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FLIGHT  
N 7 2 0 T U

'What is the purpose of your visit to the United States?'

'Business.'

'How long are you staying for?'

'A couple of days.' The customs officer examined the man in front of her. She glanced back down at the passport, then back up at him. The man was silent, staring straight ahead. The customs officer looked past the man at the line of annoyed passengers from flight N720TU, London to New York flight, amass behind him. She glanced once more at the man and brought the stamp crashing down onto his passport. She handed it back to him.

'Welcome to the U.S. Mr Evans.' Clarke Evans took the passport and nodded his thanks before heading towards the baggage claim area. He passed a security camera as he walked and gave it a wink.

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Inside the airport's surveillance room, a black and white video of Evans walking towards the baggage claim area was enlarged on the main centre screen. The room was silent as the video looped, stopping as Evans winked at the camera. In the corner, FBI agents Joe Tanner and Anthony Reid were huddled together with their backs to the screen.

'It's him! What the fuck is he doing here?!' Reid asked.

'I'm more concerned with *why* he's here.' Tanner said. 'It's been twenty years since he fell off the grid. Twenty years of no activity whatsoever. No contact with Quantum. No sightings with any former agents. Absolutely nothing.'

'There was that Monaco Incident a couple of years back.' Tanner shook his head.

'It was Abbott. Police caught him fleeing the scene, CIA interviewed him. He was lone wolfing it.'

'So, then what-' Tanner raised his hand to stop any further argument.

'That doesn't matter anymore. The only thing that matters is why he's resurfaced now.'

'Now Quantum's dead in the water, they're not giving the orders anymore. So, who's giving him *his* orders?' Tanner glanced at the video on the screen.

'I don't know,' he said. 'That's what scares me.' They both turned to the rest of the room. Tanner snapped his fingers and he had the room's undivided attention.

'Listen up people, we're dealing with a delta operative here. He's former Quantum, he's popped back up on the grid and we need to contain him right now.' He pointed to a group of computer technicians staring up at him. 'I need all security available covering possible exits.' Tanner motioned to his partner. 'Agent Reid and myself will make contact with the target. No one else is to approach him.'

No one moved after Tanner finished. He clapped his hands.

'What're you guys waiting for, Christmas? Let's go people!' The room burst into activity as people rushed to make the required calls and relay the orders. Tanner and Reid left the room, heading to intercept Evan.

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Evans had almost reached the baggage claim area when he felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned around to see a young man in a suit standing in front of him. He was holding out a badge in front of him.

'Clarke Evans? I'm Agent Reid, FBI. I need you to come with me.' Evans smiled and drove his palm into Reid's throat. He collapsed to the ground, gasping for air. His badge fell to the ground at Evans' feet. Evans snatched it up and ran off, slipping through the crowd as he headed for the exit.

Tanner came around the corner to see Reid getting to his feet and sucking in air. He looked around for Evans but couldn't see him.

'What happened?' he asked.

'Blindsided me. Got my badge.'

'Did he take your gun?' Reid checked his holster.

'No.'

'Then he's probably armed. Which way did he go?' Reid pointed towards the airport's main exit. 'Come on, then.' Both agents pulled out their weapons and took off after Evans.

Evans skidded to a halt as he saw two security guards standing on either side of the exit. They were talking to each other and hadn't seen him yet. He turned his back on them and started to walk back to the baggage claim. He ground to a halt as he spotted Reid moving through the crowd in front of him. A second FBI agent was moving through the crowd with him. Evans and Reid locked eyes with each other and they both froze. Evans noticed a small crowd to his right and started walking towards it. The two agents shadowed him, pushing through the crowd. Evans heard one of the agents call out to him and he ignored them. He reached the crowd and forced his way into the middle of it. Evans kept his eyes forward and smiled to himself as he moved with the crowd.

A single gunshot rang out.

'FBI. Everyone down on the ground.' Evans tore off his coat and threw it on the ground away from him. He dropped onto his stomach, clasp his hands behind his head. The crowd of people around him followed his lead.

Tanner and Reid both holstered their weapons and made their way through the crowd, searching for Evans. Tanner bent down and tapped a man on the shoulder. The man turned his face to look at him. Satisfied, he rose to his feet and kept searching. Both agents searched through the crowd. However, they walked right past Evans as he lay on the ground, ignoring him. Reid noticed Evan's coat on the ground and shook his head.

'How the fuck could he just disappear like that?'

'That'll be the special Quantum training.' Tanner muttered. Reid missed the sarcasm.

'We're getting ripped off.' He said. Tanner rolled his eyes at his partner. He remembered the people laying on the ground next to him. He waved a hand at them.

'You can go now. Thank you for your cooperation.' People rose to their feet and went on their way. A couple shot them a dirty look as they walked away. Tanner stared them down while Reid turned his back to them, speaking into his radio.

'Bravo team, do you have visual on target?'

*Negative, sir.*

'Charlie team?'

*Nothing here, sir.*

There was no sign of him. Clarke Evans has vanished into thin air.

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Evans had timed it well. He'd waited until the couple walked between him and the FBI agents. They were too preoccupied to notice as he got to his feet and slipped away. Now he watched as they headed back towards the baggage area. He just needed a change of clothes and he could move easier. He was standing under a security camera waiting for the right target. A backpacker in a New York Yankees cap bumped into him and kept walking. Evans caught up to him and tapped his shoulder.

'Pardon me, sir.' The backpacker turned around, an annoyed look on his face.

'What? You gotta problem with me buddy?' The backpacker snarled. Evans smiled at him and flashed the stolen FBI badge.

'FBI. I'm going to need you to come with me.' The backpacker's face fell as he was led down an empty service corridor.

'I didn't do anything! This is bullshit!' The backpacker protested as Evans made sure they were alone.

'Yeah, I guess it is.' Evans slammed the guy into the wall, knocking him out cold. He dragged the unconscious body into a nearby closet and stepped inside, closing the door behind him.

Evans emerged minutes later. He slipped the FBI badge into the backpacker's roomy jacket and pulled the Yankees cap down to cover his face. Looking around, he saw a kiosk selling prepaid phones and headed towards it.

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Reid watched the sea of passengers stream past him from the customs gate, grabbing their baggage from the carousel and heading for the exit. Tanner walked up and stood beside him. Reid leant his back against the wall.

'Just my luck a routine security exercise leads to us chasing after a former agent from a secret department buried inside the CIA, one of the most secretive organisations we have, who like sharing information as much as the Russians during the cold war.' Tanner looked at Reid and shrugged his shoulders.

'You make it sound like this job is like shovelling shit at the circus. It's got some pretty good perks.'

'Yeah for you maybe.'

What do you mean?' Reid snorted.

'We've worked together for twenty years. Every single time we have a stakeout or surveillance op I'm always stuck in the goddamn van.'

'Bullshit.'

'I've been in the van for twenty years Joe! Next time, you can be in the goddamn van.' Tanner turned his head away and went back to watching the crowd. Reid crossed his arms and did the same.

A man wearing a Yankees cap was past them when he tripped and fell to the ground. Reid and Tanner both helped him to his feet.

'You okay there, buddy?' Tanner asked. The man nodded as he steadied himself and headed for the exit. Reid watched him go and shook his head. He noticed a cheap burner phone on the ground and picked it up. He turned around to call the guy back when it started to ring. He shot Tanner a look and answered the call.

'Anthony Reid.'

*How's the throat, Agent Reid? Looks like you've got a nasty bruise forming there.*

Reid swallowed and looked around for the speaker.

'Well hey there, Evans,' He said. 'You've certainly giving us a bit of a run around today.'

*Wasn't my intention. I'm just here to deliver a message.*

Reid caught Tanner's attention and they both started walking back to the airport surveillance room to see if the cameras had picked Evans up as he left.

'Okay. How about you come in, we debrief you and then you can deliver your message to the top brass?'

*No. I want to deliver the message to someone I know.*

They had reached the baggage claim area. Tanner and Reid were both looking around for any sign of Evans.

*There was an agent I worked with in Hungary back in '92. Manhattan Bridge. One hour. Send him alone.*

Tanner held the door to the surveillance room open for Reid as he walked through.

'What if I can't find him?'

*That shouldn't be too hard... He just held the door for you.* The line went dead. Reid spun around.

No one was there.

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An hour later, Tanner was sitting in a surveillance van as it weaved through heavy traffic towards the Manhattan Bridge. He adjusted the smart glasses he had been given as Reid talked on the phone. The glasses had a microphone and camera built into them. Reid hung up the phone and wiped his brow.

'Just got word from Langley,' he said. 'They've taken over the operation.'

'Do they want us to bring him in?' Tanner asked. Reid looked up at him.

'I think we're long past that, don't you?' he asked. Tanner stared out the window. 'He's been a thorn in the CIA's side for years and they want the situation cleaned up. That's what we're gonna do,' Reid spoke into his radio. 'All units, this is Reid. We have a green light. Shoot to kill.'

The van slowed to a stop and Tanner climbed out. He started walking down the pedestrian path, distancing himself from the surveillance van. As he walked, Reid's voice came to life in his earpiece.

*Group One, any sign of the target?*

*Negative. Negative on target.*

*Group Two, anything?*

*Negative.*

Tanner glanced behind him as he walked. The path was empty. He turned back around and spotted Evans walking towards him. Before he could say anything, Evans grabbed his arm and started leading him further from the van. He pulled a gun out of his pocket and pressed it against Tanner's side.

'I told you to come alone,' Evans said. 'But you managed to mess that up just like in Hungary.' He pulled the glasses off Tanner's face and threw them over the railing. 'Now I've got some questions for you. You're going to answer them or I swear to god, I'll put a bullet in your head.' They reached a maintenance room and Evans shoved him in.

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In the surveillance van, Reid watched the live feed from Tanner's glasses as it tumbled end over end and splashed into the East River. His ears filled with static and he tore off his headphones. He turned to a junior agent monitoring Group One and Two's live feed.

'Any visual on the target?'

'Nothing.'

'Shit, he must be in one of the maintenance rooms,' Reid started issuing orders into his radio. 'Target has made contact. Target has made contact. Close in on him now.' He rose from his seat and slid the van door open. He pulled out his gun and took off running down the walkway.

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Evans slammed Tanner against the wall, knocking the wind out of him. He held the gun by his side as the FBI agent held up his hands to stop him.

'I told them after Hungary I was done,' Evans said.

'You should have gotten out when you had the chance,' Tanner said. Evans drove his knee into the man's stomach, knocking him to the ground.

'That's a load of crap! I was out. I was halfway across the world. I was building a life for myself and they stole it from me,' He stepped back and pressed his gun against Tanner's head. 'Who's giving the orders at Quantum now?' Tanner started laughing.

'That's what this is all about? Quantum's finished. The project was shuttered, everyone's dead. You're the last one left.' Evans let the gun fall to his side as Tanner kept laughing. 'One last loose end, dangling in the wind.'

Evans raised his gun and fired. The shot hit the wall next to Tanner's head. He popped the magazine, stripped the barrel and let the pieces fall to the floor.

'Not anymore.' Evans turned around and exited the room, leaving Tanner staring at the useless gun at his feet.

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Reid heard the gunshot and took off running in that direction. He spoke into his radio as he ran.

'Shots fired. Shots fired. Converge on the east pedestrian bridge!' He saw Evans exit the maintenance closet and raised his gun.

'Nowhere left to run Evans!' Evans froze and they locked eyes. Reid smiled. 'You're surrounded, there's no way off this bridge.' Evans glanced at the railing. Reid tightened his grip on the gun. 'Don't even think-'

Evans sprinted over to the railing.

Reid aimed and fired. Evans vaulted the railing and fell, plunging straight down into the East River. Reid rushed over to the railing and looked down. There was no sign of him. The other agents arrived. They holstered their weapons when they saw Reid alone.

'What happened?' one of the agents asked. Reid slipped his gun into his holster, hands gripping the railing, waiting for Evans to surface. After a few minutes, there was still no sign of Evans. Reid turned to the agent next to him.

'Get police divers in the water. I want his body found.'

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Oliver Reid sighed to himself as he shut his apartment door and flicked on the light. He listened in silence as his boss finished tearing into him about Evan's dive off the bridge.

'Yes, I understand sir. I have police divers scouring the East River as we speak. Yes, around the clock. I'll let you know as soon as they find something. You have a good-' Reid was cut off as his boss hung up. 'Asshole.' He muttered. Reid padded into his bedroom and dropped his phone in surprise.

It was his FBI badge, just sitting on the pillow.

The badge Clarke Evans had stolen.

Reid picked the badge up and listened for anything out of the ordinary.

Nothing stirred.

He was all alone...

THE END