

Chapter 3

The bare room was tiled floor to ceiling with a utilitarian white ceramic tile, the kind you'd find adorning public toilets. I was alone. The hard plastic chair was already making me ache after only five minutes. The bright flickering light was causing a headache. I twisted against the cable ties that bound my ankles and wrists to the chair, they wouldn't budge. I wanted to shed a tear for Dave, but my eyes were dry in the cloying heat.

A hand patted my shoulder;

"Comfortable?" said Drake.

He moved around to face me and placed a folder in my lap. It balanced on my thighs as I read the cover, 'Developmental and Implementational plan for THX118'.

"We found this in your house"

I peered at the cover again, "I've never seen this before," I said, "I want to see my brother."

Drake grinned, "You really don't."

"Drake, we both know I have never seen this file or have any idea what's in it. So lets cut the crap. I want to see my brother... now!"

Drake reached forward and grabbed the folder. He flipped it open, took out a photograph and placed it on the table. A grainy shot of me and a tall angular man dressed in black, his bald head shining. Despite the low resolution it was clear we were talking. I swallowed hard.

"Well?" Drake's voice broke the silence, "Are you going to speak? Are you going to explain what you were doing talking to Gustaf Braun?"

Pennies dropped. Gustaf, the Mr Fixit of the pharmaceutical world had a deserved reputation, "It was a while ago, different times." I said.

"You're deluding yourself Joe," Drake snarled, "Do you even know what that man does? You think he just works for Chemtec?"

My head swam, "I know what he is." The images of what Gustaf and Chemtec had done in Bukino Faso still haunted me.

"It's not what it seems," I mumbled. "He came to see me. He was asking about a chemical compound I'd never heard of. I told him I didn't work for you anymore."

Drake shook his head.

"I did. OK."

Drake said nothing.

"He knew why I left and thought I might want some payback."

Drake stiffened.

"I told him what I told you... I've left Chemtec. I was no use to him."

Drake shook his head, "You don't understand the gravity of your situation, in ten hours Dave will enter stage one of the infection. As soon as the sores begin to appear he'll have

just another ten hours before he's dead."

I didn't react.

"Of course, if we had the serum, he'd be fine. Since you know the whereabouts of this antidote, you can solve this little problem."

I nodded. I had no idea why they assumed I knew anything about the Serum, but something had shaken Chemtec up, something very big.

"OK".

Drake walked away from the table and turned his back. The door opened and another man entered, he started to untie my wrists.

"You can go."

My wrists ached, I rubbed life back into them before standing.

Drake said "You'll find all the background information you need in the file."

My eyes bored into his back. "If he dies, any chance I get, Drake, any chance and you're dead."

He stiffened but did not turn around. I waited till his footsteps had faded down the hall, rising to my feet I grabbed the file and nodded to the guard.

"Lets go." I said.

The guard moved in front of me and led the way through a maze of grey corridors to a metal staircase, the top of which I could not see.

"Climb that, the door will be open at the top," he said.

"Then what?" I replied.

He smirked, "Get a bus... walk! Do I look like I care?"

The climb seemed to go on forever, just like Covent Garden Underground Station when I couldn't be bothered to use the lift.

After a long 15 minute climb I reached the door. It swung open freely and I stepped into the flood of light. A car, its motor running, was waiting for me in the middle of a wide, deserted road. On the other side was an enormous warehouse, I turned, expecting to see the same behind me but saw just a domed mound of arid, almost white earth surrounding the door I had just left. Sat on top it a single CCTV camera stared down at me. I stared into the lens and gave it the finger in defiance. I stayed like that for several seconds before turning and walking to the car.