



Act II Scene S

“What the hell happened!?” demanded Control. She was beyond furious — not at her agents this time around, but rather with herself, for placing them in such a compromising position.

“The info you fed us. It was tainted. It was a trap all along,” uttered Tailor, dejectedly.

Control let out a hailstorm of expletives.

“My job is on the line, you hear me!? This whole organisation is about to go under. They’ve got us pinned down. Every day, local branches are closing up shop. I reckon we’re one more botched mission away from wrapping it all up.”

She sighed. The reins of command were getting to her.

“Okay. Another mission has come through. I can’t assume anything about the quality of the intel. I can’t really say much about the specifics of the task. But, if it’s all valid, then this can unravel an entire conspiracy.”

Control glanced around the room. Tailor was seated in a lounge chair, nursing his wounds. Soldier was seriously hurt and was holed up in the infirmary, which was really just a bedroom with a few more basic amenities. It remained to be seen whether he could pull through.

Control let out a sigh of frustration.

Glancing to the other side of the room, she saw Tinker, who was browsing through the daily paper, while blatantly and shamelessly eavesdropping on the conversation. And then there were the two new recruits.

“Tinker!” called Control.

“Yes?”

“Take these two — eh, let’s call them Raider and Hunter — take them with you on this. Your career is on the line, son, so don’t muck it up.”

Lara and Attila glanced at one another and each raised an eyebrow. They had earned codenames, which meant they must have been doing something right.

“Yes, ma’am,” came the meek reply.

And so, Lara and Attila ventured out once more into the alternate universe version of their hometown.



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The situation was a little bit different now. Instead of snaring easy prey at a deceptively unguarded warehouse, their job now required them delving into the belly of the beast — a government building. And not just any government building, but the National Archive of Intelligence Records, a building notorious for its cavalier attitude towards maintaining and keeping records. It seemed as though with every new regime change, there would be a ritualistic burning of the files.

“So, what’s the sitch?” whispered Lara to the others.

Tinker, who was manning the binoculars, replied:

“Two sentries on the door. Automobile activity all around the premises. Vent system on the northern side of the building. Possible route for alternative entry?”

“Vent? What vent?” Attila wondered aloud. “Oh... that one. I see.”

It was a surprisingly large air duct system for a government building of this sort. Maybe all the papers needed to be stored at a certain optimal temperature. Or maybe the kiln required a particularly large air vent. Or any of another myriad possible illicit things. Either way, the weakness was there, and it was just waiting to be exploited.

Using the shadows as cover, the trio sneaked their way through to the air vent cover. With a few deft twists of a screwdriver, Tinker — living up to his namesake — removed the cover with ease, and the agents of the Resistance were in, having breached the external security measures without fuss.

From there, it was a matter of navigating through the dense labyrinth of ventilation shafts before they found themselves in the archive room.

“Okay,” whispered Tinker. “According to this mission brief, we need to look for a file under CONFSEC 42.0. So get—”

“Found it!” Lara blurted, excitedly. She passed the document along to Tinker.

Her mentor nodded with approval, and gave her a thumbs up. Lara beamed with pride. Tinker proceeded to leaf through the document.

“Okay, so contained in this document is— holy smokes!”

“What is it!?” exclaimed Lara and Attila, in unison.

“It contains every single government spy that has been planted within the Resistance! Oh my goodness, this is huge. Control needs to know about this as soon as possible.”

Attila, ever the voice of reason, cautioned him otherwise:

“Let’s just be careful here. Who knows. What if Control is on this list too?”

Tinker scanned the list, and the accompanying set of mugshots more carefully for a second time. He couldn’t seem to spot Control, but his gaze did linger on one photograph in particular.



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“Tailor.”

The bile was evident in his voice. It was in that moment that he knew. That all the stuff-ups, all of the criticism. It had all been planned. These missions that he went on — they were doomed to fail.

And his mind flashed back to that moment where they had been cornered by Lara and Attila outside of the museum. “TRAITOR!” The remark still rang loudly in his head.

His stomach turned a bit. There would be consequences for this, he decided.

Lara and Attila were once more returned to the archive room. The real one, this time.

“Phew. What a rough ride,” remarked Attila.

He glanced around the archive room, and saw fresh evidence of the remnants of the police raid. Sighing with relief, he glanced at Lara.

“We’re back! And look!”

Attila pointed to the white spray paint on the back of the basement wall. It wasn’t fresh, but it certainly hadn’t been there before. It was definitely a message from the Resistance, and Attila took it as a sign that things were alive and well down in that neck of the woods.

Lara, however, was too engrossed with the Cube to bother sharing in her mentor’s observations. Two faces were now glistening brightly in the dim light of the archive room, and it was absolutely mesmerising to behold. Lara felt as though she could stare at the Cube in its current state forever...

“Lara.”

“Lara!”

Lara snapped out of her trance. Attila grinned at her once more. It was a rare occasion that he got to turn the tables on his younger travelling companion.

“Okay, Lara, since you have it all figured out, where to next?”

“How does the orange face sound?”

“To be honest, I don’t really lik—”

“Too late!”



POT LUCK

The puzzle is a 20x10 grid with a blue border. The grid contains a pattern of grey and white squares. A red square highlights a 2x2 area in the center. At the bottom, there are four colored squares: yellow, purple, blue, and orange. Braille dots are present on the right side of the grid.



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- ● ● ● Put oil emulsion into machine to make sauce
- ● ● ● Friendship between Gary, Tim and Turner
- ● ● ● Extreme anger as arguments produce weapons
- ● ● ● Dreadful legal student leaves
- ● ● ● Horrible double counter initially overestimates umbrella stock
- ● ● ● Bad head and naughty asset – most sinful
- ● ● ● Pith and rind very bitter without extremely sweet mixture
- ● ● ● Winners accomplishing irregularly except for the odd culling
- ● ● ● Keeps corn in cubic object
- ● ● ● Criticise criminal who mends badly and avoids society
- ● ● ● Calm, refreshing, directed
- ● ● ● Remove Swede, let Estonian inside
- ● ● ● Loose end in hideout
- ● ● ● In backyard, I'm simmering Aussie dumpling
- ● ● ● Large central hole in rotund battered sweet!
- ● ● ● Regularly engages with Easter chocolates
- ● ● ● Nose job lasts for ages
- ● ● ● After Nebraska primary, First Lady returned flat
- ● ● ● Grass seems oddly heavy
- ● ● ● Sweet treat for darling groom
- ● ● ● Mash-up not at birthday bash
- ● ● ● Saying "I'd top it!" with extreme optimism
- ● ● ● Singing competition? Sounds pointless...
- ● ● ● Turn a blind eye to mixed gin or drug
- ● ● ● Tear skin and insert valve ends using blades
- ● ● ● Empty toilet in bathroom a game of chance
- ● ● ● Tame a tiger by holding steak, say
- ● ● ● Feeling off at the start of movement
- ● ● ● Cubism not born as creative art
- ● ● ● Stupid old arse-headed creature of the seas
- ● ● ● Oysters initially have a serious stench
- ● ● ● A trafficker of stolen goods? Sounds like a crime
- ● ● ● Proposal cancelled due to hesitation
- ● ● ● Forget to reply that I'm OK on the inside
- ● ● ● Vegetable that goes on and on and on...
- ● ● ● Core morals are unwritten
- ● ● ● Republican vote tampering is blatant
- ● ● ● Game penalty mistakenly deducts ten
- ● ● ● We'll be watching you cut back on drug usage?
- ● ● ● Brutal riots over a hash brown
- ● ● ● Almost dash back down
- ● ● ● Gain of twenty
- ● ● ● Seriously, it's only around the middle of the alphabet
- ● ● ● Organists oddly play tunes
- ● ● ● Exotic flavours start from roughly shaved half-kilo of skewered meat
- ● ● ● Certain about grand swell
- ● ● ● Pies off to an awful start
- ● ● ● Drawstring
- ● ● ● Englishman in very French forest
- ● ● ● Dictator endlessly shouts after half of city falls
- ● ● ● He is not hugely hideous
- ● ● ● Lumber into dead end following chase