to screw him as this rather crazy, out of her skull, woman was. For some reason the roadie and his two female companions had migrated from the couch too the floor. Philip flopped onto it and within seconds he was asleep.

* * *

He woke up with a jolt. There was something on him. It was warm. What ever it was it had its arm round him and was breathing on his chest. He opened one eye and immediately closed it again. He didn't want to see any more. It was the woman from his bedroom. The sixth woman had gone back to Psylem's hotel with him. This meant that Philip only had to deal with one of the two unspoken for women. But it also meant there was no one left to help him defend his virtues. He opened his eye again, then another eye and he looked round. He couldn't see anyone else. Not a roadie. Not a manager. None of the girls they had been screwing. Just himself and this nameless woman. He would have shifted her from him immediately but she was warm and the room was cold. Eventually the urge to urinate built up inside him. He would have to shift her and get cold. She moaned.

"Sorry but I need to take a piss." He pushed her from him. Neither gently nor violently. Just indifferently. She said nothing as he slowly jacked himself up from the couch and headed for the toilet. As he fumbled at the fly in his boxer shorts he heard music emanating from the CD player. It was the Stalk CD. No-one had touched it all morning and yet this woman chose now to play it.

"I wouldn't have picked you as a Stalk man," she said upon his return.

"Do you like Stalk?" said Philip.

"Well I wouldn't say I was a big fan but they're alright. I'm more into the music you make. I've got all of your CDs you know."

"Yeah I know. You told me last night." He paused. "About fifty times."

"Tell me something," said the woman in her sweetest voice. "Why is it that you're a successful musician and yet you still work for a phone company?"

"We gotta eat," he said as he looked for his jeans. "I mean I make some money out of the music. It's enough to buy the gear and maintain my little studio but it's not going to last for ever." He found his jeans in the bedroom where they had been cajoled from him a few hours ago.

"So do you take time of work to come up here and play or something?" She had followed him into the bedroom and was watching him dress.

"What is your name by the way?" asked Philip by way of reply.

"My name is. Well you couldn't pronounce my name so just call me Jenny."

"Well, Jenny. I get five weeks holiday a year. I take two with the family and the other three I spread out for doing gigs. But I'm pretty flexible. Are you coming to the gig tomorrow Jenny?"

"I wouldn't miss it," she said. "What with you and AEK playing. It's gonna be a great show. I can hardly wait. I just wish I could have fucked you." Philip paused doing up his shoe lace. He straightened up to look at her.

"Right now Jenny. I'm fucked enough for both of us." It was the first time she'd seen him cast a warm smile in her direction all morning.

* * *

Jenny and Philip left the lobby of the hotel together though they had planned to leave in separate directions once they hit the street. They had planned to meet up later. Not because Philip felt any more attracted to her but rather, because he felt sorry for her. Plus it stroked his ego. He had met the odd groupie before but somehow Jenny was different. He felt it just might make her day if she could hang out with him. And that was OK. For now though, he had to get some serious smoodging in. Putting in an appearance at a record shop and a radio interview.

As the pair left the lobby of the Borg hotel, Jenny turned right and Philip turned left. Philip took ten paces and realized he was going in the wrong direction. Perhaps he needed a guide after all. He turned back in Jenny's direction and as he passed the hotel entrance again, he noticed two black suited gentlemen dart back but not totally out of sight. He smiled. He thought about saying hello to them but decided he couldn't be bothered. He wanted to catch up with Jenny before she got out of range. He picked up and started running. A few moments later he caught up.

"Hello again," he said touching her on the shoulder. She had already sensed his return.

"Er, hi," she said slightly surprised to see him by her side so soon. Philip was now slightly looking back at her and happened to glance further back down the street and notice the black suits looking obviously after him. He did his best to pretend they weren't there.

"Listen. I'd like to hire a guide to Reykjavik. Do you know anyone?" He smiled and raised his eyebrows. "I can't afford to pay them too much but I need someone who can show me around and stuff."

She looked at him and smiled. "I might. I might know just the person. In fact I know a person who would do that for the price of dinner." She raised her eyebrows at him and there was no doubt she meant herself.

"Err there's one small problem," said Philip. "Let me put something to you hypothetically. Suppose you were being followed?"

"Yeaass," she said and began to look round.

"No no. Don't look back. Just keep walking."

Jenny complied.

"Suppose you were being followed by a couple of ugly looking morons in black suits and you wanted to lose them. Both you and the gorillas are on foot and you had places to go and things to do. So you wanted to lose them fast. How would you go about that in Reykjavik?"

She rubbed her chin for a moment as they walked along. "Mmmm. Could be tricky. Just keep walking up here for a bit."

They kept walking in silence. They seemed to walk for ages. Philip hoped the black suits were not gaining on them but he dare not look round. Jenny ran her hand down his arm till it

reached his hand then picked it up and held it. She smiled at him but against his better judgement he held onto her's. He was looking the other way when suddenly he felt Jenny tug at his arm. He couldn't resist the force and soon found himself running after her across the street, into a clothing boutique where upon they slowed down as if they were browsing.

"What are we doing here?" he said, slightly confused. If she had a plan he was not a party to it.

"Trust me," she said and with that she dragged him to the back of the shop. They rounded a corner by some lingerie on pegs and he noticed light streaming in from a rear entrance to the store. she held up a pair of lace bikini pants to show him.

"I think you'd look great in a pair of these," she said. She let them flop back on the rack. Then once again her grip tightened around his hand and they were through the rear door. Running down an alley way. They came to the entrance to a shopping mall and she guided him into it. there was a passport photo machine on the corner and she pushed him into it. He crashed on the wooden seat out of breath. She was giggling and it was contagious. She drew the curtains and it became dark inside. They had not put any money in the machine so it had not sprung to life. She opened a slit in the curtains so that she could see. Philip lent over her so that he too could see. A few moments later he saw the two black suits run past the entry to the mall. Then one of the black suits walked back into the mall. He took ten or so paces into it and looked straight past them hiding in the photo booth. he turned and ran back to his partner who was now waiting at the entrance. They ran off in the direction they were originally heading and disappeared.

* * *

"Nice work," said Philip. Jenny said nothing as she threw her arms around him and kissed him. First lightly and then passionately. She embraced him. More like a bear hug than an embrace. At first Philip didn't put up any resistance and Jenny thought she had finally found a chink in his armour. At first Philip thought it was something of a reward and then for a moment he thought it was very nice and lost himself. Then his sensibility returned and he pressed himself away from her. Still holding each other, Philip looked at her. What he could see of her in the dark. Then he rose slightly which Jenny recognised as the cue to exit the booth. They walked in silence to the mall entrance and looked in the direction that the black suits had taken off in. Then without another word walked off. Back in the direction from whence they came. They didn't say another word until they knew they were well clear of the black suits.

"So where is it you need to go?" said Jenny.

CHAPTER 4:

Onboard the SHADO owned Lear X business jet were four people as well as the pilot and co-pilot. Bjorn Frogleberg, Anthony Appleyard and two field operatives. The Russian born Vladimir Redenkov and an African American called George Jackson. Jackson had a pair of sun-glasses on and seemed to be chasing a non-existent fly as he watched the picture that Appleyard was displaying for him. The tiny video projectors in his glasses, showing him a view from one of the clips. Appleyard was sitting at his consoles hastily set up near the rear of the cabin. Some of his gear strewn across some of the otherwise empty seats. There were a few flight cases containing other miscellaneous gear. The weapons and ammunition stowed behind some secret panelling where it would be hard to find unless someone knew it was there.

"So you sure you can get this thing set up in time?" said Redenkov to Appleyard. "You gotta get your aerals up somehow."

"Yeah it could take a couple of hours but with any luck it'll just look like I'm doing routine maintenance on the plane," answered Appleyard. "In any case you've really got to look at this as just a field trial. This system has never been tested."

Jackson removed the glasses and reoriented his vision.

"Man that'll take some gettin' use to but it's cool," he said. "Say, what about customs. How are we supposed to deal with that?"

Frogleberg took over. "With any luck it won't be too difficult. They're not interested in the plane. Only in those who come off it. But I'm told that once you've been cleared by customs off a private jet they don't really care too much after that. So it should be a simple matter of parking, going though the routine and we can come back later for the weapons."

As he was speaking he reached to the side of him for a silver brief case. He put it on his lap and opened it. From within, he retrieved three PDA computer message pads packed in the foam. There were eight in the brief case altogether. A standard issue field information pack.

Realizing what Frogleberg was doing, Appleyard stepped forward to take them from him. As he did he said: "We don't have personal remote controls for this system yet so you'll have to rely on the standard information systems. I'll upload all the data for you now. But in the future we hope to have all this linked in as well. I will be able to update your data cells from here remotely. For now though we'll just have to do it the old fashioned way." He took the PDAs back to one of the consols and placed them on it whilst he retrieved a cable from one of his flight cases. He plugged one end of the cable into one of the PDAs and the other into one of the consoles. He proceeded to upload the data to the first PDA.

"What's our ETA?" asked Redenkov

"We'll be another four hours or there about," said Appleyard as he busied himself with the next PDA. "We should be there about ten PM Reykjavik time."

CHAPTER 5:

Jenny and Philip had run all over town that day and now they were eating a meal at the Perlan. One of the, if not the, best restaurant in Reykjavik. They had had a lot of fun together and Philip had found her to be immensely useful, well beyond his expectations. They had taken lunch in a cafe which was more Philip's style but that evening he felt he owed her more. He had asked her what the worst restaurant in town was and she told him straight away. Then he asked her what the best restaurant was and she had to think about it. She had never been to any of them. She said she wasn't dressed for anything fancy but Philip insisted. He called Psylem on his mobile phone and arranged to have dinner with him at a fancy restaurant which Psylem had chosen. Philip could never work out how Psylem could work these things out when he'd only been in the place a few days.

Philip couldn't even pronounce the names of most of the people he had met that day. But Jenny said she knew where the Perlan was and that it meant 'pearl'. That was good enough for Philip. Jenny had insisted she change and caught a cab home to do so. Meeting Philip back at his hotel with enough time to take a leisurely stroll up to the restaurant by seven PM. If Philip found it hard to resist her charms before, what she was wearing now would seriously test his resolve. A very short black evening dress with a short jacket and small matching handbag. He wondered if she was cold but he thought with a body as hot as that, she must be toasted all the way through.

So the three of them were enjoying a wonderful meal in a wonderful setting with wonderful company. The Perlan was a rotating restaurant built abreast of what were once water towers. Rotating 360 degrees every 60 minutes and offering spectacular views of Reykjavik. Psylem was uncharacteristically alone.

"Where's that woman you were with last night?" asked Philip of Psylem.

"Oh you mean Bee Jerka or however you say it."

Jenny put her hand over her mouth and sniggered.

"Nar she was weird. She talked about heaps of stuff and then suddenly wanted to leave. She was your friend, wasn't she Jenny?"

Jenny almost spat out her soup. "No. Well Yeah sort of. I mean I know her but we aren't really friends or anything. We just happen to be in the night club and got caught up with Albert and that other guy. I just wanted to meet Philip." She looked at Philip with loving eyes across the table.

"Who's been a naughty boy then? Hey Philip," said Psylem with a knowing grin.

"Now look it's not like that Ok. I just hired her as a guide."

"A guide hey? Is that what they're calling it these days?" He raised his eyebrows and widened his grin from the knowing to the down right cheesy.

"Don't worry Phil ma' boy. Your secret's safe with me." He winked at Jenny.

"Look we didn't do anything Ok so just shut up about it," stressed Philip after a failed attempt to be diplomatic.

"What about in the photo-booth Philip?" said Jenny with a tell-tale smile.

Psylem let out a laugh uncontrollably. "You did it in a photo-booth? You sly ol' bugger. Why didn't you use your hotel room like everyone else?"

Philip buried his face in his hands. Jenny and Psylem were now laughing at him and Philip felt guilty at even having kissed her. He resolved not to let it get even close again but he realized he may have come too far already.

CHAPTER 6:

Twenty past nine Reykjavik time. The Lear X business jet touched down at Reykjavik airport. It taxied to the prearranged private tie down site and shut down. By quarter to ten, the Icelandic customs officials had done their work, clocking the team as some record producers talent scouting for a major record company. When customs asked what was aboard the plane they said it was a video edit suite and it would not be leaving the aircraft. That part at least was true. The fact that they didn't have any video cameras with them was lost on the customs officials who took in only cursory details to make sure there were no drugs involved. There were none and they were happy.

The team returned to the plane and by ten pm they were ready to roll. Frogberg had sent Jackson to the airport lounge to find all the local publications that might give them a clue as to how to connect with Philip Salisman's movements. Redenkov had headphones on and was sweeping the local radio stations for any related information. Meanwhile, Appleyard made busy rigging the plane with the special aerial and receiving equipment necessary for long range comms with the personal telemetry arrays. Frogberg himself was busy sorting out the equipment they would take on their first sortie into town, glasses, clips, and telemetry packs. He checked that all the batteries were charged and that they had a spare set each. He decided that there was no need to take hand weapons with them on their first outing but he sorted out one cigarette lighter grenade and 3 decoy smoke bombs each. Small and easy to conceal. Last on the list were three GSM digital mobile phones. Specially adapted with some advanced features. These wouldn't be necessary but for the fact that it would take Appleyard upward of two more hours to retrofit the communications equipment to the Lear X. If nothing else they would provide good cover so that passers by wouldn't think they were talking to themselves.

It was nearing eleven PM. The only reference Redenkov tuned in on was a reference to Salisman playing at the main festival gig tomorrow night along with a dozen other head line acts. One of the street magazines was more forth coming Philip Salisman would be doing a gig at a night club called Loftleidir, starting at midnight. They set out just after eleven and walked to the taxi rank to connect with a cab.

"I can't believe those two were too stupid to loose the trail like that," said Jackson. "How long did it take us to work it out? Ten minutes, once we got the papers."

"How did we come to get two morons like that anyway?" said Redenkov.

"It's a long story. remind me to tell you some time," said Frogberg. "As soon as we get on trail we'll tell Petrov and Snypes to piss off back to headquarters and report for a lobotomy."

They were laughing as they rounded the corner of the Leifstod terminal building and found the taxi rank. The taxi they had ordered had not yet arrived. There were no scheduled flights at this time and with all the people in town that week, cabs were a little thin on the ground. They had changed their clothes to blend in, looking like Hyped dudes. Just the kind of people you'd expect to be record producers out on the town and looking for new acts. Frogberg was looking at his watch for the tenth time when he noticed a Mercedes Benz winding its way through the access road toward the terminal building. Its illuminated taxi sign becoming obvious as the cab drew near.

"Frogberg?" shouted the taxi driver at them.

"Yeah that's us" shouted Frogberg back at him. They jumped aboard as quickly as they could.

"The Loftleidir club please," said Frogleberg. The driver nodded and they were off. It would take them nearly 40 minutes to make the journey from Keflavik to the heart of Reykjavik.

CHAPTER 7:

Philip and his roadies were rolling his gear onto the stage platform when the SHADO team arrived. Jenny was sitting at the bar but they neither noticed her nor she them. They blended in.

"Mingle." Frogleberg had said upon their arrival. In spite of this, the three men headed straight for the bar together. It seemed like the natural thing to do. They ordered their drinks and sat on three available bar stools. Staring aimlessly into the crowd hoping they didn't look too conspicuous. The crowd it self was doing as most crowds do. Couples and groups. Friends and lovers. A DJ was spinning dance tracks and a few people were on the dance-floor. Most likely zonked out. Jackson was beginning to get into the scene. For a moment he forgot who he was and why he was there. He pulled himself back into line when he noticed Redenkov staring at him quizzically.

"No that's alright," shouted Frogleberg over the noise. "Go for it. Get into to it and blend in. But don't forget why we're here." Redenkov was the one who was feeling out of place. He didn't know how to get into it. This wasn't his scene. But Jackson did. He downed his Beam, slammed the glass down on the bar and was off to join the dancing crowd on the dance floor.

"Go on," gestured Frogleberg to Redenkov, but if that was an order, it was one order that Redenkov was not trained to follow.

Jackson was still out on the dance floor. Redenkov and Frogleberg had another drink as it approached midnight. The last dance track ended and someone moved onto the stage. It was not Philip. It was a male with a thick Icelandic accent.

"Ladies and Gentlemen. Please put your hands together for Philip Salisman."

The light's dimmed and the crowd seethed toward the stage and the dance floor. Suddenly there seemed to be twice as many people in the room. Jackson was caught up in the crush but didn't mind. He was up front to see Salisman. He'd had heard his music and he was quite popular in the underground techno movement but Jackson had never seen him live. This was an opportunity to enjoy the gig and do his job at the same time. And maybe if the opportunity arose he would be able to talk to him about his music. Jackson wasn't especially a fan of Salisman's but he was a fan of the underground techno movement as a whole. And Salisman was held in high regard.

Jackson forgot his job for a moment as the first electronic tones struck out. A base line with a filter sweep sequence running over the top. From somewhere in the lighting rig above, a pair of lasers struck out in time with the music. The only light to penetrate the darkened night club. Smoke was rising from behind the artist and the laser was cutting patterns through it. Some flashing strobes and now Jackson could see Philip swaying with the rhythm. Jackson was caught up with the crowd as they cheered. Suddenly he remembered why he was there and calmed down somewhat. He symbolically looked around to see if his boss was looking.

His boss, on the other hand was still sitting at the bar, engaged in a shouting match with two women. Women who couldn't understand why he and Redenkov were still sitting at the bar.

"You should be out there," said the first shouting woman whilst her partner nodded her head. Both were clearly interested in the pair and were hoping they could encourage them to join them on the dance floor. They had been eying up the SHADO men for some time before they finally decided to do something about it. By which time Philip's show was about to begin. Frogleberg lent in towards Redenkov and shouted. "What is it with these Icelandic women?"

"What?" shouted Redenkov back just making himself audible above the quadrasonic sound system.

"I said. What is it with these Icelandic women?" repeated Frogleberg.

Redenkov just smiled. There was a pause in the dialogue as Frogleberg and Redenkov pretended to be into the music but the women could see they were staring off into space. One of the shouting woman moved in and shouted at her friend.

"These guys need something to get them into it," her friend nodded. They moved to the bar at once side of the pair and ordered another drink each. The shouting woman an alcoholic cola and the not-so shouting woman a Comfort and Coke. They paid for their drinks and stood in front of the two SHADO men. They took a sip of their respective drinks and held them out to the two men. Frogleberg and Redenkov both had obvious expressions of not understanding why they were being offered their drinks.

"It's an old Icelandic tradition," said the Shouting Woman. "We offer you our drinks and you offer us yours. You wouldn't want to break the tradition now would you?"

Frogleberg looked at Redenkov and shrugged his shoulders. He picked up his own drink from the bar and gestured to Redenkov to do the same. With an out stretched arm and Redenkov more reluctantly, the pair offered the girls their half empty glasses. The girls accepted and offered their almost full glasses in return. The girls downed the drinks offered them and raised their eyebrows to the men in a gesture to do the same. They complied. Frogleberg first followed by Redenkov after taking his cue from his boss. The girls put their glasses on the bar behind the men. Becoming very close as they did so. They took the now empty glasses from the men and also placed them back on the bar. Quickly they grabbed the men's hands and dragged them to their feet.

"Come on," shouted the shouting woman. "Get up where it sounds good."

Frogleberg and Redenkov stood holding hands with the women through the first song which lasted about 15 minutes. When it ended, the crowd stopped its gyrating and melded into applause. Without too much of a break, Philip launched into his second piece. A slightly slower number with some more intricate syncopations. The crowd cheered as they picked up the movement again. A song called 'feather head' which everyone seemed to instantly recognise.

Frogleberg suddenly noticed how nice the lighting display was. The patterns on the rear projection screens were some how more interesting than he had noticed before. He looked across at Redenkov. He was holding the other woman's hand and staring straight at the stage unmoved. Frogleberg noticed his own woman's hand and how nice it felt. He looked at her in the eyes and she gave him a smile. The smile must have been contagious because he smiled back. Frogleberg's girl saw Redenkov's girl leading him off amongst the crowd. She decided to try the same. She tugged gently at Frogleberg's hand and somewhat to her surprise, Frogleberg complied. Not only did he comply but he was beginning to get into the spirit of the rave. Though tentative, he was beginning to sway with the music. The woman was pleased. This guy might turn out to be worth it after all. And he seemed a hell of a lot more interesting than the other guys she had met.

By the end of the third song at around 12:35 am, Frogleberg was right into it. The sound, the people and the colour. He had never met this woman before but he felt he had known her all his life. He was dancing with her and although she thought he was a bit weird, the dancing was becoming more and more intimate. In a movement during a relatively slow number the woman ran her hand down and then back up his thigh. It was like electricity to him. Wonderful

electricity that left a trail of brightly colour sparks along his leg in slow motion. She moved in close with one hand around his waste. He couldn't contain himself and moved one of his own hands on to her behind. It felt like nothing he had felt before. Like a sponge cake he could almost taste. And then she kissed him. A sweeter kiss he had never experienced. She kissed him longer this time and he closed his eyes for a moment. And in that moment he felt he was both on a different planet and that its inhabitants were cheering him on.

Also in that moment Jackson happened to be passing him by in the crowd. At first Jackson didn't recognise his boss. Just another couple taken by the musical experience. Then he recognised the clothes. They were the same clothes that they had changed into in the aircraft. Still it didn't click. Still Jackson thought it a coincidence. But as the lovers came up for air and their lips parted company. Jackson could see the face of someone he knew.

Jackson laughed. Not that anyone could hear him over the music but he laughed. He nudged his boss slightly and gave him the "sly old dog" look. But the look he received in return was not what he expected. He expected his boss to raise his eyebrows. He expected his boss to suddenly snap back into character. He expected his boss to wave him off in a gesture that warned him to ignore it. Anything except the look he got. A blank look that said. "Do I know you?" And a strange smile. It was like he wasn't looking at his boss at all. Jackson couldn't believe what he was seeing. He couldn't take his eyes off Frogleberg and bumped into someone else in the crowd. Jackson waved his hand at Frogleberg and noticed the woman's expression. An expression that read: "Hands off. You can't have him. He's mine."

Jackson was even more astonished. He looked back at Frogleberg who seemed to recognise him for a second than he turned back to his girl. Jackson still didn't know what was happening but he figured he'd better find Redenkov. The straight logical Russian would know what to do.

Redenkov wasn't hard to find. Standing with his own girl in the middle of the crowd, Staring straight at the stage and the light show. Seemingly zombified. The girl was hugging him from one side so that she too could see the stage. He had his arm around her and she was running her hand over his butt as they looked on. He noticed that the girl was swaying slightly with the music but the big Russian was rigid. Eyes wide open and staring straight ahead. Jackson finally made it too them and waved his hand in front of Redenkov's face. Redenkov moved his head slightly to try and see round Jackson's hand but that was the only life he got out of him.

"Hey fuck off pal," mouthed the girl at Jackson. Jackson gave her a brief glance and then returned his attention back to Redenkov. Once again he waved his hand in front of Redenkov's face. Redenkov shifted his gaze to look at Jackson. Jackson shouted: "Come on man. you've got to help me with Frogleberg."

But Redenkov just returned his gaze back to the stage and ignored him. Jackson threw up his hands in disgust and moved away. Back toward where he had last seen Frogleberg.

Frogleberg hadn't moved too far but moved he had. Still embracing the woman and dancing. Well not dancing as Jackson knew it but dancing of sorts. The music picked up and he saw the woman moving faster with the rest of the crowd. He noticed Frogleberg throwing his arms around wildly and the crowd parted slightly around him. Jackson approached him and tried to stop him making a fool of him self but the woman pushed him out the way. He looked at her and she had a look that said.

"Leave us alone pal." Then he felt a nudge from someone behind him. He turned to see a fairly tall guy throwing his arms around. Pretty soon the whole audience was throwing their

arms around in a stylized version of Frogberg's original movement. It was getting dangerous to be part of the crowd at that point. Unless you were moving exactly with the rhythm, one would have stood a better than even chance of being smacked about by anyone who came too close. Jackson decided to work his way clear. Not before checking on Redenkov. Whom he found was still standing there staring at the stage regardless. No one was around him though. He was too big for that so he wasn't being assaulted by anyone dancing. His woman was nowhere around him. Jackson found her over by the bar having just returned from the ladies room. He approached her and shouted: "What did you do to my pal?"

She looked at him quizzically at first. "Oh you mean the big Russian guy?" She began to smile the smile of the guilty. "Zonk," she shouted. "We put some in their drinks."

"What 'n' hell did you wanna go do a thing like that for?"

"They looked like they weren't having a good time."

Jackson raised his hand to rub his eyes. As if rubbing imaginary perspiration from his brow. "You idiot. Do you know what you've done? Redenkov doesn't even drink tea. We gotta get 'em out of here."

"Oh I don't know," said the girl. "Looks like he's having a good time in his own way." They looked across that the crowd to see Redenkov's large head and shoulders, largely motionless, with the crowd dancing like waves crashing around him.

The girl just shrugged her shoulders. He noticed she had one of Redenkov's clips. He retrieved it from her.

"Hey. Whatta ya think you're doing?" she said.

"Got anything else belonging to Redenkov?" Jackson spun her round quickly to make sure she didn't have his telemetry pack.

She didn't have it and she didn't object. "Say. I could go for a guy like you."

Jackson just raised his eyebrows. He looked out at the crowd as he moved off to find a quieter spot where he could use his mobile phone. He noticed the crowd were now making something of a bending movement and shaking their hands. No doubt another zonked out Frogberg inspired movement. Sure enough Redenkov was still standing there. Staring at the stage.

"Hello Appleyard? It's me. Jackson. Something's happened. They got Zonked."

"They got what?" came the voice on the other end of the phone barely audible over the noise.

"They had their drinks spiked with zonk."

"What's zonk?"

Jackson rolled his eyes. He didn't have time to explain the finer points. "It's like the latest designer drug. It's a long story but I think we've got a problem. What are Harry and Dean doing?"

"They're forward getting some Kip. They wanna be on the ball in case they've gotta fly us somewhere."

"Ok. Tell them to look after the plane and get down here as fast as you can."

"What about Petrov and Snypes? They should be there somewhere by now."

"What?"

"Petrov and Snypes. They phoned in earlier. Said they found out where Salisman was going to be and were going to be there."

"That's all I need. Great!" Jackson rubbed his forehead as if it would somehow relieve his headache. "Look I think it's more important that you come down here in that case. Now I'm

really worried. Look I need someone I can rely on, Ok."

"Yup I understand. I'm on it," said Appleyard.

"Oh and Anthony. Bring a brief case to stash the telemetry gear in. Redenkov almost lost his already."

"Roger that."

"Ok see ya when you land."

"Ok I'll be as quick as I can."

Jackson returned to the bar and hoped nothing else would go wrong. He ordered a mineral water and sipped it and tried to enjoy what was left of the music. He held one eye firmly on the crowd in the hope that he might spot any trouble before it started. He was glad that they hadn't brought any weapons with them. Then he remembered they had a grenade each. A panic attack swept over him but he calmed down quickly. He contemplated trying to retrieve them from their pockets but thought better of it. He thought someone might get the impression he was trying to rob them. Could get him into a very tricky situation. As un safe as the idea may be, he thought it better to try and ride it out. The Girl came and sat next to him again.

"So what's the deal with you guys anyway?"

"We're A&R for a sub label of D'hama records. Purple records."

"Yeah I've heard of you. I thought you only did main stream jive? Never thought of you as doing Zonk music."

"We wanna branch out. We were supposed to be here to think about poaching Philip from his little independent label."

The girl nodded. "So what's with the Russian guy?"

"Oh he's spoze to be our muscle but you seem to have turned his brain to mush."

"He's good though, isn't he?"

"What?" said Jackson.

"Philip. He's good."

"Yeah he's damn good. That's why we're here."

Jackson noticed Petrov and Snypes standing in the corner, arms folded and dark glasses. he considered going over to them and warning them off. He thought it could wait though. He'd wait till Anthony got there but he realized he now had two problems. To make sure Frogleberg and Redenkov got out safely and to make sure Petrov and Snypes didn't mess with Salisman.

"What a nightmare," he said.

"What?" said the girl.

"Nothing."

Jackson was starting to get into the show again at last. He had forgot about the problems and his duty for a while but it all rushed back to him. He looked at his watch. It was 1:35 am and Philip was into the last half hour of his set. The two black suits were still standing there with their arms folded. Philip was on stage making exaggerated hand movements. Usually the crowd would have reciprocated and part of the crowd did. But in an area around Frogleberg, the crowd seemed strangely undecided. Obviously Frogleberg was doing his own thing, in his own drugged out crazy world. The crowd didn't know who to follow. Redenkov, as usual was still staring, mesmerized at the stage. By chance Jackson looked over to the entrance and saw Appleyard coming through it. He was carrying a small metal brief case. Jackson waved and smiled at him to catch his attention. Appleyard waved back and started heading in his direction. Out of the corner of his eye, Jackson noticed a smoky stage effect. The lasers were beginning to cut though it over the crowd. He looked back to see where Appleyard was then

did a double take. He realized the smoke wasn't rising from the stage but was coming from somewhere among the crowd. Then he realized it was coming from an area where Frogleberg was.

"Shit!" Said Jackson. The girl heard him but didn't know what the fuss was. Jackson pointed at the crowd so that Appleyard could see what he was pointing at. Appleyard smiled and looked. Then the same thought crossed his mind as did Jackson. "The smoke decoys."

Jackson hit the floor running. Appleyard jumped into gear. The two black suits stood their oblivious to what was unfolding. Which was fair enough since even the night club's bouncers were unaware of the danger. Philip was on stage looking at his stage crew, making questioning gestures at this unscheduled effect. The closest stage hand shrugged his shoulders. They had no clue as to what was happening either.

Jackson looked back to Appleyard just before he entered the main bulk of the audience. He pointed at Redenkov's position and gestured that Appleyard should get Redenkov. Appleyard understood even though he was not totally sure where Redenkov was.

Jackson entered the crowd and forced his way towards Frogleberg. Pushing his way past people still dancing. Unaware how close they were to a drugged up madman with a grenade. He reached Frogleberg only to find him dancing oblivious to what had happened. He saw the girl standing back out of the smoke. She had turned pale and was still holding one of the white plastic caps. Jackson realized that it was most likely the Girl who had found the caps in Frogleberg's pocket. Jackson grabbed Frogleberg and began to drag him out of the crowd. Frogleberg didn't put up any kind of fight. Jackson dived into Frogleberg's pockets looking for the little gold cigarette lighter that could be just a tiny bit dangerous. It wasn't in his left jacket pocket. It wasn't in his left trouser pocket. He grabbed Frogleberg with his other arm and searched his right pockets. He found it in his trouser pocket, and retrieved it. He attempted to place it in his own pocket but was bumped by another dancer. The cigarette lighter skidded across the floor. He let go of Frogleberg who immediately danced forward into the crowd again. Jackson located the lighter and dived for it, taking a blow to the head by a dancer's leg for his reward. He secured it in his own inside jacket pocket then returned to his feet looking for Frogleberg at the same time.

Frogleberg had almost returned to his original position. Jackson noticed the girl still standing with the white cap in her hand. He signalled her to hand it over. She did. Then he signalled her to help him with Frogleberg. She grabbed Frogleberg by the hand and led him almost willingly out of the crowd. The house bouncers were becoming interested in what was happening but when they saw the girl leading Frogleberg out they called off their hunt. Jackson beckoned the girl to bring Frogleberg to the bar. She did so.

"Now keep him here until I get back OK," shouted Jackson. She nodded.

Jackson strode back into the crowd to find Appleyard trying to coerce Redenkov to move. Redenkov seemed unaware of them. They each grabbed an arm and tried to swing him around but every time they would swing him and his eyes would leave the stage he'd shrug them off and turn back again. Finally in desperation, Jackson waved his hand in front of Redenkov's face. Redenkov blinked and looked down at him. He recognised Jackson's face. Suddenly Redenkov snapped out of it.

"Come on," gestured Jackson. Redenkov shrugged his shoulders slightly and seemed to be happy to follow Jackson like a lost puppy. They led Redenkov back to the bar.

"That's a shame," said Redenkov as if nothing had happened. "I was just enjoying that. What's Anthony doing here?"

"You don't know what's been happening then?" said Jackson.

"What do you mean? I was just looking at the light show for a few minutes." Jackson rubbed his eyes in disbelief.

"So you really don't have a clue then?" Redenkov looked at Jackson like he wasn't making sense. Redenkov looked at Frogleberg sitting at the bar smiling and holding hands with the girl.

"What's wrong with him?" said Redenkov.

"Oh never mind, I'll tell you later," said Jackson. "We gotta get you guys outta here." Jackson gestured to the brief case that Anthony some how managed to retain through all of this. Anthony put it on a bar stool and opened it. Jackson retrieved the telemetry gear from Frogleberg. He dumped it onto the brief case and Appleyard randomly spread it out to make room. Jackson dumped his own gear in there as well and gestured to Redenkov to do the same.

The girl was stroking Frogleberg's hair as he sat on the bar stool like a puppy being pampered. Redenkov recognised his girl but wondered what she meant when she said. "Are you alright now?"

He didn't answer. He just looked at her with an expression that said. "What 'n' hell are you talking about?"

Communication was becoming difficult as the gig rose to its crescendo. Philip was playing the last number. With everything settled, Jackson gestured that they move out. There was little point in trying to catch up with Salisman tonight. Salisman would probably just laugh at them anyway. Redenkov's girl shook her head and pointed toward Salisman on stage. She wanted to hear his gig to the end. Jackson agreed and settled for a little while longer. It might also give Frogleberg and Redenkov a chance to step back into reality a little. Philip brought the crowd to a fever pitch as his music hit the last 20 measures of music. The whole crowd seemed to be as one except for the disconnected Frogleberg who was now looking around from time to time. Jackson would have been impressed were it not for having a few things on his mind. The music finished and the crowd went wild.

"Thanks everyone. See you at the little rave thing we're having tomorrow night," said Philip, and with that he exited the stage. The crowd started stomping their feet in unison. The noise was almost as loud as the music had been. Jackson was ready to go but realized there would probably be an encore. He turned to notice Frogleberg push the girl's hands from him. He seemed unsure of his surroundings. Jackson moved in towards him.

"You've been zonked bro. Are you alright?"

"Yeah man. That was so cool. Did we get the aliens?" said Frogleberg.

"Now is not a good time," said Jackson. Jackson lent in further toward the girl.

"How much zonk did you give 'im?"

"Oh not much," said the girl. She looked at Frogleberg and then looked back at Jackson.

"Err well rather a lot actually. I thought that's what he wanted."

Jackson rolled his eyes in disgust. Philip Salisman returned to the stage amidst a wild applaud. Some people had started dancing even before the music struck up again. A sequence rang out over the top of the crowd and they quieted down ready to dance once more.

"Are you alright?" shouted Jackson face to face with Frogleberg.

"Do you know where you are?" Frogleberg nodded boyishly. He then put his hands in his pocket. Suddenly a wave of panic came over his face. He searched around in one pocket. Then another. Then he searched the pocket of his pants.

"It's alright. I've got it," said Jackson holding up one of the lighters. Upon which

Frogleberg stopped searching and seemed somewhat relieved. The surge of adrenalin seemed to jolt him back to reality a little. They milled around at the end of the bar till once again Salisman brought the crowd to a head. Then suddenly the music died away to a sequence line and everyone knew it was over. Philip just waved and left the stage with the sequence fading out. The crowd instinctively knew it was over. So did Jackson.

"OK let's go. Are you ready to move?" he said to Frogleberg. Frogleberg nodded and slowly got to his feet. Still not quite sure where the zonk ended and reality began. He missed the woman's touch but tried to regain an air of professionalism. Even though he was still far from sure what that was. And as his mind started to regain control he was beginning to feel like he had spent the last few hours working in a chain gang. The six of them reached the door. Frogleberg, Redenkov, the two girls, Appleyard and Jackson bringing up the rear. Jackson saw them through the door and was about to exit himself when he noticed the two black suits from the corner of his eye.

"Shit!" He said then he called after the others. "I've just got to attend to something do you think you can manage without me for two minutes?" He didn't wait for an answer and dashed back inside. Making a bee line to Petrov and Snypes.

"You guys weren't thinking of making a grab for Salisman were you?" said Jackson. It took Petrov a second to focus and realize who Jackson was.

"Err no. Err we were just following him."

"Yeah well don't. We know where he's going to be and we'll take it from here OK. They want you back at HQ. But take your time. There's no hurry. And we want to speak to you first too. But leave Salisman alone OK. This is more delicate than you can imagine."

Petrov and Snypes seemed annoyed at this. "But we've been working on this all week."

"Yeah I know but now it's time to let it go, children. God has spoken and she's not very pleased."

"Yeah, so we lost him once. We found him again didn't we?"

Jackson wasn't about to argue the point. He saw red. "Look Petrov. I've had a bastard of a night. If you don't do what I say I'll blow your fucking head off right here and now. OK. You got that monkey boy?" Jackson knew he didn't have a weapon on him but he hoped that Petrov and Snypes didn't realize it. In any case he would not have actually shot them even if he had a gun and that was something he figured they probably could work out for themselves. Eventually at least.

"Now get the fuck outta that door and come with us. And keep the fuck quiet whilst your about it. And you can wipe that fucking smile off your face too Snypes." He realized he was yelling at the top of his voice. He was attracting attention. Two of the bouncers were taking an interest.

He grabbed Petrov and Snypes by the sleeves of their suits and spun them toward the door. He looked back at the two bouncers who couldn't work out what they were seeing. It was one of the weirdest things they had seen. To them it looked like some zonk head ordering two cops around and then ushering them out. With the cops complying like school boys. When they reached the door Jackson shoved the pair through it symbolically.

Once outside Petrov tried to gain an explanation. "What's going on? We're the same rank. You can't push us around."

"At the rate you're going we may not be of the same rank for long. Listen pal. we had some problems in there. Women problems you might say. I'm in charge now till the Colonel gets better so you better do what I say, OK? And I'm telling you to shut up, you go that?"

Petrov mumbled something and nodded.

"Good. Now we gotta work out what to do. We can't take these girls back to the plane and we need to get things straightened out. Follow me and shut up." Jackson strode off down the street to where the others had wandered ahead slightly.

Frogleberg's girl had his arm around him. Frogleberg didn't know if it was a good idea or not but considering the time he was having, thought it was probably better to at least keep up appearances.

"Right girls," said Jackson as he approached them. "Where can we go to get a coffee this time of the morning?"

Frogleberg's girl turned and said: "We could go back to my place. Mum wouldn't mind." Jackson thought about this. He looked at Petrov and Snypes. "You realize there are now eight of us?"

"Hmm," said the girl. "Who are those two?"

"Never mind who they are. I think we should find somewhere else though. Anything around here?"

They walked aimlessly for a while. Jackson thought he was following the girls when in fact the girls were following them. The girls were laughing and joking.

Frogleberg was still hallucinating slightly. He was coming to terms with what he had experienced. The embarrassment was over taking him. "Did I really do what I think I did?"

"Yes" came the unanimous reply.

"Man, you can dance like a MoFo when you wanna," said Jackson laughing. He thought he had better make the most of it. It may be the last time he ever got to laugh at his superior.

"So it was a fun evening then was it?" said Appleyard to Redenkov.

Redenkov just looked at him with eyes that begged him not to press any further with that line of questioning. Truth be known, Redenkov was still suffering slight hallucinations himself. But since he'd never experienced anything like this before his brain didn't know how to deal with it. If he felt sick he could understand it but he didn't. Actually he felt great. He just couldn't deal with feeling this great.

They walked on for some time till finally Jackson realized they were probably going nowhere.

"Look are you girls taking us to a coffee shop or what?"

Frogleberg's girl turned round and pointed to herself. "Who? Us? I thought you knew where you wanted to go."

Jackson slapped his forehead. "Look we need coffee. Something's gotta snap these guys out of it."

Frogleberg's girl turned back and stopped. "Like I said. My place is not far, we can have coffee there." She placed her hands on her hips and stared directly into Jackson's eyes.

Jackson shrugged and nodded. "Yeah Ok. Ok." They took another few steps forward. This time more confident that at least someone knew where they were going. When suddenly Jackson said. "Wait. Look if you're taking us back to meet mummy, at least you could tell us your names."

Redenkov's girl laughed then turned to Redenkov who was towering over her. "You remember my name don't you. I told you often enough."

Redenkov looked at her and did his best impression of an Alzheimer patient. He had no clue.

For the first time she felt truly rejected. "Hu! I can remember your's" she said. "It's

Valerie!"

Now it was Jackson's turn to burst out laughing. Then Appleyard. The two black suits looked at each other and wondered what they were laughing at. They thought they had better laugh too just to be on the safe side and let out a raucous and very pretentious laugh.

"Shut up," said Jackson abruptly but still laughing himself.

"I'm Gudrun," said Redenkov's girl

"And I'm Elva," said Froggleberg's girl. "And who the hell are those two?"

"Never mind about them," said Jackson. "Just tell them to shut up if they give you any trouble."

Froggleberg, Jackson and Redenkov had gratefully accepted the invitation to spend the night at Elva's house. Elva's mother, Helga, enjoyed talking to Jackson. It was a novel event to be talking to a black man with an American accent in her own living room. After having coffee, Jackson had sent Appleyard and the black suits back to the Lear X to get some sleep. He had a quick word with Appleyard on the porch before their taxi arrived.

He explained what he thought might be required later in the morning and to make sure the black suits didn't get any ideas of their own that might compromise their mission. He would call later when he could speak more freely. For now though the three of them were stranded without the aid of their telemetry equipment. Armed only with their mobile phones. Jackson was tired.

The girls had retired to elsewhere in the house with their respective catches. Jackson neither knew where nor could he care. It didn't matter till the drug had worn off. He learnt that Elva's father was away fishing. Fishing was the life blood of Reykjavik and that Elva was the heiress to a fishing dynasty. All very interesting but as he was falling uncontrollably asleep at the table Helga offered him the couch. He was relieved when it was only the couch and not her bed. As it had become with the other women.

CHAPTER 7:

The morning came and they said their farewells. They vowed to meet up again in the evening. The three SHADO men hoped they wouldn't.

As soon as they were free to speak Frogleberg did. "Look I'm really sorry about last night. I know I'm gonna get my ass kicked for it but I really didn't have a clue what I was doing."

"No that's fair enough," said Jackson. "Man I'd have done the same If I had had that much Zonk in me."

"So what's the plan?" said Frogleberg.

"You're asking me? You're the boss."

"Well I'm still not sure I'm straight from last night. Man that's some drug. And they say it's available legally." Frogleberg shook his head and smiled a cheeky grin.

"Yeah it's just a bunch of herbal medicines mixed together. Valerian and some other shit. It's rather nice really. Err, so they tell me."

"Yeah It is. I think we should include it for recreation back at HQ." The conversation about the hypothetical uses of zonk in SHADO continued for almost a block until Redenkov suddenly butted in.

"Like, dude," he said in his thick Russian accent. Both men turned to look at him. "Like don't you think we should be looking out for this Salisman dude and making sure nothing happens to him?"

Frogleberg's and Jackson's mouths were visibly wide open. Jackson said.

"What's with this dude shit? Valerie. Err I mean Vladimir?" Frogleberg nearly choked as he laughed.

Redenkov didn't even realize what he had just said. "So what about it? Shouldn't we be looking for him?"

"Yeah, I think you're right," said Frogleberg "But he's gonna be really hard to find now. Unless we can find him at his hotel or something?"

"What ever happens," said Jackson "We've gotta get a change of cloths and some gear."

* * *

Frogleberg had called ahead to the Lear X. Petrov and Snypes were ordered to change their cloths so they didn't stand out too much. Then they were to try and find Salisman. Not to do anything but just to follow and report in. They told Frogleberg about the girl Salisman was hanging around with. They told him how it gave Salisman an unfair advantage of local knowledge. Frogleberg wasn't too fazed by this as he knew that Appleyard could use his telemetry system to give them instantaneous street maps and the like. The taxi took them the 40 minute journey out of Reykjavik and back to the airport at Keflavik. Frogleberg paid with his credit card and they began their walk back to along the length of the Leifsstod terminal building.

"So how did we come to have idiots like Petrov and Snypes anyway?" asked Jackson.

"Well," said Frogleberg. "I can tell you it wasn't my idea, that's for sure. It dates all the way back to General Henderson. He insisted that SHADO have a division based on the FBI. Something about an elite group who could work undercover and largely separate from the main workings of SHADO. You know how the aliens like to take over and use people? We'll these guys were supposed to be able to detect it. They had to be a little removed from SHADO so that the aliens would have less of a chance of working out what was going on. But what it really was, was Henderson's impotence."

"What?" said Redenkov.

"No I mean he had control over SHADO from a financial point of view but he was always jealous of Commander Straker getting the real action. He always wanted that job for himself. So this gave him an opportunity to be in command of his own team."

"Man, I'm glad he never got Command of SHADO proper if they're anything to go by," said Jackson as they were approaching the Lear X.

"Oh they're not totally indicative of the civil intel branch." continued Frogleberg. "But they're certainly a symptom of it. When Henderson died the command was relinquished back to SHADO command. And for a time there was a vacuum left by Henderson so suddenly Commander Straker had to do both jobs. These guys became a bit of a legacy." Frogleberg was about to step on board.

"Don't be too harsh on them. I know we laugh at them a lot. They're not on the front line like we are but they do have unique skills. Petrov and Snypes are just two members of CI. The psychological profiles say we should split them up and get them to work with a couple of the others but no-one else wants to work with 'em." Jackson laughed. Redenkov just nodded in agreement. They climbed aboard the plane.

* * *

Twenty minutes later they were wired up and tooled up. They had a change of clothes and ready for action. They had all taken a dose of fast acting anti-oxidants from the small pharmacy onboard the Lear X. Jackson didn't need to but thought he would anyway. No harm in doing so.

"This time we're going to hire a car," said Frogleberg feeling very much back in control. There was a hire car firm with an office right at the airport. They had selected the appropriate identification and drivers licenses and acquired the car easily. It was a Mercedes Benz. None of them looked nor cared about the model. They jumped in and were away. Back past the Leifsstod terminal building and onto the 40 minute drive between Keflavik airport and Reykjavik. Jackson at the wheel. Frogleberg in the front passenger seat, retrieved his mobile phone from his inside jacket pocket. He dialled some numbers and Appleyard's voice came on the line.

"Any word from Petrov and Snypes yet?" said Frogleberg

"Yeah, apparently they saw him go back to his hotel. That Australian guy and the girl were with him but they saw them both leave a short time later and go their separate ways."

"Ok excellent," said Frogleberg. "We'll go straight there. Do we know which room he's in?"

"No not exactly. All we know is that he's on the second floor."

"No matter. We'll show them our police ID and they should spit it out. Ok thanks Anthony." And with that Frogleberg disconnected.

"Alright, it's straight to the hotel then."

* * *

Some 30 minutes later the car pulled up outside the Borg hotel, one of the oldest in Reykjavik and right in the heart of the city. Frogleberg and Redenkov stepped out of the car whilst Jackson found a place to park. Frogleberg put his brief case on the ground between his feet to wait for Jackson to return. Petrov, who had been waiting further down the street, stepped up to meet them.

"He's in two oh seven," he said without uttering a greeting.

"Good work," said Frogleberg. "How did you find that out?"

"We couldn't see the key rack but we got lucky. We overheard a delivery driver with a package for him. After he left the desk clerk asked the bell hop to deliver it to room two oh seven."

"That's great," said Frogleberg. "Where's Snypes?"

"He's in the lobby. I didn't want to stay in there with him and draw too much attention. As it is the desk clerk got suspicious so we had to flash our IDs. The Interpol ones. They left us alone after that but we thought Salisman might recognise us. In spite of our change of clothes." Frogleberg nodded. He pulled out his mobile phone and entered a key combination. He placed it to his ear and waited.

"Hello?" said Snypes's voice on the other end.

"Snypes. It's Frogleberg. Look we're coming in just as soon as Jackson gets back. I want you and Petrov to hold your positions. I'm not expecting anything but you never know. Once we've established that everything's OK you and Petrov can stand down. OK?"

"Yup," said Snypes.

"Ok Jackson's here now so we're coming in. Just make sure none of the staff follow us up."

"Yup," said Snypes again and then Frogleberg rang off.

"Ok is everyone ready?" said Frogleberg looking around him at the nodding faces. "OK then let's go in."

* * *

The three men entered the lobby lead by Frogleberg. Frogleberg and Jackson held up their Interpol IDs as they passed the desk clerk. She didn't quibble in the slightest. They went straight to the stairs and began to climb. At the second floor they looked around. Frogleberg pointed to a number five on a door and headed off down the corridor till he came to number seven. He stopped to check that they were all grouped. Meanwhile on the ground floor, the desk clerk had rounded her counter and appeared through a door. She approached Snypes who was lounging in the lobby with a news paper.

"You're not expecting any trouble are you?" she said.

"No ma'am I hope not," said Snypes.

"Only we don't want to alarm the other guests."

"That won't be a problem I'm sure." Snypes tried to smile a smile of reassurance.

It only made the woman more edgy. Finally she asked. "Who is it that you're after anyway?"

"I'm afraid I can't tell you that, ma'am," said Snypes. She raised her eyebrows realizing that she'd probably asked too much already.

* * *

There was a knock on Philip's door. Then another. Philip was quite groggy from lack of sleep. He had only been asleep perhaps an hour when the knock came. After the third knock he began to crawl his way out of bed, through the main room and to the door. By the fifth knock he arrived.

"Alright alright. chill out," he mumbled. He opened the door and the site of the three men brought him awake suddenly.

"May we come in Mister Salisman?" said Frogleberg.

"Who are you?" said Philip.

"Oh I think you know who we are. Word gets around, Mister Salisman."

"Well, you're certainly not record company executives. Hey wait a minute. Aren't you

that guy that was waving his arms around like all hell at the gig last night? Yeah you were right off your face. And come to think of it that smoke bomb came from you as well. Ha! Damnedest thing I ever did see." Philip was laughing at them now. Hope of Froggleberg maintaining a dominant composure was all but lost. Philip turned his back and retreated back into the room. The three followed him in and Jackson closed the door behind them.

"Look. We're hear because of what you know," said Froggleberg trying to maintain his composure.

"Oh so those FBI looking goons that were down stairs were your boys, where they?" said Philip.

"Well, yeah. In a manner of speaking. We'll get them off your back now but we got them in more for your own protection."

Philip was positively chuckling now. "My protection. Ha! Those guys are the ones who need protecting," said Philip as he sat down at the table and peeled a banana.

"Yeah well that as it may. We had to pull them off another job to get them here as soon as we could. They were not fully briefed. We've only just become aware of the threat you pose to our security."

Philip finished chewing on his mouth full of banana. "Which is why I've taken steps to guarantee my own safety from you. I'm not entirely sure what you're capable of but if anything happens to me then..."

Froggleberg cut him off. "Yes we know about your own security measures. So I take it that you can verify this in some way?"

"What do you mean?" said Philip "Verify my security or verify the fact that I have the skinny on you guys?"

"Well both really," said Froggleberg.

Salisman finished another mouth full of banana. "First of all, I don't have to verify shit with you guys. You can't take the chance. If I were to show my hand you'd probably blow if off so I'm not about to reveal how I've done it. Needless to say. If you guys fuck with me even just a tiny bit, a chain of events will go down that will see every piece of information I have on you guys become very public knowledge. Some of the people involved don't even know they're involved. Two of them don't even know me personally so you can't connect us. What I'm saying is. Don't fuck with me pal." Emphasizing the point by shaking his banana at them before taking yet another bite from it.

"Yeah that's Ok we're not here to fuck with you but we're need to know that the data you have on us is secure. We need to know that no-one else knows about this. And we need to know it's for real."

Philip thought about this for a moment whilst finishing off another mouthful of banana.

"Ok. Firstly. The data is as secure as I can make it. It's behind several layers of encryption. No-one else knows about it. Not even my wife." He paused for a moment realizing that he'd told at least six people something about it. Including a fairly detailed account to his Australian friend Psylem Lampoon. He hoped that these people wouldn't discover that for themselves at any stage.

"And if you want proof, I'll show it to you." Philip conveniently finished the last portion of his fruit as he rose to get the CD. He binned the banana skin and headed for his portable player. He turned to speak. "Oh and by the way, This is just a small sample of what I have."

He turned back and pressed eject on the portable CD player. The lid flew open but there was nothing in it. He thought he must have put it away in the jewel box but he didn't remember

doing so. Which was unusual given the sensitive nature of the material. He located the CD jewel box but there was no CD in it. Now he panicked slightly. "It's gone."

"What's gone?" said Frogleberg.

"Ok I get it. You stole it but can't decrypt it. Nice try guys."

"Stole what?" said Frogleberg.

"The CD. The Stalk CD. You must have come up here whilst I was out and stole it."

"I can assure you Mister Salisman that this is the first time any of us have been here. We only just found out what room you were in a short while ago."

* * *

Philip eventually agreed to at least suspend disbelief that the SHADO men hadn't stolen the CD already. Simply in order that they could carry the conversation forward. But the fact remained that the CD was gone.

"Jenny was playing it yesterday and I didn't take it out of the player since then."

"Is Jenny that girl you've been seeing?" said Frogleberg.

"Don't get any ideas," said Philip defensively. "She's just a fan."

"And what was she doing playing the data CD anyway?" said Frogleberg surprised.

"It was encrypted into a Stalk CD. That's this crappy band called Stalk right?"

Frogleberg still didn't quite get it.

"I made a CD that looked for all intents and purposes like the real thing. Like a glass mastered CD. Only it was a particularly short CD so I used the extra space to encode the data. Just as much as I could fit. Which was quite a lot as it turned out. But nothing compared to what I've collected in total."

Jackson waded into the conversation. "If we didn't take it, and you haven't simply lost it somewhere, who else could have taken it. I mean no-one actually likes that stuff. So someone must have taken it specifically. Is anything else missing or out of place?"

Philip had a quick look around the room. Then the bedroom. He looked through his cases and through the wardrobe. "No nothing. everything's intact."

"So we can assume then that who ever took it, took it specifically. Either that or they really had a thing about crappy music." Philip laughed briefly.

"Ha! Anyway there's no real problem. It's all encrypted. There's very little chance of anyone breaking the encryption. Don't worry about it."

"Mister Salisman," started Frogleberg again. "I am still a little concerned. There are forces out there who would like to see SHADO exposed. Perhaps you underestimate the alien threat. And now you offer them a way to split SHADO wide open. All they have to do is kill you and what ever system you have in place will do the work for them."

A shiver went up Philip's spine. "Don't be stupid," said Philip. "Look Jenny's probably taken it. She was listening to it earlier on."

"Does she have a portable CD player?" said Jackson, now standing by the CD player and giving close scrutiny to the Stalk CD jewel box.

"Well no. Not that I'm aware."

"So why didn't she take the CD cover with her? Not many people just pocket the disk and forget the cover."

"Well it could have been Psylem, then. He hates Stalk and thought I was stupid to have a copy of it. He might have thrown it out the window as a joke or something?"

"I hope you're right Mister Salisman," said Frogleberg. "I hope you're right. For your sake as well as ours. But remember this my friend. We defend the planet from attack by aliens."

Bonafide creatures form another world. You may well be sitting in the hot seat between mankind and the aliens. I wouldn't want to be in your shoes right now." And with that Frogleberg stood to leave. He pulled a card from his inside jacket pocket.

"If you need to call me, you can reach me at that number." He handed Philip the card and Philip read it. He laughed.

"Bjorn Frogleberg. A & R. Purple records? That's a good one."

* * *

It was 4:00 pm. Philip had tossed and turned in his bed trying to get some rest before the gig that night. He would be playing in front of at least twenty thousand people. Some people estimated the crowd would swell to twice that. This was a big festival by Icelandic standards. People had flown in to be a part of it from all around the world. Not only was Philip playing but his friend from Australia with his outfit AEK. As well as acts from Germany, the UK, America, Japan and a Russian techno act called Soyuz. There was a film being made of it and Philip wanted to be alert to do a good show. Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Philip thought it was the SHADO people returning. Frogleberg's words of warning were still echoing through his head. As he reached the door he said.

"Who is it?" using his best means-business voice. Or as means-business as he could muster on the small amount of sleep he had that day.

"It's me," came the female voice. The voice of someone he recognised. The voice of Jenny. He opened the door rubbing his eyes.

"Are you alright?" she said. "You look like shit."

"Gee thanks," said Philip "I haven't had much sleep. Say did you borrow that Stalk CD by any chance?"

"Hell no," said Jenny. "I don't like that stuff very much."

Philip returned to his bed. It was all the energy he had left. He crawled into it and lay down. He kept his eyes open long enough to notice Jenny pull herself underneath the covers from the other side. This was the second time in a single day he had fallen asleep with his groupie sharing his bed.

* * *

Someone was shaking him. He looked at his bedside clock. It said it was 8:00 pm.

"Wake up Philip. Wake up," came the soft voice. "You're on at ten. If you don't get up now you'll miss the show."

Philip rolled over to see the ever smiling face of Jenny. He moaned a tired moan and stretched to try and wake his body up. She couldn't resist his muscular physique. She wrapped herself around him in a gentle bear hug. She knew he still wouldn't have mustered the energy to fight her off.

"God it's a shame you're married," she said. She sighed and then continued to hug and kiss him. It was enjoyable. At first Philip forgot where he was. Then all of a sudden the thought of missing the gig, the very thing he'd flown all the way up from Nova Scotia to do, and he pushed her off. He sat straight up in bed.

"The gig!" he said. Suddenly he was awake. She watched him kick off the covers revealing his naked body until he could wrap his dressing gown around himself. It fed his ego that his body could be such a commodity.

"I've got to have a shower."

"Mind if I join you?" said Jenny.

"We don't have time. Maybe later." His resolve was definitely slipping. If his grip became

any more loose he would have some explaining to do. As it was, circumstances seemed to be holding his fidelity in tact for now at least. There was another knock at his door.

"Could you see who that is please?" he asked Jenny. "I need to get in that shower."

Jenny opened the door to find Philip's manager, Albert and Psylem standing behind him.

"You'll be late Philip ol' boy. No time for nookie now ol' son." He winked at Jenny as he came through the door. Psylem just smiled a friendly smile. She returned it. Philip noticed Psylem.

"Hey Psy. You haven't seen that Stalk CD have you? Only I was looking for it and it seems to be missing."

"No I haven't touched the damn thing," said Psylem.

"Wot you doin' with a Stalk CD Philip ol' son," said his manager. "I wouldn't have thought you'd listen to that ol' commercial retro crap."

Philip didn't offer any defence. He just made a bee line for the shower. Psylem made a bee line for the CD collection. Psylem knew the importance of the CD and didn't let on accordingly. He flipped through the collection and noticed that there was no CD in the player. As he flipped through the stack of CDs one of them slid off the top and went crashing to the ground at the end of the cupboard they were sitting on, the jewel box splitting open and cracking slightly.

"Oh shit," said Psylem. He surveyed the wreckage for a time and bent to pick up the pieces, wondering if the jewel box hadn't been damaged beyond repair. As he picked up the lid he noticed a round object leaning up against the edge of the cupboard on its end. It looked like a CD but the CD he had sent to the ground was still secure within its half of the jewel box. He picked it up and observed it for a second.

"Philip. I've got some good news and some bad news," shouted Psylem at the bathroom. "The good news is I found your stupid Stalk CD. The bad news is, I broke the jewel box of one of your Kraftwerk CDs." He heard the water stop and a few moments later the still wet Salisman emerged from the steamy space.

"Where was it?" said Philip, still desperately trying to dry his hair before he became too cold.

"It was down there." Psylem pointed to where he had found it.

"Oh," said Philip nonchalantly as he moved to the bedroom. Closing the door so he could get dressed in private. Philip was sure it wasn't there when he had looked earlier. He was sure that the black dude who was there earlier with the SHADO guys had also looked there as well. Philip figured that Psylem had borrowed it for some reason and had just put it back there whilst he wasn't looking. He would get to the bottom of it later. But for now he had a gig to do.

CHAPTER 8:

Frogleberg and the others were sitting onboard the Lear X parked a short distance away from the Leifstod terminal at Keflavik airport. They were almost ready to leave to take coverage of Philip's spot in the festival. They were chatting with the pilot and co-pilot whilst Appleyard worked furiously behind his console. They all seemed to be waiting on him.

"Are you sure this is going to work Anthony? Only we don't have a lot of time left."

Appleyard ignored him for a few seconds. Still tapping away at a keyboard and monitoring data. "Yeah there's no reason it won't work. It's worked before. But I have to wait till headquarters re-position SHADO-SAT seventeen into to geo-sync. We're just coming up on Iceland now. A few more minutes and we should be bang over Reykjavik." He paused and punched some more data into his terminal.

"OK now that it's here we can also divert some of the telemetry data through SS17 as well. That should make these things a little more reliable."

"Yeah but will the bugs stay in there?" said Jackson as Petrov came in through the door bearing hot food. Closely followed by Snypes.

"What bugs are those?" asked Petrov as he began to delve into his boxes of food and work out who's was what.

"We went to the concert organizers today," said Frogleberg. "We poked around as Interpol special agents."

"But Interpol don't have special field agents. They're just a clearing house these days," said Snypes as he handed out some of his containers.

"Yeah, that's right. But the people here don't seem to know that. Fact is that people don't really know much about what Interpol actually do so it works to our advantage," said Frogleberg as he opened his box of unsightly hot food and extracted something that smelt much better than it looked.

"Anyway. We got them to let us inspect all the passes that were specifically for Philip and his crew. We slipped micro bugs into all the passes. We couldn't put a bug in just Philip's pass because we couldn't guarantee which one he'd be issued. The best we could do is know that his crew would be issued with only those specific passes. So we'll be chasing road crew and his manager around. Oh, and his new girlfriend as well. He's had a pass made up for her as well apparently. It's a tall order to keep track of all this so Anthony's just ordered in one our spy sats. We were using one out over the South Atlantic but with all the extra telemetry, it's going to be tricky."

Jackson continued the explanation. "We've got 3 extra telemetry packs to handle the local triangulation but with the aid of the satellite, and a GPS lock we can target him anywhere as long as he wears that security pass. Though it get's a little fuzzy outside of the immediate area."

"Anyway that's where you guys come in," said Frogleberg. "You've got to place the telemetry packs in the park at three different locations. Then you have to make sure we get them back. We don't want them to fall into the wrong hands if at all possible. Sounds like a job you can handle."

"But where do you want them put?" said Snypes.

"Anywhere as long as they're roughly in a triangular formation," said Appleyard. "The GPS will log their positions and then use that as a master reference to know where everyone is within the festival's area. You should place them in a radius of about one kilometre around the stage."

"There's one other thing," said Redenkov. They all turned to look at him. The Russian didn't say very much very often but when he did it was always profound.

"Salisman had the SHADO data on a CD. The CD got stolen. We don't know by whom yet."

Petrov wondered why the other's weren't in as much panic about this revelation as he was. "But. But," he said.

"Don't worry Petrov," said Jackson. "It was encrypted."

"Yes but there's bound to be trouble as a result," said Redenkov. "As soon as the people who stole it realize they can't get access to it, they're going to need to get Philip and force him to crack the code. We know they're not going to try anything till after the gig. No-one's likely to miss him too much after the gig goes down."

"So all in all, you need to be on your toes, okay guys," said Frogberg. "We don't know what's going to go down but something is bound to. And on top of all this we have to find out who it is and what they know. Preferably how they found out. This Salisman guy's turned into a security nightmare."

"If it was me," said Snypes. "I'd just take the MoFo out and be done with it."

"And that my boy, is why you'll never make commander," said Jackson. It was a short lived laugh at Petrov and Snypes's expense.

CHAPTER 9:

The satellite was positioned and checked. The telemetry packs and associated hardware was loaded into a pair of brief cases. Their hunger was kept at bay by the unspeakable food and they were ready to set off once more for Reykjavik. Frogleberg was the last one through the hatch way. He turned and put his hand on the pilot's shoulder.

"And remember, you've got to be ready to put his thing in the air at a moment's notice. We may need you to take this thing into the domestic airport in Reykjavik at any time. We don't want to draw attention to ourselves but we may need you there in a hurry so be on you toes." And with that they were off. Another 40 minutes later they were parked outside of town. Near the park where the rave was being held. Their telemetry gear strapped on and ready to party with the rest of the ravers who were becoming tribal in front of the huge stage. The PA blasting out a techno/rap trio from the US. Frogleberg looked at his watch and noted the time. He put his special sun glasses on and turned to the others.

"We've got just over an hour till Salisman goes on. I'm going to see if I can find him and have a word. I want you two to take a look round. See if Anthony can match any faces in the crowd to our database back at HQ. Did you get that Anthony?" Frogleberg looked up as he said it, as if he had a direct line to God.

"Yup. Got that," came the voice of Appleyard in their respective ear pieces.

"OK, we'll meet back here before the start of Salisman's set."

Frogleberg walked to the security marquee which was set up behind the stage and to one side. He showed his Interpol ID to the bouncer at the door and he let him in. He had a quick look round and saw that Philip was not inside. He had a brief word to the woman who's job it was to hand out the security badges. Five Germans strode into the tent and flashed their own ID at the woman. She nodded at them and watched them stride past and out into the back stage area. Whilst she was distracted, Frogleberg found a convenient place to attach one of the telemetry clips. He had brought a couple of spare ones specifically for this purpose.

"So no-one from Salisman's crew has been through here then?"

"That's right." She said. "Some of them were here to set some stuff up but they left about an hour ago."

"Mind if I have a look back stage?" The music suddenly became particularly loud and he had to finish by shouting and pointing. The woman nodded to him that it was ok. He went to walk out but she grabbed his arm.

"Try not to get in anyone's way," she shouted. Frogleberg nodded. As he passed out the back flap of the marquee he pulled out the second spare clip and began to look for a place to hide it.

* * *

Back on board the Lear X, Appleyard noticed the small image window jump into life as the clip was retrieved from the darkness of Frogleberg's pocket.

"See if you can put it somewhere central to the rear of the stage. And try and place it vertically. That will give us better lateral coverage."

Without acknowledging Appleyard, Frogleberg searched through some flight cases stored at the rear. The location was central but the opportunities to hide the clip and still have it do it's job were slim. About five metres away Frogleberg noticed what looked to be a broken lighting rig. It seemed to have been dumped there. He inspected it but he couldn't be sure it wasn't going to be used at some stage during the show. Another 10 metres away was a roadie

who was rummaging through a flight case looking for some cables. Frogleberg made a bee line for him.

"What happened to the lights?" he shouted.

"Don't you know? I thought that's what you inspectors were here for?" shouted the roadie.

"You tell me," said Frogleberg. "I wanna hear it like it is." The roadie was hesitant. He didn't want to cause any of his colleagues any trouble.

"Wind," he shouted. "It was one of those things. It was only a broken leg. It could have been a lot worse." Frogleberg nodded and thanked him with a gesture. He now knew what he wanted to know. The lights would not be used and although they were five metres stage right, the structure would offer a near perfect place to attach one of the clips. He milled over it some more and attached the clip without anyone seeing him do it. He pulled out his PDA message pad and pretended to take notes so that he would appear to be fulfilling his new role as safety inspector. What he actually wrote on the pad was.

"How's that Anthony?" In large letters. He held it up in front of the clip where Appleyard would see it. A few seconds passed in which Frogleberg thought that maybe he hadn't seen it.

"Let me check." Came Appleyard's voice in Frogleberg's ear piece. Frogleberg removed the PDA from in front of the clip so that Appleyard could get a view of back stage.

"Yup that's fine," said Anthony.

CHAPTER 10:

"We're gonna be late," said Albert Manning, Philip's manager. Philip was about to shut his hotel room door but had rushed back in at the last moment.

"I forgot my backups," he shouted back at Albert as he scooped up 3 CDs from the table. One of them being the 'Stalk' CD. He rushed back to the door and slammed it behind him. Psylem and Jenny were straggling down the hall itching to get moving.

"We'll have to try and do some prep on the way there in the van," said Albert.

"Van?" said Philip.

"Yeah we've got an RV. It'll double as your dressing room. There's a spot waiting right by the back stage entrance. You know how you and Psylem wanted to do some sight seeing before you went back to NS..." Albert raised his eyebrows and was smiling.

"Wow. Thanks. How'd you manage to swing that?"

"A pal o' mine up here owed me a favour. Hey you could take Jenny here. And one of her friends." Once again Albert was doing his eyebrow raising routine

"Give it a rest," said Philip. He didn't need to encourage the girl that far. They hit the stairs not waiting for an elevator. Round and down to the lobby. Philip almost threw his room key at the desk clerk.

"Sorry. we're late for the gig." He shouted back at her. Trying to raise a friendly smile to assure her he meant no harm. Sure enough waiting out front was a huge recreational vehicle, one of the road crew at the helm.

"You sure you wanna do this?" He said as the clambered aboard from the side entrance. "I mean if we don't get there soon we're not gonna make it at all."

"Shut up and drive," said Albert. The man did just that.

"Chill out," said Philip. "There's plenty of time. Err that doesn't mean we've got time to stop for a pizza or anything. Mind you I'm feeling a bit hungry."

"Shut up will ya," said Albert. "You'll get fed but first you've got to sing for your supper."

* * *

The RV pulled into the park with 45 minutes to spare.

"See. What'd I tell ya," said Philip. Jenny had helped Albert put the tribal makeup on him on the way. He wanted to look 'native' as he was quoted as saying in the news paper that morning. But he didn't want to give the game away entirely. His electric suit was back stage. Hopefully rigged up and ready to go. It would take at least 5 minutes to fit it on prior to walking on stage. The suit was really just some strips covered in tiny multi coloured spot lights. It also had sensors for body percussion and controls for the computer equipment. Philip had built it especially for this gig but he thought it might become a feature of his act in future. Bjorn Froggleberg was standing outside of the Marquee entrance when the RV arrived. He watched it pull up along side. He wondered what it was doing there. Only when Philip finally emerged did it all fall into place. He made a bee line for him. The roadie and manager instinctively moved in to protect him.

"It's alright," said Philip. "I know this guy."

"I need a word Mr. Salisman," said Froggleberg as discretely as possible.

"Look I don't got the time right now. I'm late."

"OK then I'll be brief." Froggleberg grabbed Philip round the shoulders and directed him away from the others for a moment. Just far enough to be out of ear shot. "Philip. I think you're in great danger."

"Don't worry about it. I found the CD. I think Psylem had it."

"Oh. Ok but watch your back. I'll be helping with security if you know what I mean," said Frogberg escorting him back to his friends and the waiting marquee entrance. Albert made a gesture as if to say. "Who is this guy?"

Frogberg replied before Philip had a chance to. "I'm just security. There's been a very small incident in the crowd tonight and I just wanted to warn Mister Salisman to be careful." Frogberg stopped at the entrance to the marquee.

"Mister Salisman. May I strongly advise you wear your ID badge at all time. Security's pretty tight and you never know when you might need it." Frogberg raised his eyebrows. It was the only signal he could think of. He just hoped Philip would understand.

* * *

"You want some," said the roadie holding out a bag of tablets as Philip drew up backstage. Philip looked the roadie up and down. The roadie could sense he didn't know what he was being offered.

"Zonk. It's just Zonk."

"No thanks," said Philip. "At any other gig I might say yes but at this one I need to be in control. You never know who might be out there tonight."

"And they're filming it," said Albert. "If it goes down perfect they just might use the footage. Then Philip's name goes up in lights."

"Well for 15 minutes," laughed Philip.

"I'm gonna make sure you're gear is ready to roll out. You stay here and get fitted into your costume. We'll be back to test that in a minute," shouted Albert as he disappeared up some steps and onto the rear of the giant stage, leaving just Philip, Jenny and the roadie. The roadie doused his cigarette and moved off to get Philip's techno suit ready to be fitted.

"When you finish your gig," started Jenny. "I want you to meet some friends of mine." Philip raised his eyebrows. The thought of more autograph hunting Icelandic fans wanting to climb into bed with him was not quite how he imagined fame to be. If this is what a little bit of fame could be he wondered what a lot of fame would be like.

Briefly, the thought of it driving a wedge between his family crossed his mind. He made a note to try not to let it happen. Starting with this Jenny woman. As soon as he could he'd try and dump her. Maybe he'd come back another time for a sightseeing trip to Iceland. The roadie returned with the suit. He held it out with all the straps open. Philip turned and put one arm through the arm hole. Then twisted and put the other one through. Then the roadie let go.

"Damn this is heavier than I remembered. I hope I don't collapse under the weight."

"You'll be OK once the straps are done up," shouted the Roadie. Then Philip noticed the muscles on the roadie. He looked like he had been working weights all his life.

"That's easy for you to say," said Philip but the roadie didn't hear him over the music. Philip was strapped in and ready for a final test. The roadie checked the lights and all seemed well. All that was left was to test the audio controls.

"You may as well go out the front and watch now," shouted Philip to Jenny. He had to squeeze in a little closer and shout it a second time for her to hear. She nodded her head and took the opportunity to give him a quick kiss on the lips for luck. Philip jerked his head back but smiled at her. he turned to step up to the rear of the stage. Trailing his thin umbilical behind him like an astronaut preparing to board a rocket to Mars.

* * *

There were a pair of comedians on stage. They were doing a quick fill in act during the

change over. They were performing a type of visual humour. When Philip peered at them through a gap he could see one of them on all fours doing an impression of a spider whilst his partner was standing next to him pretending to hold some strings. They're combined synchronized movements giving the impression that the standing man was controlling the spider impersonator. The audience was laughing. This was the kind of humour that would appeal to a zonked out audience. There was very little dialogue to their act. The audience was largely international and no matter what language they spoke, it would alienate someone. The act was done, the audience was cheering and as the comedians left the stage an MC rushed onto centre stage.

"Ladies and Gentlemen and zonk heads. Go wild for Philip Salisman."

CHAPTER 11:

The audience cheered as the computer started playing the opening bass line. The sound of wind crept into the mix as smoke from six smoke machines filled the stage. There were pricks of coloured light piercing the smoke. Suddenly Philip burst through the blanket of smoke. His suit of spot lights pulsating to the rhythm of the drum machine which suddenly kicked in at that point. The crowd went wild. Frogleberg was in that crowd now joined by Jackson and Redenkov. Jackson was smiling and grooving slightly to the music.

"You know he's really quite good," shouted Frogleberg to Jackson. "I could get to like this stuff."

Jackson just continued smiling. There was no point trying to make a reply. Suddenly there were coloured patterns flashing in front of their eyes in time with the music. Redenkov removed his glasses and rubbed his eyes. Jackson was laughing openly though no-one could hear him. Frogleberg pulled his PDA out and wrote on it. He held it in front of one of his clips. It read.

"Very funny Appleyard. Har Har." Within seconds the coloured patterns were gone.

In a few more seconds the words: "Sorry. Couldn't resist" Flashed up on in front of their eyes.

Frogleberg laughed at this. There was little else any of them could do for the time being until Philip finished his gig. Frogleberg picked up his PDA again and wrote on it. "Give me a visual of the back of the stage please.?" Once again holding it to one of his clips.

Nothing happened for ten or more seconds until a message scrolled across his field of view. "Sorry I can't. Your telemetry unit is out of range. All I'm picking up on that channel at the moment is noise. Probably from all the gear up there."

Scrawling once more on his PDA, Frogleberg wrote. "What about switching to one of the other telemetry packs?"

Another five second pause. "Same problem there too."

There was another pause for about 30 seconds and then another scrolling message. "But what I can give you is this."

Frogleberg saw what looked at first as a cluster of dots. None of them moving. Then another scrolling message. "That's the signals from the radio tags. North is to the top of your screens so it's upside down to you at the moment. There's no integration with the scans from the satellite. We're working on it. I'll give you a look at that in a sec."

There was a pause whilst Frogleberg tried to study the dots and make sense of them. Suddenly the dots were gone. Replaced with an aerial view of the park. It zoomed in tighter in a jerking motion. Now Frogleberg could clearly see the shape of the top of the stage. He there was a sea of people in front of it and a relatively open space behind it. A few other dotted structures around it. Again it jerked and zoomed in. Now he could see the backstage area and dots of people. The view jerked again and he could see right down into the stage. He could see Philip on the stage in front of him as well as from overhead. Though the picture was beginning to lose definition. Up until that time the pictures had all be snapshots but suddenly the picture animated. He could see Philip moving on stage. The picture jerked again and froze. It was a picture of the crowd from almost directly overhead. It zoomed in closer then began to animate. He could see three people standing whilst the rest of the crowd was gyrating around them.

"Shit that's us!" exclaimed Frogleberg in momentary excitement. No one heard him over the music. He was tempted to look up and wave but thought better of it. He knew what it

would mean to twenty thousand or more zonked out people. Suddenly the picture disappeared altogether. Frogleberg was beginning to wonder what had happened when the overview returned and now was integrated with the dots. It was impossible to tell who was who from the cluster of dots without some kind of visual identification. The dots appeared to be clustered all towards the back of the stage. Frogleberg got writing on his PDA again. "Shouldn't there be a dot out front for Salisman?"

A pause and a message came scrolling back from Appleyard. "Looks like Salisman has taken off his ID badge. Seven Badges clustered back stage. Can't get visual but." There was a pause. A white circle appeared to be drawn on the image where Salisman was on stage. There was clearly no dot in the circle. Appleyard continued. "We just got to hope he puts it back on."

The show seemed to go on forever. None of the three could get into it. They were all concerned with what might happen to Philip after the show. Frogleberg caught sight of someone he vaguely recognised in the crowd. Walking in front of him with a woman. He tapped Jackson on the shoulder and pointed at them as they receded out of view. Jackson just shrugged his shoulders. He gestured for Jackson and Redenkov to stay where they were. He took off after the people. He spotted them ahead of him walking casually through the crowd. He made his way through through the crowd to get ahead of them but never losing sight. When he was suitably ahead he turned and headed back towards them. He put one of the clips on his glasses and made sure he came into visual range of them. Trying not to let them notice him.

As soon as he was past he pulled out his PDA again and scrawled on it. "Did you see those people? Get me an ID."

A few seconds later he saw the video of his encounter being played back. Appleyard circled two people in front of his actual target and scribbled a question mark next to it.

"No the next two," scribbled Frogleberg. The video moved on to the intended targets and froze. The circle came out again.

Frogleberg scrawled. "Yeah. The guy!!!"

A message scrolled back from Appleyard. "I'll run it by HQ."

The image disappeared and Frogleberg made his way back to his companions.

Jackson eyed him off as he returned with an expression that asked if everything was OK. Frogleberg nodded in reply. Philip's section of the festival was coming to a close. His music was much louder and full. He had been playing for an hour and ten minutes. He was already ten minutes over time. All the acts had gone a little over time. The concert wasn't due to wind up for another nine hours but would probably go for another twelve at this rate. The performance wound up with the crowd going wild. Frogleberg gestured that they should make a move but with the crowd now throwing it self around so wildly it was slow going. They would have to wait till Philip wound it up entirely before they could make any real progress. There was no extreme hurry. Philip would still have to get out of his costume and make up before he could make any kind of move.

CHAPTER 12:

Philip thanked the crowd and waved his arms in the air. The gig had gone well and he was pleased. But now it was time to exit the stage. The MC was walking back on and about to announce another comedian. Philip made it back stage dragging his umbilical. Two of the roadies grabbed it and prevented it from snagging. A third grabbed his suite and began to unbuckle it. Philip was out of it in under thirty seconds and very much glad of the weight being removed. He was sweating profusely. The fourth roadie threw him his tee shirt.

"Now come and meet my friends," said Jenny.

"Wait up," said Philip. "I've gotta get my coat from the van." He was smiling as he stepped down off the stage. Albert slapped him on his back as the fourth roadie handed him a towel to wipe off the perspiration.

"Well done ol' son," said Albert. "You really knocked 'em dead out there."

The other three roadies were taking care of the equipment. Rolling it off stage and preparing to pack it back into the flight cases. Readying it to be shipped back home to Nova Scotia.

"Come on. Meet my friends now," said Jenny more insistently.

"Alright Alright," said Philip. "Where are these friends of your's?"

"They should be outside by the RV," said Jenny.

"Oh. OK then. I have to go and get my coat and stuff from the van so I can talk to them there then. But only for a second or two. I have to come back and make sure everything's locked down here before I can go."

"Ok," said Jenny and she put her arm in his and made way for the marquee and the security post.

Philip turned back to Albert. "Oh, I'll be needing the keys Albert."

Albert looked at him blankly for a second then realized he was talking about the keys to the RV. He dug round in his pocket and slung them at Philip. They were caught in Philip's one, unoccupied hand. They were almost at the marquee when one of the roadies came running up from behind. Philip turned to see what all the fuss was about.

"You forgot this," said the roadie as he handed Philip his ID badge. "You won't be able to get back in without it."

"Thanks," said Philip. He smiled and the roadie ran back off.

"They'd probably let me back in without it. They know my face, I think. But it's better to be safe than sorry."

Jenny smiled. She seemed somehow less interested in him. Philip thought that perhaps she was worried about missing her friends. She probably wanted to show off to them.

CHAPTER 13:

They passed through security and out of the marquee. Philip looked around but the area seemed to be scarce of people. Certainly no-one standing around waiting for them. Philip rubbed his shoulders. It was beginning to get very cold. He was beginning to refrigerate with all the sweat he had generated.

"I'm going to get my coat."

Jenny didn't say anything she just followed him to the RV. He put the key in the side door but it was already unlocked. He didn't think too much of it. He thought that Albert or the roadie must have forgotten to check when they arrived. He opened the door, put one foot on the step and was about to jack himself up inside. Then he noticed two people, A man and a woman, sitting on one of the seats. Before he could question what was going on he noticed the man had a gun in his lap. Philip turned and was about to tell Jenny to run when he noticed Jenny also had a gun. Only her gun was pointing straight at him. He had no time to question anything.

"Get inside," said Jenny in an uncharacteristically forceful voice. She waved the gun in his face. Philip was confused. He froze where he was as his brain tried to come to terms with this new reality.

"Go on. Get the fuck in there," said Jenny with such anger that he knew she meant business.

Philip reluctantly turned and stepped up inside the RV.

"The keys," said Jenny.

"What?" said Philip.

"Give her the fuckin' keys asshole," said the man. Philip slowly handed her the keys. He felt himself shaking. He had never been in a situation like this before. He racked his brain for something to say but nothing useful crossed his mind.

"Sit down, Mister Salisman," said the man. "Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Perters. Leon Perters. And these are my associates." Perters gestured to Jenny who took the keys to the drivers seat and prepared to get it into motion.

"I work for some people who aren't terribly humane, Mister Salisman. Or should I say. Not very human." Perters laughed a maniacal laugh. The laugh of a mad man.

The engine started and Jenny fumbled for the gears. She found reverse and floored it. A couple of ravers who were returning from one of the many venders beyond the stage area, dropped their food and made a dash for cover as the RV hurtled backwards toward them. She arced round backwards and threw it into drive. She planted it and made for the exit.

"We have a little problem with your disk, Mister Salisman. We made a copy of your disk successfully enough but we can't break your encryption. And we know you have some very interesting information on that disk."

CHAPTER 14:

Frogleberg, Jackson and Redenkov rounded the end of the stage after having forced their way through the crowd. Frogleberg noticed the RV missing.

"Anthony, Give me a fix on the ID badges please." It was easier to talk now. They were away from the PA speakers and the next band was yet to start up.

"There are two blips heading out on the park lane. The rest are inside back stage." The now familiar blips appeared in Frogleberg's glasses. Complete with the satellite generated overhead view. A square box that looked like the RV.

"Can you tell who it is?"

"Sorry no. We never got a visual. But if you can get a bit closer we can get a visual from your clip."

"Jeez, I may as well go in and have a look myself," said Frogleberg. He turned to Jackson and Redenkov. "Call Petrov and Snypes and get them to their car as quickly as possible. I don't like the sound of this."

Frogleberg ran over to the marquee entrance and disappeared inside. A large security man instinctively tried to stop him. With one swift elbow Frogleberg laid him out cold. Before the other three security men and the woman could move much more than a foot Frogleberg had his fake ID badge out. The woman held up her hand and the remaining security men stopped in their tracks.

"Sorry," shouted Frogleberg back at them as he ran out of the marquee and to the back stage area. He caught sight of Philip's manager and made a path to him in record time.

"Where's Salisman?"

"What?" said Albert.

"You heard me. Where's Salisman?"

"He's gone out to the RV with Jenny."

Frogleberg took off back the way he had come. As he ran he shouted. "Salisman's in the RV with that woman." Then he realized that he was in effect, talking to himself. He withdrew his mobile phone and repeated. "Salisman's in the RV. Somebody get to the cars. Anthony. Get a fix."

He ran through the marquee again. He met a security man on the inside face to face, knocking him to the ground accidentally. Like dominoes, the security guard crashed into the other two security guards who were trying to help the first man after Frogleberg had laid him out.

"Sorry," shouted Frogleberg as he exited the marquee. He made a bee line for the car as fast as he could. Jackson and Redenkov were already in it and warming up the engine. Frogleberg dived into the front passenger seat and before he could close the door they were on their way.

The car sped round the park lane as fast as it could. Spinning out on the gravel surface.

"Where are they heading now?" shouted Frogleberg. He didn't have to shout. Appleyard could hear him just fine. But after his marathon run he couldn't help shouting.

"They seem to be heading back into Reykjavik," said Appleyard. "But we've lost definition because it's out of telemetry range. We're relying entirely on the satellite to keep track. If they get more than about 10 Kilometres out I'll have to re-calibrate the satellite to cope."

"How fast are they moving?"

"Fast. Pretty fast. Especially for an RV." A visual came up on everyone's visors just as Jackson was making the manoeuvre out of the park lane and onto the main road. The car spun out slightly.

"Shit Man," said Jackson. "Watch who your showin' that shit to dude!"

"Sorry," said Appleyard.

CHAPTER 15:

"You can't break the encryption?" said Salisman as the woman with Perters handed him a lap top computer. Philip realized that she was the woman who went back with Psylem a few nights before. He didn't mention it. He figured the less said the better.

"We know that," said Perters "That's why we've got you."

"No no no. That's not what I meant. It's no good trying to crack the disk on this lap top. The only way you're going to get it is with my personal lap top."

"And where might that be, Mr Salisman?" Philip thought about lying. He thought about telling them it was back stage. If he could get them to take him back there he might stand a chance.

"It's in his fucking hotel room," shouted Jenny from the front seat. Philip said nothing, relieved he hadn't tried to swing a deception.

"A minor inconvenience but nothing we can't handle," said Perters.

"Still. There's nothing you can do if I don't give access to the data."

Perters turned to face Philip solemnly. "My dear Mister Salisman. You're going to give us access to the data. I just know it. I don't think you'd want any harm to come to your lovely wife and daughter do you." Perters smiled the smile of a truly evil man.

Philip looked away. He had two last aces left up his sleeve. "Of course you realize you can't copy the data on the disk. Once the encryption is in effect, you can't copy the data off the machine. There's only one way you can get that data back and that is using the super computer at work."

"We'll get our own super computer if that's what it takes. That's no problem."

"No. It has to be that particular super computer."

Salisman hoped that Perters and who ever it was he worked for, didn't know that this disk only contained a very small sample of the total information he had collected. He also hoped that he didn't know about the fail safe against SHADO coming after him. Otherwise all they would have to do is kill him and the information would become public knowledge.

"Tricky but not impossible, Mister Salisman. It may take a little time to organize but we can get in there."

Then Philip realized that as soon as they chewed through the data on that disk, even if they couldn't copy it, they would realize that there was more to it. Time was running out and so were Philip's options.

CHAPTER 16:

"Yeah they're definitely heading back into Reykjavik," said Appleyard. "You're about three minutes behind them."

"OK," said Frogberg. "What is going on? This doesn't seem right. At all. Where's Petrov and Snypes?"

"They're another three or so minutes behind you again," said Appleyard. "Look if they go into Reykjavik I'll have to re-cal the Satellite."

"But we'll lose them," said Jackson.

"No we won't," said Appleyard. "It'll take about forty five seconds to do the re-cal if I set it up now. However you might lose a bit of ground. We don't know where they're headed after that."

Redenkov put in one of his rare vocal inputs. "Why can't you re-cal now? We know where they're headed at the moment."

"A man of few words," said Appleyard. "But when the man speaks he speaks words of wisdom. I'm on it. It'll take about 2 minutes to set up but you'll have a track until I do the actual re-cal."

Perters pulled out his mobile phone and dialled. "It's me. I think it's time you checked on Mrs. Salisman." There was a pause. Philip couldn't hear the other half of the conversation.

"No no. Just make sure she's at home and keep an eye on her. No need to do anything till I say so."

Philip's heart almost leapt into his throat. He racked his brain for a solution, a way out, some way he could rescue his wife, Janet, and his daughter, Claudia, but he was feeling increasingly helpless. He could see they were entering the suburbs of Reykjavik.

"Don't worry Mister Salisman. We'll be there soon," said Perters. "And don't think of making a run for it either Mister Salisman. It wouldn't be good for your health."

"You can't kill me. You need me to unlock the data."

"Who said anything about killing. But bullet in the right place can make the rest of your miserable life... Well even more miserable. If you follow me."

Philip remained expressionless. He imagined that they were desperate people. "Don't you think SHADO knows all this too? Don't you think they'll be trying to prevent you from getting the information?" said Philip in a feeble attempt to outwit his opponents.

"Mister Salisman. You're smart but not smart enough. If SHADO knew about this they would have killed you before now."

"Oh and like you're not going to kill me once you have what you want anyway," said Philip.

"We might. Then again we might not." Perters laughed. "We might have to toss a coin."

* * *

"I've got a message for you from HQ," said Appleyard. "They got the ID back almost immediately but they didn't believe it. They had to run it by Straker himself."

"So what's the deal?" asked Frogberg.

"It's about that guy you eyeballed."

"Oh Yeah?"

"Someone called Perters?" Anthony punched up a mug shot up in front of Frogberg.

"They said he was supposed to be dead," continued Appleyard.

Frogberg said nothing. He just stared at the picture in his visor.

"Who is he Colonel?"

"Only one of the vilest mo-fos you never wanna meet. And they're right, he is spose to be dead."

"I've got the data on him here. Says Straker was supposed to have killed him personally," said Appleyard trying to pump for a more personal angle.

"Oh, yeah, back in nineteen ninety two. I was just new to SHADO then. I was working security during that Gulf War fiasco. Man, the aliens really tried to capitalize on that. And Perters was out there trying to help 'em. If Straker hadn't have killed 'im who knows what might of happened. What does the data say?"

Appleyard punched up the text so that Frogleberg could see it.

"Read it out, boss," said Jackson, still working hard at the steering wheel.

"Leon Perters. One time head of Majik? An offshoot of the CIA. They don't approve of SHADO being made international and therefore out of the control of the US. (Which was giving most of the capital to set up SHADO.) They were maintained as a kind of provisional watch dog but were never disbanded. When SHADO clamped down on its security and went invisible in the 70s, Majik was left out in the cold. - May or may not have direct connections with the aliens but probably do since they feel that trading a few human lives for advanced tech would be worth it. They may or may not understand what the aliens agenda actually is, but probably do to some extent and believe they can handle the aliens anyway. Majik disapproves of Straker personally because they consider him a boy scout and not an operative. Not fitting with the culture of the intelligence community of the time."

"But that was a long time ago," said Appleyard. "Certainly before my time."

"Yeah. I haven't heard of them for a long time. I thought the whole organization died with Perters. If that really was Perters? But we can't take any chances. Everyone better be on full alert." Frogleberg paused. The concern was beginning to show.

"So what's the deal with Straker needing to be brought back into this? Other than he killed him, or thought he did," said Appleyard.

Frogleberg sighed. "Look no one knows for sure, okay. But the rumour at the time was that Straker and Perters were old pals. They started out in military intelligence together in the sixties. It wasn't just an empire building issue. It was personal. Straker always tried to avoid him but Perters was always there ready to try and trip him up. Apparently there were some funding issues in the early eighties. General Henderson, whose job it was to administer SHADO, suddenly turned against it. From what I understand Henderson was beginning favouring Majik instead. It was all sorted eventually but when Straker killed Perters, questions were being asked. No-one was sure how much of it was business and how much was personal."

Frogleberg looked around at Jackson and then back at Redenkov. "And if you're worried about this. You should be. From what I recall, Perters is one evil son of a bitch. He killed two of his own agents rather than have to share his water with them when he was out in the desert in Iraq. He killed another one just trying to get a pot shot at Straker."

* * *

The RV cruised up to the entrance to the Borg hotel.

"Now don't try to do anything stupid, Mister Salisman. We're going to go inside and get the computer."

"But I don't have the disk," said Philip. "It's back at the stage with the backup disks."

"Remember, we said we took a copy. We know there's no way your computer can tell the difference." Perters turned to Jenny who was still at the wheel. "Stay here."

Jenny nodded. Philip noted how remarkably different Jenny was now. He could not even recognise her as the same person. He wondered if there was any of the Jenny he had previously known left inside that body. The other girl stepped from the RV first. Then Perters pushed Philip to get out.

"Remember. Don't be a hero or this could get messy. Not just for you but for some people you care about." The three of them entered the lobby. Philip approached the desk clerk and asked for his key.

"How did your show go?" asked the desk clerk.

"Oh. Ok," said Philip reluctantly. He turned and headed for the stairs. Perters prodded him toward the elevators. Philip shrugged and pressed for the lift car. It arrived a few seconds later. They stepped in and the woman pressed the second floor. The doors closed and the lift jerked into motion.

"I'll take those," said Perters as he snatched the room keys from Philip. Philip didn't flinch. He said nothing and remained motionless as they roared upwards. He looked at the woman and then at Perters. Perters smiled his evil grin. The elevator car reached its destination and the doors opened. Once again the woman stepped ahead followed by Philip with a shove from Perters behind. Perters extracted his handgun and put it to Philip's head. Philip was sweating slightly now but remaining as cool as he could.

"Here," said Perters as he threw the keys to the woman. "Unlock it and check it."

The woman fumbled with the keys and then Philip heard the familiar click. She left the keys in the door and extracted her own handgun. Flinging the door open she rushed inside. Pointing her gun in all directions. Covering her back.

Philip let out a faint laugh which broke her poise entirely. Philip had only seen behaviour like this on television. Sensing that Philip was taking them less than seriously, Perters smacked Philip on the back of the head with the handle of his gun. Philip fell to the floor.

"Oh you think it's fucking funny now do you? get up or I'll put a fucking bullet in your ass."

Philip slowly climbed to his feet. Perters closed the hotel room door behind them.

"Find the computer," demanded Perters to his pretentious companion. It wasn't hard to find. It was in the bedroom doorway where Philip had left it. She picked it up and opened it instinctively. There was no booby trap so she placed it on the table in front of Philip who was now in the process of sitting down at the table. He rubbed his head, weary at the beating he had taken. He looked at his hand and there was a trace of blood. He reached for the laptop and was about to boot it up when he was struck across the head a second time. This time across the temple. He fell across the seat next to the one he was sitting on but was dragged up by the scruff of his neck.

"Not here you stupid bastard. The fucking disk we copied is back in the RV."

Philip looked Perters directly in the eyes. He had the expression of a victim at last and this was just the way Perters liked it. As Philip looked at Perters face. He sensed the man was becoming rapidly psychopathic. He had to get out of this soon but there was no way out. Still he said nothing. His mind concentrating. Searching hard through the lack of sleep and the haze of a zonk hangover, to find the exit door. His one and only consolation that he didn't do any zonk that night. Perters dragged him to his feet.

"Well grab the computer," said Perters. Philip looked down and grabbed it. He didn't bother to close it. He thought it might attract enough attention to get him out of it in the lobby. He was clutching at straws. Perters opened the door and just before he went through it, Philip

felt the click as the woman closed the lap top behind him.

CHAPTER 17:

As they went down in the elevator Perters and the woman stowed their guns. The lift jerked again and the doors slid open. This time there was no shove from Perters but Philip knew the drill. He stepped out into the lobby. The girl returned the keys to the desk clerk without a word. The desk clerk sensed there was something wrong but not enough that she knew what to do about it. A doorman held the door open for them and still Philip said nothing. The woman rushed in front and opened the side door to the RV. She waited as Perters herded Philip up the step and inside. The woman was next she had one foot in the door and was stepping up when a voice shouted.

"Freeze Perters." It was the voice of Frogleberg.

Perters's gun was out in an instant. Pointing in all directions looking for the source. He found the source behind the hire car that was parked a short distance up the street. Behind the RV.

"Kill him!" shouted Perters. Philip saw her raise her gun and aim it directly toward him. Philip closed his eyes and there was a gun shot. He kept them closed and instinctively put his hand over them until he felt something land on him. Something warm heavy and slightly wet. It dragged his hand away from his eyes. He opened them instinctively. He screeched as he realized it was the body of the woman. The wetness as the blood and bits of brain oozing from the gaping hole in her head. He felt his stomach churn as he began to vomit.

Philip looked up as he emptied his stomach contents and saw Perters swing his gun toward him. There was nothing he could do. Suddenly Perters jerked backwards with the sound of another gunshot. Perters flung himself against the side of the RV just forward of the open doorway. He was hit in the shoulder but he still had his gun. He fired at the two men approaching from behind.

Jackson and Frogleberg jumped in behind the RV for cover. Perters looked for an exit. He looked in the front cab of the RV hoping to drive himself and his victim out but noticed the dead body of Jenny in the front seat in a pool of blood. He began to run down the street toward a black sedan parked just in front of the RV. He didn't recall it being there when they arrived. A man with a gun appeared from behind it. Perters instinctively took aim and fired. The bullet connecting with Petrov, downing him. Perters saw Jackson trying to get a shot from behind the RV and fired in his general direction.

"It's not over yet," shouted Perters. "You still loose." Redenkov appeared from the road side of the RV and took aim but Perters was too far down the street. He reached the next side street. There was a small two door saloon pulling out of it. Perters approached it and shot the driver. A woman on her way home from somewhere. He dragged her still heaving body from the driver's seat and took her place. As he sped off he took more pot shots at the RV and the SHADO team. Then he was gone.

Philip looked up from the mixture of body parts and his own vomit, still shaking helplessly to see another man at the door. This time a man he knew. It was Frogleberg.

"He's going to kill my wife," said Philip not able to stop the tears streaming.

"Where is your wife Salisman?" said Frogleberg, still pumped up from all the action.

"At home," sobbed Philip. "And my little girl."

"What you mean, home home? As in back in Nova Scotia?"

Philip just nodded. He couldn't bury his head in his hands. They both had blood on them.

"Shit!" said Frogleberg. "Anthony get that plane up here fast."

Redenkov and Jackson were standing by the door now.

"Jackson, Redenkov, you're with me," said Froggleberg as he turned to face them and step from the RV.

"He got Petrov," said Redenkov. The most concern that the emotionless Russian had shown in a long while.

"No he didn't," said Snypes approaching with Petrov using him as a crutch. "He's just winded."

Snypes knocked on Petrov's chest. Petrov bent in pain. "He's got a vest on. He'll be alright in a minute." There was the sound of police sirens in the distance.

"Right," said Froggleberg. "No time to loose. Everyone meet at the Reykjavik airport. Anthony. Tell that pilot to get that thing in the air and down here. Get what ever clearances you need but get that thing in the air. And do it fast." Froggleberg turned to Philip.

"Well? Are you coming?" Philip composed himself. he tried not to think about what he was looking at. As he stood up he could see Jenny's blood covered body in the front seat. Her gun still clenched in her hand. He was about to step from the door. Still not sure he should trust the SHADO men.

"Shit there's a disk here somewhere."

His composure returned briefly. He saw a small brief case on the floor. He grabbed it and opened it. There was a gun in it and assorted devices, He saw the disk. He retrieved it and threw the brief case on the seat. Then he took another look at the brief case, He looked back and saw there was no-one standing in the door. He quickly retrieved the gun from the brief case and stashed it on his person. He threw the CD back in the brief case and dragged it with him.

"Come on," shouted Froggleberg from somewhere behind the RV. Philip sprang from the RV and ran toward the car. Redenkov was holding the rear passenger door open for him. Philip threw himself in, blood and all. He threw the brief case on the floor. He tried to nurse the gun without anyone noticing he had it. No-one noticed. They sped off toward the local Reykjavik airport. Mainly for internal air traffic but today, they were going to get a visit from a very international Lear X.

CHAPTER 18:

The drive gave the four of them time to think. No-one saying a word. There was too much going on inside Philip's head. His wife, his daughter, Jenny and the mysterious Mister Perters. The gun he was trying to conceal was digging into his hip and causing him pain. He hoped it didn't go off. Jackson broke the silence.

"Here comes Petrov and Snypes up behind us." Philip tried to look but couldn't move. Redenkov turned and saw the sedan with the two men in it in the distance.

"We're going to do our best to save your wife and daughter, Mister Salisman," said Frogleberg.

"I have a team moving in. They'll be there before we will but it will still take some time. They have to scramble from our base in Maine but they're on their way. Sorry about all the blood. You can clean up on in the plane on the way. You can have a change of clothes."

Philip nodded then he thought of the gun he was now carrying. If he changed his clothes, how would he continue to conceal it?

"How did you manage to get a shot at that woman?" asked Philip. "You couldn't have seen her."

Frogleberg picked off one of his telemetry clips and handed it to Philip behind him. Philip was reluctant to take the object at first but Frogleberg insisted.

"Miniature personal telemetry. It's the latest thing. I put one in the RV after you arrived."

"So you could see me the whole time. You could have done something before that bastard beat six kinds of crap out of me."

"No, unfortunately these little things have a limited range. We have to be real close. The only time we could use it was when we caught up to the RV parked outside of your hotel."

The cars neared the domestic terminal in Reykjavik.

"We seem to have alluded the police," said Frogleberg looking behind him.

"Don't look now," said Jackson.

"What? Where?" Frogleberg was looking intently around them.

"No I mean. Like whenever someone says we got away with it, within seconds of them saying it something happens."

Frogleberg settled. The car approached the entrance and Jackson slowed it.

"How do you guys find your way around so easily?" asked Philip. "I always had trouble. And I've been here before."

Jackson held up his PDA and showed it to Philip. Philip could clearly see a street map on it. As detailed as any city street map.

"Man that little box must have some horsepower."

The car pulled up in the small car-park. There wasn't much activity. Some light planes tethered and one had just lifted off. Snypes and the still reeling Petrov pulled in behind moments later. Their respective engines were turned off and they just sat there.

"So aren't we going to get out?" said Philip.

"Not looking like that sunshine," said Jackson.

Philip realised just how much of a dripping mess he was.

"Hell I need a shower. You guy's got a shower?" Redenkov scoffed.

"Not exactly," said Jackson. "But you can get cleaned up on board." Philip looked down at the brief case on the floor.

"Damn I forgot to grab my lap top out o' the RV. That cost me a small fortune."

"We'll get you another one," said Froggleberg.

"Thanks but it had some stuff I was working on, on the drive as well. " Philip laughed as a thought crossed his mind.

"You know I told them that I needed that specific lap top to decrypt the data. Otherwise it wouldn't work."

"And do you?" asked Froggleberg.

"No not specifically. But I was trying to think of anything that would buy some time."

"That was good thinking," said Froggleberg turning to face Philip behind him. "Probably saved your life."

Appleyard's face appeared in front of Froggleberg. It startled him slightly.

"Damn it Anthony. I wish you wouldn't keep doing that."

"Sorry, sir, but I've got a link to Commander Pilgrim at HQ for you."

"OK Give me a tick. Sorry chaps. Gotta take this outside." Philip couldn't work out what was happening as Froggleberg stepped out and closed the door. Jackson, now leaning across the drivers seat handed Philip his glasses.

"Err Anthony, could you punch up some pictures on my glasses so that Salisman can see." Philip secured them on his head as best he could without getting body fluid on them.

"I don't see... Ahhh I see. That's neat."

Jackson wound down his window and put one of his clips in the roof gutter of the car.

"Yo' Anthony. Put up the picture from the clip I just stuck on the roof."

"Whoa. That's incredible," said Philip. "What's that police car doing over there? Where is that exactly?"

"What police car?" said Jackson. "Gimme those things back a minute."

Philip carefully removed the glasses from his head but Redenkov had already spotted it visually.

"There it is over there," said Redenkov trying to make it less obvious he was pointing. A police car, still in the distance but beginning to cruise the car park.

"Anthony," said the thick russian accent. "Perhaps you should tell the Colonel?"

Froggleberg was finishing his conversation with Commander Pilgrim as he climbed back inside.

"Yup. But I think we've got another problem here." They watched as the patrol car cruised past slowly.

"Have they spotted us?" said Philip. There was silence as they watched the car recede into the distance.

Froggleberg instinctively put his hand to his ear to hear the message from Appleyard. Then he announced it. "The plane's coming in to land any minute." He looked round hoping the patrol car was out of sight.

Jackson opened his door but Froggleberg held his shoulder. They were still not quite out of range. They waited a few more seconds and then disembarked.

"Stay low," said Froggleberg as he crouched and signalled to Petrov and Snypes. They heard the sound of jet engines above them somewhere. "Shit that's going to attract some attention here I'm sure."

They moved off as low as they could. Out to the edge of the few parked cars in the car park. Looking through the window of one of them Jackson gave the all clear. They stood up and walked briskly toward the tarmac. They heard the screech of tired from the Lear X as the engines wound up reverse thrust.

"Try not to attract attention," said Frogleberg but it was too late. The patrol car was returning and had spotted them in the distance. The plane was still taxiing on the runway. Frogleberg looked back and saw the police car approaching more rapidly now.

"Anthony can you get that plane any closer? We've run into a spot of bother ol' son," said Frogleberg.

"That's a negative," came the voice of the pilot. "We're going to have a hard enough time getting this thing back in the air as it is."

"Right, guys," said Frogleberg. "I think it's time we made a run for it." They put on the speed. There was a large distance to overcome and the police car was gaining on them rapidly. Through the terminal gates and onto the tarmac behind them. They reached a grassy area between the tarmac and the runway. Philip was losing pace balancing the brief case. He knew he couldn't afford to lose it and the gun was causing pain. They could hear other sirens in the distance as the patrol car approached within 20 metres.

"Stuff it," shouted Frogleberg as he reached into his pocket and pulled out two decoy caps. He broke them in his hand as hard as he could and threw them just before the heat burnt his hand. The patrol car veered off not knowing what the smoke was all about.

"Don't make me use my cigarette lighter, you bastards!" shouted Frogleberg as he grabbed Philip and pulled him along. He looked back and could see six other police cars coming through the terminal gates in the distance. The patrol car had stopped and they were almost at the plane.

Appleyard had the door open and ready to scoop them up. Redenkov made it there first. He waited as Jackson ran up the steps at full speed followed closely Snypes and the rapidly improving Petrov.

Frogleberg came in last towing the out of breath Salisman. Frogleberg ran up and onboard but Philip ran out of steam only a metre before the plane. The burly Russian grabbed Philip and literally threw him on board. Philip landed ungracefully. His gun slipping between him and the deck as Jackson and Appleyard grabbed him and pulled him in. Redenkov climbed aboard and began closing the hatch in one graceful movement.

"Go Go Go," shouted Appleyard and they heard the roar of the engines pick up.

Philip rolled sideways with the jerk of acceleration revealing the gun. Frogleberg picked it up and eyed it off ever so briefly. Philip looking guilty.

"Don't worry. We'll get you a better one than this toy. You're a brave man to be carrying a gun in your trousers without the safety on."

Redenkov pulled Philip to his feet. Philip instinctively cupped one hand over his groin. Philip was indignant about the whole affair.

"God Dammit," said Philip. "Look I'm a reasonably popular musician. To supplement my musical ambition I work for a telephone company, at a satellite up-down station in Halifax Nova Scotia. I have a loving wife and a beautiful young daughter. I sometimes get bored at work and check out the data traffic for anything interesting being transmitted through the station. We all do. Sometimes you get to see television programs before anyone else. And sometimes you even get porno. We're trained to monitor things to make sure everything is working. But nowhere in my job description did it say I had to endure a psychopathic maniac with a gun, being beat up, shot at and covered in someone else's blood. And then having to run from the police with five half assed spies to try and rescue my own family. I'm just not trained for this kinda shit."

"I think you'd better sit down Mister Salisman," said Frogleberg. "The plane is about to lift

off."

Philip felt the vibrations as the plane hit take-off speed. He found a seat next to Jackson.

"And who are you callin' half assed?" said Jackson. "I've got at least three quarters of an ass thank you very much."

The plane bumped along for a few more moments and then with one stomach churning lurch it's motion became smooth. It pulled ever steeper into the sky.

CHAPTER 19:

The Lear X climbed and took up a heading south west, climbing again to an altitude of two thousand metres. Philip took the first opportunity to wash and change. It wasn't a shower but it was the next best thing. He almost vomited again when he had to wash the blood off, realizing that some of it was congealed body parts. He had not known the woman but perhaps Psylem had. He wondered what Psylem would say when he found out she was dead. Then he realized that he could probably not tell Psylem any of this. He had an insurance policy against SHADO but Psylem didn't. He realized that he had told too many people too much already.

He also realized why he had told people. It was the only mechanism by which he could leak the fact that he had any kind of security against SHADO. He hoped he hadn't leaked way too much information. He returned to his seat, past Appleyard's equipment at the rear of the cabin. Appleyard was only too pleased to show him over his equipment. Only after approval from Colonel Frogleberg though.

There was no point in worrying about things like that now. Salisman knew all the crucial points about SHADO. He may as well know the rest. Salisman sat in his seat with a coffee. There was very little to eat on the plane. Some dry biscuits and some spreads. Philip was satisfied with some of these and some cottage cheese. He was sitting and calming when Redenkov sat next to him and handed him a gun. It was a big silver thing. Philip heard Redenkov mention it was an Israeli design and was called a Desert Eagle. Redenkov gave him a crash course on how to use it. He handed him half a dozen clips and then stressed once again about the importance of the safety. Philip only really took in the bits about pulling the trigger, the safety and the possibility that a bullet might not fire and jam in the chamber. Though he couldn't remember what to do about it if that did in fact happen.

A short while later Jackson appeared with one of Appleyard's pairs of sun glasses. Philip was shown how to use them and Jackson took the opportunity to talk to Philip about his music. Philip was surprised that a man like that would know so much about his music and the underground music scene in general. Philip was beginning to like his new friends although he was still cautious. They certainly weren't the kind of people he expected them to be. All except for Redenkov. Who was exactly the type of person he expected them to be. Even Petrov and Snypes seemed vaguely likeable.

Finally Frogleberg sat beside him. "You know you're going to have to join SHADO now don't you?"

Philip looked at him incredulously.

Frogleberg continued. "We can't have you running round the country side. You're too much of a security risk."

"Not a chance," said Philip. "The moment I give it up you've got reason to kill me."

Frogleberg was shaking his head. "We're not killers Mister Salisman. Who do you think we are? The CIA? The only time we'd kill someone is if it was, well someone like Perters and his team. Then there's really no choice."

Philip didn't know what to say but he wasn't cut out for this kind of life.

"Well think about it, Mister Salisman. You're really stuck between a rock and a hard place. There's still Perters and his organization out there. We can't predict what he'll get up to next. We weren't even aware that he was still alive till he came to your show. You must have leaked some of that information somewhere. Who know's what trouble that could bring? Just think about it, Mister Salisman, okay?"

The conversation was stopped short by a warning alarm sound ringing through the cabin.

"What's going on?" said Philip as Frogleberg instinctively sprang to his feet.

"Red Alert. Mister Salisman," said Frogleberg and he was off in Appleyard's direction.

"We've got incoming," said Appleyard.

"What?" said Frogleberg.

"UFO. Haven't got it on radar. It must be invisible but HQ just picked it up with the new tracking arrays. Heading our way."

"Damn. How many of the damn things have they got hidden? At least we should be thankful we can pick them up at all now I guess. Right I need to get onto HQ and I need to speak with the pilots. I'll take it on the flight deck." Frogleberg strode off. Philip had turned in his seat trying to catch what was going on.

"A UFO, Mister Salisman," said Appleyard. "And it looks like we're the target."

Philip felt more helpless than ever. He stood as if he could do something but there was nothing he or his new gun could do anything about. If none of the other, trained and better qualified SHADO staff could do anything he had no hope. Appleyard called him over and showed him the incoming flight path plot being relayed to them from SHADO HQ.

"The arrays picked it up lifting off from Greenland. They seem to like Greenland for some reason." Appleyard explained that these were a new breed of UFO with a limited camouflaging capacity. That they had been sneaked in during the solar storms in 2001. That no-one as yet knew how many had been hidden around the globe. That the ability to see them reliably, even when camouflaged had only recently been perfected.

"It looks like it's coming straight at us," said Philip.

"Yeah and real fast. They don't look real aerodynamic but with their kinda propulsion system they can move real fast."

"Haven't you got a submarine aircraft thingy?" said Philip.

"Yeah it's on it's way. That's it there on the screen." Appleyard pointed to another blip. "But it'll be close. The UFO will probably reach us first."

Philip saw the look of concern on Appleyard's face. "Just out of interest, which direction is the flying sub thing coming from?"

"Out of the north Atlantic," said Appleyard. "Heading south almost the same as we are."

"And how much fuel do we have?" continued Philip. whilst pointing his finger back along their flight path on the screen.

"I think I see what you're getting at Philip," said Appleyard with an amazed smile. He picked up a microphone.

"Colonel, Philip Salisman has just made, what I think is a good suggestion." There was a pause Philip's heart sank. He didn't know if it was a good idea or not and if it wasn't he would not only make himself look stupid but also Appleyard for following him.

"What is it Anthony?"

"If we simply change direction and start heading back north, we'll close the gap between us and Sky One."

There was another pause. This time longer than before. The reply came. "Sit down."

Philip's heart sank even lower. He thought he was being told to shut up. Then suddenly he felt the floor give way underneath him. He suddenly knew why he should sit down. He stumbled for the nearest seat as the plane banked round. They were doing exactly what Philip had suggested.

"Oh and by the way," came the voice of Frogleberg on the speaker. "Nice work Philip."

We were racking our brains for ways to make land fall somewhere in Newfoundland. This will buy us about 5 minutes. Which is all the time Sky One will need to close the gap. Good thinking." The speaker clicked off.

* * *

The plane levelled off heading back the way they came. Phillip climbed out of the seat he had hastily retreated to and back to Appleyard's array of equipment.

"I'm just a tad curious," said Philip. "To see these UFOs and track them you need satellites right?"

Appleyard nodded.

"And now your telling me to see these new UFOs you've had to invent a new technology that could spot them?"

"Err well yeah the technology's been around for years but we had to find a new way to deploy it, but, yeah."

"So how did the UFOs know we were here?"

Appleyard didn't quite understand what Philip was driving at.

"I mean how can they track us. They don't have a network of satellites do they? And even if they did for that matter, how would they know that this specific air craft is a target?"

Appleyard scratched his head for a moment. "You know. Well. Um. Well I guess Perters could have something to do with letting them know which plane is the target but as for being able to track us. I have no idea really. I don't think anyone's ever asked that question."

It was a tense ten minutes as the Lear X sped full throttle northwards until the word.

"Incoming" came through the speaker. Philip looked around.

"This is it," said Appleyard.

Philip jumped up to look at Appleyard's array.

"Lose altitude," said Philip. "Lose it real fast. It'll buy as some more time."

"Lose altitude," said Appleyard into the microphone.

Philip was thrown forward almost immediately then became weightless for a moment. He noticed lots of objects floating round with him. Then he began to get heavy and crashed painfully across two seats with an audible thud.

"That was fun, Mom. Can we do it again?" He said before the willingness to find out if his body was broken overcame him. As soon as he could compose himself he looked back at Appleyard. Appleyard nodded and smiled which told Philip the plan was working. Philip looked out the window. He could see the expanse of the ocean coming up fast as the plane lost height. There was a flash. He didn't see it directly but he saw it reflected on the window surround. There was another flash. This time he saw it briefly light up the inside of the cabin. He was looking around himself for an explanation.

"UFO?" he asked of Appleyard.

"UFO," nodded Appleyard calmly. Too calm for Philip. He looked outside his window. In the distance he could see the round spinning object. It was moving southwards but he assumed it would turn and make another pass. Then he spotted a dark green object. He thought it looked like a steam locomotive with wings. As the Lear X began to bank he could see several streaks of smoke sped out from pods on the side of Sky One. The Lear X banked further and he could see the UFO again. He saw it take evasive action and the missiles passed close to it but didn't hit. There was an other volley of missiles and a last desperate attempt to hit the Lear X with its Plasma Weapon. It was no use. The very next missile made a direct hit. The UFO burst into flames showering debris far and wide.

"Yesss!" said Philip. Almost immediately he felt the plane roll sideways giving him an excellent view of the remains of the UFO as it fell earthwards. The plane banked and was on its way southward again.

"Trouble is," said Appleyard. "We've just lost twenty minutes." Appleyard pushed his headset on and punched up something that Philip couldn't see. Appleyard waited and then hit a button fairly hard.

"Still no answer at your house."

"Since when have you been calling my house?" said Philip.

"Since before we even landed in Reykjavik," said Appleyard. "There's only your answering machine."

"Damn it," said Philip. "She's got to be alright. Keep trying." Philip remained silent for much of the rest of the journey into Nova Scotia. He was going home. But what would he find when he got there. He knew that whatever it was he was messed up with, one way or another, it was going to change his life. He just hoped he wouldn't lose his family in the process.

CHAPTER 20:

Frogleberg finally emerged from the flight deck. As he came through the door Philip realized he had never even seen the pilots. Frogleberg could see that he was worried. He sat next to Philip.

"Don't worry. The helicopters from Maine should be there any minute now. Is there anywhere else she could have gone?"

"She could have gone to her mother's place. Or my mother's place."

"We've been trying there, too. What about a friend?"

"Damn it, it's nearly two am," said Philip exasperated.

"Actually you're still on Reykjavik time. It's only coming up on eleven. And we'll be there in half an hour." Philip smiled a glib smile then looked away.

"That was a good call, Philip."

Philip looked up quizzically. "When you suggested turning back to meet Sky-One. And then suggesting we dived. We were so busy trying to make some kind of land cover we completely missed the obvious. That was a good piece of lateral thinking."

Philip looked away again. "Lateral thinking is probably what got me into this mess in the first place."

"What? Because you used lateral thinking to hack our comms?"

"Yes. I mean no. I mean. Look. If your bloody aircraft hadn't had been dog fighting a space ship over my brother's place I never would have stumbled onto you in the first place!" Philip broke into a slightly angry tone which took Frogleberg back for a moment.

"How so?" asked Frogleberg. Philip explained about his trip to Newfoundland. How he had witnessed a Skydiver and a UFO in deadly embrace. How his scanner had picked up the strange comms and how he had recognised the sound some time later back at work.

"You guys don't have very good security do you. I mean if I can break it anyone could."

"Actually we have the best security measures money can buy. No-one should have been able to crack that data. Nothing short of a super computer would be capable of cracking it."

Philip blushed. His guilt showed.

"What?" said Frogleberg.

"Err. Well. Err. Actually. I had access to a Prism four, YMP twin stack." Philip smiled an almost cheeky grin. Not cheeky enough to betray his worry.

Frogleberg laughed. "Ha. Now that'd just about do it." Then Frogleberg scratched his head. "So, why does an up down station have a Prism?"

"Because we handle some NASA and ESA links and we do a lot of space telemetry handling. We have to crunch and regenerate stuff in real time. It's a big job and so we got this state of the art super computer put in."

"So how did you get it to crack out data without anyone noticing?"

Appleyard, who had tuned into the conversation was now laughing behind them. Frogleberg and Philip turned to see what he was laughing at. Philip knew.

"What?" said Frogleberg.

"It's a YMP," said Appleyard. Frogleberg was still blank.

"It's four computers stacked together. In fact if it's a twin stack it's virtually eight computers. Four stacks of two Prisms each. And each stack is made up of twenty four sub processors."

Frogleberg was getting the picture but prompted for more.

"Don't you get it?" said Appleyard. "He took one of the four stacks off line whilst the others remained running normally. They're set up for quadruple redundancy. Normally you have the back-up of four computers. If one goes down there's three more to back it up right?" He prompted at Philip to confirm what he was saying.

Philip only needed to nod. But Appleyard's grin was infectious. Philip was smiling too. Finally someone who appreciated what he had done.

"But something I don't understand," said Appleyard. "How did you get the other Prisms not to notice.?"

"Actually that was easier than you'd imagine," said Philip. "You can take a stack down for maintenance. Usually it goes back up in the maintenance log and someone would notice. But I found this mode that can be used in the event of a complete back-up failure. It will take a complete dump from one of the other machines. So in effect, all the logs match exactly. Unless something catastrophic happens, no-one will notice."

Appleyard slapped his knee. "Damn that's brilliant. I just love hacking stories like this."

Frogleberg frowned in Appleyard's direction. Appleyard quelled his excitement.

"But I wish now I hadn't. I wish my curiosity hadn't got the better of me," said Philip turning forward again as his thoughts turned back to his family.

"Yeah, well we wished you hadn't as well, Mister Salisman," said Frogleberg. "You've put us to a hell of a lot of trouble. And of course now we have the problem of what to do with you."

"There's no way I'm going to join SHADO," said Philip.

"And there's no way we can just let you wander round the planet being a target for people like Perters or any other fanatic that might stumble onto you. So we have a big problem."

CHAPTER 21:

The Lear X touched down the Shearwater military base in Dartmouth, a suburb of Halifax. They were met by some local military officials of the Canadian army at around half past eleven Nova Scotia time. There were several HUMMVs waiting at their disposal, supplied by a courteous Army captain under orders to keep things as quiet as possible. Three HUMMVs had been taken by SHADO's Maine team. Frogberg took the captain aside and had a quiet word, negotiating a couple of less conspicuous cars from him. One of which was the captain's own car. Frogberg remarked to Philip: "Perhaps not as exciting but certainly less attention grabbing."

The SHADO team from Maine had been to Philip's house ten minutes before but there was no-one home. Still only the answering machine. The two cars departed the airport as quickly as possible. All of them armed and fitted with telemetry sets. But it would be at least another 30 minutes before they arrived at Philip's front door. Frogberg pulled out his mobile phone. He punched in a secret code which made it behave as a direct two way radio link.

"Come in MT one. Over." There was silence.

"Come in MT one. This is the frog team. Are you there. Over."

"Use the call channel," said Jackson. Frogberg pressed in another code. The phone made a quiet bleeping sound.

"Nothing," said Frogberg. "They should be able to give us some signal."

"Well they couldn't have taken out 6 men surely," said Philip.

"Ah. Well. You see, we sent two men each over to your folks' places to check that she wasn't there and they weren't just covering for her."

"Oh shit," said Philip. "Can't this thing go any faster? You should let me drive. It's my town. I know it better than you do."

"Chill out," said Jackson. "We're almost there. "

It was a tense ten minutes till the car turned into Philip's street. It cruised up slowly as Philip pointed out his house.

"Hey where are you going?" said Philip as Jackson drove straight past.

"Chill Phil," said Jackson. "We don't want to be spotted."

Philip noticed that the car with the two weird guys, Petrov and Snypes, in it was no longer behind them. He also noticed a faint light from a window in his house. Although it was hard to tell which window it was because his front yard was heavily wooded.

"There's someone home," said Philip.

"Yeah we noticed," said Frogberg. The car drove to the end of the street and pulled around the corner before parking.

"So now what?" said Philip.

"We wait," said Jackson.

"Wait for what? I'm going in. I've got to know if my wife is safe."

Frogberg turned toward him and nodded at Redenkov as Philip motioned toward the door handle. Redenkov grabbed him by the forearm.

"We wait for Snypes to place a telemetry clip or two so we can see what's going on," said Frogberg. Another gesture and Redenkov let go of his arm.

"You got anything for us yet, Anthony?" said Frogberg seemingly into thin air. A picture flashed in front of everyone's eyes. Everyone except Philip who was not wearing his glasses.

"Put your glasses on," said Frogberg over his shoulder to Philip. "And don't forget your

ear piece as well." Philip fumbled through his pocket to find the paraphernalia. As he did so he felt the gun in its shoulder holster. He put the glasses on and then retrieved the ear piece. Once again he felt the gun. He could see the picture from where Snypes had placed the clip across the road from his house but he couldn't get the gun out of his mind. Before he knew it and before Redenkov could stop him, he was out of the car and heading back towards his house. Redenkov opened his own door but Frogberg stopped him.

"We can't all go running down there."

Philip passed Snypes coming up toward the corner as he ran down the street. He saw Snypes look round at him in confusion. Snypes didn't say anything. Acting as cool as he could in case anyone was watching. Philip was having trouble seeing through the picture in his glasses so he removed them. Stashing them in his pocket he ran his hand over the shape of the gun once more. Frogberg, Jackson and Redenkov met Snypes at the corner. From the image in their glasses they saw something move in one of the trees. The camera's light range went down to infra red. It could see the heat outline of a body moving.

"In front of you in the tree to your left," came Appleyard's voice in Philip's earpiece. Philip stopped. He looked around.

"Use one of your clips," said Appleyard. "I'll patch the image through." Philip fumbled for his glasses but saw the shape move out of the corner of his eye. There was a high pitched squeal. A gun went off. A gun with a silencer on it. Suddenly a shape fell from the tree. Philip looked around to see Redenkov. Smoking gun in his hand still aimed at the tree. Redenkov waved his hand forward signalling that Philip should go in.

Philip reached his front door but realized he didn't have a key. He had left almost everything back in Reykjavik. He tried to force it but it wouldn't budge. He was making a lot of noise. Someone approached from behind. It was Jackson.

"Here try this," said Jackson as he pulled out a cigarette lighter. Philip looked at him sideways.

"What?" said Philip.

"Oh sorry," said Jackson. He flipped the top and twisted something. He dropped it by the door and whispered as loud as he could whilst still maintaining as whisper: "Get back."

Philip stepped back but Jackson grabbed him and ran. Suddenly there was an all mighty bang behind him. Philip turned and saw his front door flying inwards and upwards in an arc. He immediately realized what was happening.

Redenkov and Frogberg were on the plot now. Philip and Jackson entered the house through the smoke and debris. The door lay just inside the doorway where it had previously been hinged. It was resting unevenly on something. Philip, then Jackson stepped across the door then looked back. They realized it was an intruder. Someone how had been knocked unconscious or killed from the force of the door. They didn't hang round to find out. The house was a half split level design. Stairs in the hall went up and down to different sections of the house. Jackson went down. Philip went up.

Philip's gun was drawn and ready. He held it as he had seen people hold guns on TV. He didn't know what purpose it served but it felt right.

"Janet," he shouted. "Claudia." He kicked the first bedroom door open. Nothing. He went to approach the second. Two bullets came screaming out through it. He pulled back. Then kicked the door as he raced past it to the other side. A few milliseconds later he drew his gun and rounded the door frame to see a man with his gun to his wife's head. His daughter, Claudia, in the corner bound and gagged. The man said nothing. Philip aimed his gun at the

man. The man at his wife. Philip just stood there. His wife not knowing whether to be in shock from having some stranger hold her at gun point or the sight of her own husband with a gun.

Philip heard Frogleberg and Redenkov rummaging round down stairs. A gun shot rang out from one of the lower rooms. His daughter Claudia, all of five years old, kicked a chair closest to her with her bound feet. The gunman turned slightly to see what it was pulling his gun away from Janet's head slightly. Philip hesitated and then saw the gunman about to return the gun. Philip pulled the trigger.

There was a loud explosion between his fingers, the kick back nearly forcing the gun back into his face. There was smoke in front of him but as it cleared, he saw the gunman fall away from his petrified wife, her clothing splattered in blood.

Redenkov tore up the stairs. He reached the bedroom and rounded the corner with his SP16 machine pistol drawn. Janet still standing petrified as Philip approached her. She screamed at something. Philip turned to see Redenkov.

"It's alright. He's with me," said Philip and Redenkov lowered his weapon.

His daughter was sobbing in the corner, still tied up. Philip hugged his wife briefly and then proceeded to untie Claudia. He placed his gun on the floor next to her and removed her mouth gag. He had untied her hands and was working on her feet when she screamed in the direction of Redenkov.

There was another gun blast and Redenkov went down seemingly in slow motion. Philip went for the security of his gun as he noticed another man standing behind Redenkov in the hallway. But he couldn't find his gun. In the split second that it took for Redenkov to fall his SP16 bounced across the floor towards Philip. He dived on it snapping it up and aiming in one swift, professional motion. He squeezed the trigger hoping the safety was not on. It wasn't and the first shot rang out. The man jumped backwards, a look of surprise on his face. Philip had not let go of the trigger and more shots followed. With each one the man jumped backwards. Till finally Philip realized that it was a machine pistol and released the trigger.

The man had reached the edge of the landing still convulsing. Philip, his wife Janet and his daughter Claudia watching in horrified amazement as the man toppled over the railing and crashed down to the lower level of the house. Narrowly missing Frogleberg who was working his way back towards the stairs. Philip still lay on the floor with the SP16 pointing toward the landing where the man had been.

"Don't fuck with me you arseholes."

CHAPTER 22:

The big Russian was laying on the floor unconscious. Everyone was milling around him. Frogleberg checked that Redenkov was OK whilst Jackson picked the remains of a bullet out of Redenkov's vest.

"Mmmm. Nine millimetre at close range," said Jackson eyeing off the projectile. "Nasty." Redenkov groaned.

"Your back's gonna ache for a while ol' son," said Frogleberg. As soon as Redenkov was up to it they began to help him remove his vest. They removed his shirt and then unbuckled his vest. Jackson whistled as he inspected the depression in the armour plated kevlar ply of the bullet proof vest. Frogleberg inspected the bruising on Redenkov's back. Redenkov winced as Frogleberg probed it slightly.

"I think you might have broken a rib there Vlad. That will need some seeing, too."

Philip was holding his wife and daughter as they watched the proceedings. All of them shaking as if one single entity.

"Who are these people?" asked Janet, still afraid that someone else might take a shot at them.

"They're the good guys," said Philip. "I know you've got a million questions and I'll tell you everything later." Philip let go and knelt by Redenkov's side. Huddled with Jackson and Frogleberg there was some unfinished business.

"Thanks for taking that bullet" said Philip. Redenkov nodded.

"So what now?"

"We're going to have to think about that," said Frogleberg. "Any chance of coffee? And I could do with something to eat." Everyone stopped and looked at Frogleberg in amazement.

"What?" said Frogleberg. "Look it's been a long day, okay. I'm tired and I'm hungry."

Just then two more men came running up the stairs and stood in the door way. Philip's wife let out a slight startled scream.

"It's alright Hon. This is just Snypes and Petrov," said Philip.

"We found the two Maine agents," said Petrov. "Both strangled in the front yard."

Frogleberg sent the two suits into the kitchen to make coffee and rustle up some food.

"Don't forget to wash your hands first, okay?" He had stressed upon them. Frogleberg called in the remaining four Maine agents. There were sirens in the distance.

"Damn. Halifax police," said Jackson.

"I'll take care of it," said Frogleberg. He called someone on his mobile phone and gave some orders to get through to the police and give them a story that would make them back off. There was no harm in them being there just as long as they didn't dig too deeply into the evidence. Jackson and Frogleberg helped Redenkov downstairs and into the living room. Philip helped his own family down stairs. They all planted themselves in Philip's large soft sofa. Redenkov particularly pleased at the comfort. Petrov and Snypes returned with coffee and sandwiches.

"Who said they would good for nothing?" said Frogleberg.

Philip's daughter was still sobbing slightly in his wife's arms. Understandably because she'd just witnessed several killings.

The police had arrived and were milling about. Frogleberg had words with them and they seemed to be more generally curious than investigating a crime. The other four SHADO men from Maine arrived and were ordered to help clean up the mess. When everyone had calmed

down and finished their sustenance, Frogleberg took Philip aside and had words. They returned to the living room where Jackson was singing Philip's praises to his wife. Both about how great his music was and how exceptional he had behaved under fire.

Philip took the floor.

"Hon. How would you like a trip to London. Do a little shopping. See the changing of the guards, that kinda thing?"

"What?" said Janet, confused about everything that had happened to them.

"I've got to go to London with these gentlemen and sort some stuff out of my own. You may as well come along for the ride. We've got our own jet. We'll be there in no time."

"What have you gotten yourself mixed up in, Philip?" pleaded Janet.

"I'll explain on the way. But we're safe now."

Janet still wanted further explanation.

"Don't look a free, all expenses paid trip to London in the mouth. C'mon. You know you've always wanted to see London. Hey, maybe you'll even get to see 'coronation street'." Philip smiled.

Janet was hooked on the English soap opera. Janet didn't need much convincing after that. "I'll need to pack," said Janet.

"Don't worry about that. We'll get some new stuff when we get there. Won't we fellas?"

Frogleberg looked around and realized he was being committed to something. "What. Oh. Arr. Oh Yeah. Sure. No problem," he said. "Anything you need. Anything at all."

"By the way, honey. Where were you all night?" asked Philip.

"I was at Peggy's place. She was having a Teddy bear party. I would have left sooner but the kids were asleep and we were watching a DVD."

"Well, you're lucky you did stay, Mrs. Salisman," said Frogleberg. "If you'd had been home any sooner things may have been a lot different. A real lot different."

CHAPTER 23:

Back across the Atlantic and some 30 hours later, after some well earned rest in a luxury hotel, Janet and Claudia were escorted around London by Snypes and Petrov. While Philip was due to come face to face with Commander Adrianna Pilgrim who was not too pleased. Frogleberg drove Philip into the car park of the Straker Harlington building in his Lamborgini. Frogleberg gave Philip a quick tour of the studio lot.

"Mighty decent of you to do all that for Janet and Claudia," said Philip.

"Not a problem. Really. They don't know anything much and if it helps keep their minds off it then it's worth it," said Frogleberg. "Of course what happens after this is anyone's guess. That was quick thinking about the record deal."

"Of course you know I'm going to hold you to that now," said Philip.

"Well I guess we'll have to go into the recording business one way or another. It's the only way to keep this whole thing from looking overly suspicious. So I guess you got yourself a record deal one way or another."

"Anyway, it should go well with your film business cover." Philip laughed slightly, partly at the general excitement and partly because he knew he not only had one over SHADO but was forcing them to realize his life long dream.

Frogleberg parked the Lmborgini in the executive car park and he and Philip walked into the foyer of the building. Frogleberg carrying a brief case. Philip wearing the suit that Frogleberg has bought for him.

"I hope Janet's having a good time," said Philip.

"Don't worry. With an unlimited budget and private guides, I think she'll have a ball. Of course you did remember to tell her not to buy the crown jewels didn't you."

Philip just laughed.

* * *

They climbed the stair case to the mezzanine level and entered an office.

"Good morning Miss Ealand," said Frogleberg to the woman at the desk.

"Good morning, Mister Frogleberg," she said. "Go right in. Commander Pilgrim is expecting you."

They stepped into the office. Philip looked around while Frogleberg picked up the ornate cigarette case on the office desk.

"There's no-one in here," said Philip.

"Quiet," said Frogleberg. He began speaking into the cigarette case to Philip's amazement.

"Colonel Bjorn Frogleberg. UR94528B" He snapped the lid shut.

A voice emanated from the ceiling. "Voice print identification positive."

Philip thought he understood what was happening. He looked around expecting to see a door open somewhere. He wasn't expecting the whole room to jerk under his feet.

"What's happening?" he said. Then he saw the view from the window moving up. "Whoa. That is soooo cool." He said.

Frogleberg smiled slightly in acknowledgment.

"You like that do you? You ain't seen nothin' yet."

The office descended slowly downwards. The window view replaced by the sight of concrete rising upwards. At first in silence but as the room neared the basement level, the motor noise became slightly louder. With another sudden jerk the office stopped moving. Before Philip could say. "What now?", the same door through which they had entered, opened

again. Only this time revealing a concrete corridor adorned with a beautiful young guard dressed in a tight fitting white uniform. She escorted them down the corridor toward central control.

"You know when I decoded the pictures of people wearing those uniforms, I thought it was some kind of fashion parade or something. I never expected to see people actually wearing them for real."

Frogleberg smiled.

"Good aren't they? Actually they're very practical. Trust me."

"I can believe that," said Philip. Smiling. They turned down several more corridors till they reached the control room. The guard left them there and Philip followed Frogleberg in and past the throng of people milling about computer terminals and large projection screens. It reminded him of mission control at NASA. He tried to take it all in but was whisked away to a side corridor and another set of sliding doors. Frogleberg pressed a button by the side of the door way and the door's began sliding apart. Philip expected to see the interior of another elevator but instead they opened to reveal a woman in a business suit, seated in her office. Frogleberg stepped in and introduced them.

"Philip Salisman, this is Commander Adrianna Pilgrim. Commander, this is Philip Salisman."

"Good morning Mister Salisman. You've caused us quite a problem." She didn't shake his hand but simply gestured for them to sit. Philip looked round for a place to sit whilst Frogleberg drew up two chairs.

Pilgrim tapped away at her computer terminal as if the men weren't actually in her office. Or as if they were only a computer simulation of which she could ignore. Philip's expectations rose as she continued to ignore them in favour of her computer. Finally she triumphantly hit the finishing stroke on her keyboard and looked directly at Philip. "So what are we going to do with you?"

Philip just smiled.

Pilgrim looked back at her computer monitor but she was really staring into space.

"Hmmm," she said.

"He doesn't want to join SHADO," said Frogleberg. Pilgrim looked back at Philip.

"Surely there's something you could do with us? We can't have you as a loose cannon. You must have found something interesting about us otherwise you wouldn't have dug so much dirt on us."

"Well do I get to fly a space ship?" said Philip.

"Not a chance," said Pilgrim. "And you don't fly a space craft you pilot one."

"Well um. Do I get to drive a submarine?"

"Hell, no," said Pilgrim indignant. "Next you'll be wanting to drive a fire engine."

"Well I wouldn't mind one of those Lamborghinis," said Philip.

Pilgrim looked at Frogleberg.

"No way," said Frogleberg. "That's my car."

"Don't worry. No-one's gonna take your car, Bjorn," said Pilgrim.

"The fact is that I don't think I'd be much good at anything here," said Philip. "Except all the mundane stuff. And I'm not cut out for that. If anything, I wanna be where the action is. Know what I'm sayin'? And I don't much like authority. All this Commander this and Colonel that stuff is just bullshit. If you said jump I'd say. Yeah, when I'm good and ready'. I'm use to doing what I want when I want."

"I hear you're something of a lateral thinker, Mister Salisman?" said Adrianna.

"Please, call me Philip. Like I said, I don't stand much on formality."

"But you seem to show some extraordinary talent," she continued. "You know we recruit computer hackers from time to time."

"Look I'm not a hacker either," said Philip. "I just work for a phone company. It pays well and it supports my family. All I've ever really wanted to be is a musician. Nothing more nothing less. Unless SHADO has a techno band I can join I don't think I'm going to fit in here at all."

"I've already offered him a record deal as a sweetener," said Frogberg.

"Look what about this," said Commander Pilgrim. "We'll employ you. You'll get all the privileges of rank. We'll even call you colonel. But you won't be in charge of anything specific. From our records it seems you know a hell of a lot of stuff. Far too much stuff to be wasted on a telephone company. We'll make you as famous as you want and that can be your cover. It'll keep things sweet with your wife and daughter. It'll tie in with our film and game industry cover. You can head up the record company angle. I don't have a clue how that works so you can drive that end of the bargain yourself. But you've got to guarantee us that you'll remove your threat to expose us. We can't have you dying on us and then exposing us anyway."

"No way," said Philip. "That's the only thing that prevents you from taking me out. That's the only protection I have."

"It could also get you dead, Philip," said Pilgrim. "Now that we know that Perters is alive, it would only take him to get wind of what you've done. Then it would be in his interest to kill you to get at us. You're in a pretty difficult situation, I would say, Mister Salisman. I don't see that there's much choice."

"You may be right. but the moment I pull down my protection clause, you guy's will kill me."

Frogberg laughed. "We're not really like that Mister Salisman."

"Call me Philip. Look you forget. I've seen you guys in action. I saw what you did to Jenny and that other girl in the RV. I had half her fucking brains all over me remember."

There was a pause in the negotiations.

Commander Pilgrim jumped back in. "Look. We've given about as much ground as we can give. It comes down to this. Who do you trust more. Us or them. We'll give you protection and a cover. You can keep up the front and settle in with us. We'll review the situation in three month's time and see how comfortable you are. But it's important to us to know that we're not going to be exposed. After all we were set up to serve the people of earth. Surely you can see how important this is?"

Philip nodded.

"Here's the deal, Mister Salisman," said Frogberg. "We'll get you a record deal and make you a big star. That's your cover. We'll call on you if we think you can help us or you can chip in where you think you might be able to help. Hopefully you'll make a niche for yourself in the organization and then when we can trust each other, there won't be any need to compromise each other's security."

"What about my family and my job?" Asked Philip.

Commander Pilgrim stood and rounded her desk. "Small details, Philip. We'll fix all that to your satisfaction. For now we'll put up you wife and daughter in the hotel. You'll probably need to move to London. You can keep your house in Halifax of course. The fact that you can fly around the world as a rock star could actually be of benefit."

"Rock Star?" said an indignant Philip. "Rock Star? Rock 'n' roll is dead. Techno artist if you please."

"Ok Techno artist then. Just one last thing. I'm the boss. Don't ever forget that, okay," said Pilgrim waving her finger at him. "You may not fit into the command structure but you answer to me. Don't do anything unless you clear it with Bjorn or myself. You got that. It's real important. We're a military organization when all's said and done."

"Yup. Understood *el capitan*," said Philip. "By the way. What part of Canada are you from?"

"What?" said Pilgrim.

"You've probably been in England a long time but you've not lost your Canadian accent entirely."

Commander Pilgrim laughed. An almost girlish laugh. She had been caught out. "Well actually, as embarrassing as it is to admit, I'm from Halifax, Nova Scotia just like you Mister Salisman." She extended her hand to shake his. "Welcome aboard Mister Salisman."