

The Circle of Socialites

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Prologue

My name shouldn't be mentioned at the present moment because I'm still working on this case and it may be too dangerous for both myself, my team, and now you. I was given an audio recording of a man telling a story. It's not everyday you hear something like this so it caught me off guard. I've listened to it many, many times so I know every single word. In fact I've analyzed it so much I feel like I personally know the people involved. I'm considered one of the best detectives in the entire city and I still don't understand some details about these people. That's why I'm thinking you might be able to help me. I'm not allowed to play the tape for anyone it's against the law but I'm thinking I can type them out for you. I haven't altered any of the words you're about to read, every word was spoken and then typed by me, hopefully you can help solve this case.

Book One - Brian Miller and the Robinson File

1.

"My name is Brian Miller and I'm a dead man, well not literally obviously because you can hear my voice but I am about to die. There's no turning back from where I stand right now and even forward is the danger in which I starte...well unknowingly started. I'm in quite the predicament and this recording is my way to explain why I did -what I did, the last few days. I'm nota criminal or who you might think I am based on what you're going to hear about me in the media. They like to tell you whatever they want you to hear not the truth. I'm just an accountant, a boring nine-to-five desk jockey. My days are very boring and I like it that way. I sport collared shirts and khakis, not ski masks and hoodies. How can I be seen with dignity after this. I know what's going to happen to me, I see death in every possible outcome from this. If only I could just taste one more pile of spaghetti, chased down by a big glass of rum and Dr. Pepper. There are so many things I wish I could do right now, most of all I'd like to play Scrabble with my Siri or hear her play the violin one more time".

BANG...BANG...SLAM...BANG

"As you can probably hear in the background there are a few men trying to find a way through the only door I can exit through. It's a nice solid door but it won't hold them for too long. When they finally enter they'll shoot and kill me and that's not the worst part, it will be legal and they will wid up looking like heroes. Up until today I didn't know there was a legal way to kill someone but there is, and they've been doing it a lot lately. Everything except me being in here, they didn't expect that. It's my chance to tell you why I did -what I did, before the false stories of me surface. This got out of hands... So quickly... I have no chance to fight back honestly, things just couldn't get worse than they are right now. I have a fake gun glued to my hand and a ridiculous new tattoo on my neck. The slight pain on my head was nothing compared to my finger... Well lack of finger, It was chopped off yesterday. I wish I could make one phone call, that's all I would need. It wouldn't be the police because they couldn't help me. Even though I wanted to hear Siri's voice more than anything in the world, I know my call would go to a guy I only know as Rondulph. He's the only person I could trust enough to explain how to get out of here...If there even is a way. I'm stuck in a vault like room that has door, and no windows. Like I said earlier when that door opens I'm dead, done, blasted with a barrage of bullets. I know I can't dodge, block, or survive the impact of being shot mutiple times; I'm not Superman or 50 Cent. Hopefully they won't find this message and delete it before anyone hears it. It's something that might happen but it's the only chance I have to tell you my side of the story, so I will.

2.

Except for today I pretty much start every morning with the same routine: I get up and

have breakfast with Siri, read the newspaper, and then walk to work. Even though my parents gifted me an awesome brewer for my birthday I still get my morning coffee on the way to work. Nothing ever changes for me and I like that, my routine is my safe blanket

Something different happened a couple mornings ago, it was strange that took me off guard, it seemed so simplistic but I couldn't wrap my mind around it. There was a man across the street but this wasn't the strange thing. It was the fact that it was a rather busy day in the cafe and dozens of people were around but it felt like he was staring directly at me. I do the exact same thing every single day, even the barrista knows exactly what I want as soon as I walk in. For what felt like a thirty second hour we were intertwined in a stare down before he lifted his hand towards his wrist and tapped it. This made me shake my head in confusion because it felt like he was asking me for the time. There were literally six or seven people walking by him he could have asked why was he asking me? I lifted the cup to my mouth to break his creepy stare and by the time I had taken my sip and lowered the cup, he was gone.

When I arrived at work I didn't see many people but the ones I did see seemed down, gloomy, or just strange in some way; everything did. Like my boss, he's a nice guy but that day he came in screaming about some file I'd put off doing to start on what I thought was more important business. I guess he was just having a bad day and needed someone to yell at, we all have those days so I filed the paper and got on with my day. No matter how much work I did I couldn't get the weird bearded dude out of my head, I don't know what it was about him but he really creeped me out. When I got home that night I told Siri about the bearded fellow and laughed and replied that I over think things too much. I brushed her off, ignoring an argument and went on telling her about my boss combusting on me over that file. She suggested that he was probably just stressed out because the company wasn't doing so good. I of all people had a hard time believing her on this. Due to the fact that I handle the paper work, I would have surely noticed something like that, but I ended the conversation by saying 'I know honey' and we went to bed.

When I woke up the next day, which is presently yesterday, I felt rejuvenated and motivated to exceed my position and really do my part for the company. I didn't see the weird bearded dude when I bought my coffee so I had no other option but to believe what Siri had told me. When I arrived at the office I started sifting, filing, and stamping right away. The numbers, oddly almost hidden in the corners of the pages were slowly declining. It didn't make any sense because sales have been good, great in fact, so where was all the profit? I took all this in to consideration and the deeper I dug the more apparent it became that the company was in financial trouble. I continued my descent into the workload, when not ten minutes later my boss came crashing through the door. I greeted him like I normally would and started to point out things I've noticed and even presented ideas that I had to rectify them. I thought he would be impressed with my initiative but it was quite the opposite, In fact he seemed quite agitated at my reviewing of the files in such a close order. He seemed absolutely livid when he realized they were finance papers he became so irate that before I could get a word in edgewise he was tossing a box at my head and telling me to get my stuff and go. I asked, almost begged him to

reconsider but he was sticking to his decision. I asked him why he was doing this and the only answer he had was 'the numbers were down' and 'he couldn't afford to keep people around who didn't do their jobs' I saw instant red flags and was flooded with thoughts.

Some we're about the numbers, some about the company, but the most were about my boss. As I was leaving I saw Betty the receptionist and she asked me where I was going with boxes and sparing embarrassment replied 'I received a promotion so I'm switching offices'. I sat in my car for about fifteen minutes before I came up with a plan. I was going to steal a few files find out why my boss fired me. I know it wasn't because the company wasn't doing goodit's because I was on to him. I'd given him seven years of faithful service and I get this? I had to investigate, I knew if I was going to find answers I had to get my files.

3.

It was easy to get past Betty, I told her I forgot something and walked right by. I knew everyone else in the building would've known by now of my firing, this building was bad for that. My office was the only occupied office on the ninth floor so once I get there I wouldn't have to be as sneaky. There was a staff meeting going on in the conference room today which is probably lucky for me it would make it easier to retrieve those files and bring them back down without being seen. I felt like a detective in one of those conspiracy stories Siri always reads. I knew the elevator was off limits because it was one of the only cameras that still worked. I raced up the stairs and In all my years working there I had never ran, or walked up the stairs. I was deeply out of breath by time I reached the ninth floor. I sat there for a few minutes and caught my breath in case I saw my boss. I tiptoed slowly through the hall and at first I thought the window in my office was left open, the curtains were tapping my filing cabinet. As I got closer I heard an Ahh! or Awe! I couldn't decipher which but it was enough to confirm my suspicions of someone's presence. It wasn't my boss though, so now it opened up a whole new world of questions.

I crept slowly until I was just outside of the door. I thought this man must've been talking to himself because he was the only voice I heard but was muttering a whole conversation. I could only hear every second or third word, or make out little parts of sentences. I heard stuff about an activated file and a bird out of its cage. After a minute more of rumbling I understood him say tomorrow was the last day and he could have his serenity. It was really hard to hear him because he had some kind of heavy accent and if I had to guess I'd say Ukrainian, or Russian.

Evidently as I leaned in further he raised his voice just a little and I could hear him well. He started saying stuff about the police department and then I heard my bosses name. He apparently fulfilled his part of the bargain by setting up 'buddy'. I'm guessing that was me so I turned around to leave and was struck by something hard enough to make me almost pass out. I couldn't see anything but I was being lifted and carried until I heard the Russian guy right above me. He called the man dragging me Rog or Raj, some variation of that sound. I couldn't say anything not a single word, it was almost like I was paralyzed. They were asking me questions and would choke me when I didn't respond.

They kept asking me if I was the one that's been following them. I still couldn't answer them but I could begin to see again. My office was a mess, there were papers everywhere. I had only been fired about twenty minutes before this so it was impressive. They kept asking me if I was a fed and how they've killed nosy cops before. I think It's the Ukrainian guy I feared more than the guy holding me down. I remember the next moment so vividly because he pulled harder on the tiny hairs on the back of my head as he pushed me towards the Ukrainian and said they'd have to kill me. Before another thing happened I kicked Rog right in the nuts hard enough for him to drop to the ground and without a second of delay I swung a right hook towards the Russian and hit him square in his oddly egg shaped head. I ran like my life depended on it -and I see the irony there since my life actually did depend on it. I didn't make it out of that room, at least not how I had planned. It was dark and I only seen Rog and the Russian and ran right into a third man sitting in the corner. I didn't even notice him until he stretched his arm out and I collided with it full force. When I awoke I realized I was no longer in the office but in some kind of bedroom, or living space. I was tied up and not a normal way either. I had one arm stretched behind my back with just enough pressure to cause serious discomfort. My second arm was in a position where it looked like I was trying to shake someone's hand. The weirdest part at the time was the realization that they had me a gun . . . Well at least that's what it felt like.

4.

I couldn't free myself and stopped trying when I heard the maniacal laughter behind me. I tried to turn my head and see but it seemed it was also tied by a rope leading up. I was advised to be careful because if my chair fell over I'd hang to death. It suddenly turned from me feeling like a detective in a conspiracy story to being stuck in a Saw movie. I heard the voice of a new person who I presume was the guy who hit me. He's the one who asked all the questions and since it was a long interrogation and I have no idea how long I have to record this, I'll keep it brief. He questioned my job with the company and my connection to the boss, he asked me about my family life and hobbies, and lastly he wanted to know what I knew so far. Since I didn't want to die I answered everything truthfully and after a few hours he finally believed I wasn't following them nor did I know who they were for that matter. He said that was the good news, the bad being the fact that I knew what they looked like and that would have consequences.

I gave the kind of speech you've heard in a thousand movies something along the lines of 'if you let me go I won't tell anyone' and 'you'll never hear from me again'. He told me I was free to leave right then and there and even took the noose off my neck. They all began laughing hysterically and I knew it was a joke. They said I knew too much to be set free but wouldn't tell me their names, I thought this was a good thing because if they were going to kill me outright they wouldn't care if I knew their names.

I pleaded the fact that I could still be useful to them and killing me wouldn't do them as much good as keeping me alive. I said if they spared my life I would dedicate the rest of it to helping them. It was a lie but it's probably exactly what you would've said in the same place.

Rog didn't think it was a good idea and the Ukrainian shouted at me in another language, the only word I understood was cheeks. It turned out to be the nickname for the third man. They didn't believe I would obey and try to run away the second I could. I'd have to pass a test before they could trust me. I was nervous but I knew I wasn't going to die so I was down for anything. The first order he sent out was for Rog to go get the knives. I gasped and squirmed but Cheeks assured me it wasn't for stabbing but he was going to cut my hair. I've gotten a few bad haircuts in my time but this one was the worst and it hurt more than I could describe. Rog came back in with some kind of weird device that had red paint or something all over it, well I definitely hoped it was paint and not blood.

5.

When he turned it on and I heard the buzzing I instantly thought it was a shocking device or something bad -and technically it was, but it was only a tattoo gun. I've never wanted one in my life they disgust me but I was in any position to argue. They owned me so I had to sit there while they tattooed my neck of all places. I had no idea what they tattooed that whole day but I have seen a mirror before recording this so I know it's an orange and red fox playing with a beach ball. As soon as he was finished the Russian came back into my view and said that I was now free to make my decision. I was confused but Cheeks made it clear he was asking whether or not I wanted to join them and face a sacrifice, or choose to skip it all and die. Rog then went on to describe in further the position in which I was in. I knew my left hand was getting warmer but kinda thought it was my mind playing tricks on me. One of them had placed a candle underneath it and it was slowly starting to burn. Remember how my right hand was holding a gun? Well I heard the sound of a chair being pulled up in front of me and they told me to shoot. I could hear a woman struggling and I had a sharp pain in my stomach. I was about to do anything to save my own life but not end someone else's so I reluctantly told them I wasn't going to shoot a stranger. The Russian said that they had my wallet with all my information so it wasn't a stranger but a someone really close to me. I started struggling -half out of anger towards them and half because the heat on my hand was getting really hot. The result was that I knocked the chair out from underneath me and since they took the neck rope off I didn't hang to death. SHOOT! SHOOT! Is all I kept hearing, Shoot! to save yourself something must be sacrificed. I didn't want to pull the trigger and every muscle in my body was shaking except that finger. It took a very strong mental test of my endurance not to do. I was crying, almost bawling out of control while Cheeks talked right into my ear. 'the burn in your hand is nothing compared to what she is about to feel and he lit a fire under her chair. After a few seconds of silence I heard 'little love birds burning together here Cheeks, let's turn up the heat' I could now hear the person in front of me struggling, her chair legs sounded like they were tap dancing across the floor. Now the Ukrainian guy was also screaming at me to end her suffering 'Shoot your poor wife Brian'. It was intense and the pressure was building steadily, the candle was driving a mental and very physical hole in my hand. The adrenaline and pain throughout my body finally hit a boiling point and built up to a moment where I don't know whether I did it to save me, or end her suffering, but I pulled the trigger. I didn't hear a bang or feel the gun shoot but the pain

in my right hand was now at an all time high but at the same time I felt the pressure lift out of my whole body and I nearly passed out but Rog quickly chopped a rope with the big knife and I fell to the ground like a pile of dead meat. I quickly looked up expecting to see the bullet filled body but there was some woman sitting in the chair laughing and although she did resemble my wife, it wasn't her because she wasn't even tied up at all.

6.

I passed out and awoke in the same room but lying on a bed and for a second I believed that I had dreamt the entire thing. I heard the voice of Cheeks so I realized it was real life. He was talking on the phone with someone and discussing something about the police and a big event that might happen. He began to ramble on about the fox and about a certain trap he set for it. He noticed I was awake and quickly said goodbye to whomever he was speaking to. He assured me that I wasn't in danger anymore but I wasn't allowed to leave yet. I agreed but protested that I earned the right to some answers and surprisingly he agreed. I asked him why they were in my office and what their connection to my boss was. In which he replied that my boss has developed some serious financial trouble over the past couple months. He's done a really bad job trying to maneuver the finances to hide it, I wanted to know why they were going through such drastic measures to help my boss to which they laughed. 'This was much bigger than any one person' was all he replied. He told me how a few years back him and the gang had an organization going on and set up a series of 'business protection plans' that would build up unnoticed over a long period of time. They also revealed they had a fourth member of their team and he was the one who urged for their growth and that's when they said the police got involved. They didn't try and shut them down but instead charge them a tax to continue.

The small amount of profit they were making wasn't enough to pay the police and so they stopped paying altogether. One by one the lower level members were getting arrested and the gang was disappearing fast. When the fifth member went missing a while back the three of them started a little investigation on the police officers involved. They realized they weren't shutting down their organization but stopping Cheeks from finding out about theirs. Just as I was about to ask what they were up to he, told me a story of a group of people, or a circle of socialites to be precise, who pretty much control the entire city. They were draining it dry through methods no one would notice until everyone involved has long since retired. He listed off politicians, lawyers, doctors, business owners, and worst of all people in the justice system.

The way they were doing business was nothing compared to Cheeks, instead of a couple neighborhoods and a few shop owners, the police had the same thing going on with the whole city and all its businesses. Instead of thousands of dollars they were stealing millions. I asked if they were really after the police why were they in my office and not in the police station investigating? I didn't even give him enough time to answer before I asked him how he got the nickname Cheeks instead. He looked at his knife and muttered the word 'Well' before Rog called him out of the room. When he came back in, he said they would have to leave for a bit but wanted to know if I wanted to join them and help bring down the group of greedy monetary

leeches. It was this I remember, this sentence that made me switch how I felt about these guys and the whole situation. The reason for kidnapping me was that I was in the wrong place at the wrong time. I agreed to help them but was scared to ask what I'd have to do. I remembered about the tattoo on my neck and went to go touch it and noticed my finger, well lack of finger. I screamed as I saw it and asked him how it happened simultaneously as I remembered about the gun, the girl in the chair, and the whole situation. Cheeks reminded me I could've either died or joined them -with a sacrifice, and since I already made the sacrifice it'd be wise to join them. Rog was loudest of all when he chimed in 'I thought you were never going to pull the trigger I thought you would burn a hole through your hand first' and that's when I remembered about the candle but my hands were wrapped so I couldn't see how bad it was yet. I somehow still calmly asked who the girl was and about my missing finger and why didn't the gun go off when I pulled the trigger? He replied that I did pull the trigger but it wasn't a gun that I was holding, well the handle and trigger section were but it was connected to a blade that drops and slices the finger of the person who pulls the trigger. Rog created it and called it the Finguitine or something like that.

Cheeks said he knew why I was in that room that I was trying to bring my boss down and offered me a chance to take down a bunch of my bosses and do some good for this city. He apologized about what they have done to me so far but assured me it was only because they wanted to make sure I wasn't one of the bad guys. I felt I could trust these guys a little more, I felt like they actually needed my help and I wanted to get back at my boss who created this whole mess for me in the first place so I agreed to join. I asked him how I was able to help and they informed me of something called project ARF and they had been planning it for weeks, collecting and planted pieces of financial information that will help bring down each one. I clued in that that's why they were in my office that day. I felt like pieces to this grand puzzle were coming together and I was excited to be a part of the group that would bring them down. I had to ask what ARF stood for and the Ukrainian guy said it was none of my business but Cheeks seemed to snap back reminding that I agreed to help. He said it stood for 'Activate the Robinson file' which was the last piece to their collection of evidence and that tomorrow all four of us were going to do it. Suddenly I was one of the guys and not a hostage or a kidnapped victim. That didn't mean I had my freedom they made it clear I wasn't going anywhere until after the plan went off successfully, I said I needed rest because I had a big day tomorrow, so they said goodnight and left.

7.

For hours I tried to get to sleep thinking about how this was the first night since I met her that I wasn't sleeping beside Siri. I wondered if she was worried I was dead or angry thinking I'm cheating on her. I knew I had to try and see her so I waited until everyone was motionless and I knew they were sleeping and made my way to the window. This was the first chance I had to escape so I had to try. I climbed down the side of the house barefooted and it seemed my hands were throbbing more than in the chair but I smelt freedom and it felt like I was going to see my family again. It's crazy but even though I woke up this morning like every other day with her it's

felt like days since I've seen her. I wandered aimlessly throughout the roads unknowing of where I was going or where I was for that matter. I saw under the street light there was a phone booth and thought I could call collect to Siri. I went to reach for the receiver but the phone rang instead. I jumped backwards almost right out of the phone booth, it had to be three or four in the morning, in the middle of nowhere so just the fact that someone called that phone at that moment scared the crap out of me. I let it ring a couple times but it wouldn't stop so I decided to answer it and they didn't say anything so I slammed the phone down and went to grab some change to call my wife forgetting that they have everything I own. The phone rang again and I didn't want to pick it up but I didn't know where I was or how I was going to get out of here so I answered. The line was clear again just silence and when I went to hang up I heard a voice say 'it's nice to finally speak with you Mr. Miller' It wasn't any of the voices I knew but someone new. He said that I was in danger because I was outside and advised that I go back and let matters unfold. I never take advice from strangers so I asked him why should I go back? to which he replied that we had mutual enemies who are extremely dangerous and would kill anyone to cover up their tracks, and not to trust them. He told me of a cell phone in a bag just outside the phone booth beside the garbage can, I looked and there was a little take-out bag and after I had hung up and checked there was a phone in it. He told me this would be the only form of communication I could trust, there were eyes and ears everywhere.

He advised me not to call Siri for my house wasn't safe, if I called or showed up there it'd be bad. My only option was to go back but I cut him off by saying I was going to go back but not to sleep, I was going to kill them all so my family and I could truly be safe. I asked him to at least tell me his name and he told me I'd know soon enough, I couldn't figure out whether he was someone trying to help me or one of the bad guys trying to get me back to the house without having to shoot me in the street, either way I was going back to that house and even though I didn't have any weapons it wasn't going to stop me. It was quiet and kinda eerie, I crept through the halls making my way to Rog's room, he was the biggest so obviously taking him out first was the smartest plan. I didn't get quite get to his room when I heard Cheeks behind me telling me he knew I left the house and asked where I went. I stood there motionless, expressionless and nothing to say. Thankfully he broke the silence and said it didn't matter where I went because I came back. He asked if I wanted to know more about what I had to do tomorrow and would answer anything I wanted. I really wanted to hear what he had to say so I agreed and we went into the study. I asked him first to explain the Robinson file and about how or where we were supposed to get it. He said it's the last piece of information in a web of paper trails they've collected and in obtaining it, proving its existence and in return save Cheeks from ending up in prison like his friends. I again tried to ask him how he got his nickname since he had no scars or physical deformities on his face. He answered that it didn't involve his face and was going to tell me the story but the Russian guy came storming in, out of breath, and ranting on about something but it was either in another language or I just couldn't understand his accent. Cheeks stood up and asked where I went except this time he was serious in hearing an answer. I said nothing just stood up and walked towards the wall behind me. Cheeks pointed his gun and asked who I talked to on the phone. I told the truth which was that I didn't know who he was but they

said I was either a liar, a cop, or a rat. I claimed that I was none of the above and if I wanted to leave or get them busted it would have happened by now. I came back and they'd have to trust me as much as I'd have to trust them. I did the only thing I could think of I pointed to Rog who was on the other side of Cheeks, when he looked over his shoulder I grabbed the gun and they stood very still for a minute scared. I don't know why I didn't shoot them all but I threw the gun to the other side of the room. I don't know whether I said this to make them believe me or whether I really meant it but I said we were doing this tomorrow as planned and we will do it as a team.

8.

I had a hard time getting to sleep because I feared one of them was going to kill me. I thought about killing them while they slept but I knew if I was going to take down my boss these guys could help. I fantasized about blowing up the house and even torturing them in contraptions of my own and that was enough to let me drift off to sleep. My dreams that night were of four masked men whom I presume were the three stooges and myself. led by Cheeks, we were dressed in pure white so that the four of us stood out in the large black room. We were making our way towards a little green light on the other end of the room, but shadows were making it hard for us to move. I remember one grabbed me and it was hard to struggle against it but I did manage to shake it free. I saw who I believe was Rog due to his size turning pure black until he was one of them too, then the others followed and almost everyone except me were now shadows. I ran for my life towards the green light until it was right in front of my face and I could've touched it but I didn't for some reason, I wanted to run as far away from it as possible. I was tackled to the ground by the last shadow man turning black and I landed right on the green light. There were shadow people all around so I couldn't move a single muscle, all I could see and feel was blackness for a moment. I felt them loosen and suddenly instead of just a green glow in black world I saw everything again.

The shadow people all had little white yellowish lights or circles right above where their hearts would be. I looked around and I could see someone who also wasn't a shadow person but he was blurry, I could now crawl now so I made myself towards the figure. When I was close he came towards me and I recognized him as my boss. He ordered a bunch of shadow men to pick me up and bring me face to face with him. I looked him in the eyes and tried to scream but I couldn't even whisper, only observe what was happening. I saw a shadow man right beside my boss and watched as the bright light on his chest blinked and fell to the ground. I couldn't take my eyes off of it, he was the only shadow who didn't have eyes, just blackness. He made a wave or swing of his arms and suddenly I dropped to the ground and so did every other shadow person in the room. I stood up as soon as I could but no one else did, only three people were standing, me, and the two people in front of me: My boss to the left and the shadow person to the right. No one spoke a word but I could sense the whole conversation as if they were, my boss was pleading for me to give the green light to him because just like me he's been set up. It could help the both of us escape. I looked at the shadow person on his right and he just held out his hand. It became very apparent they wanted that green light.

I looked and Cheeks was now standing beside me. He was a shadow person too with the little white light above his heart but he wasn't trying to take it, he stared at the other two. My boss pleaded with me again to give it to him but I could sense his evil intentions and told him he was never going to get it and here was no way I was about to give it to a creepy shadow person either. Cheeks said giving the file to either of them would be walking it right into the hands of the people who want it destroyed and everything we've sacrificed would be for nothing. I gave the green light to Cheeks and everything changed, I couldn't move again just staring at the creepy shadow person in front of me. He lifted his hand towards where the white light on his chest would've been and it turned blood red. I just couldn't stop staring like I was hypnotized or something, his finger also kept a red glow as he lifted it towards his temple and it started spreading throughout his head. He told me to think and opened his eyes and suddenly everything turned white. I was pushed back to reality by the feeling of a vibration in my pocket. I awoke and was flooded with questions about my dream and couldn't understand what it meant at first. Was he telling me to use my brain or open my eyes? What was up with the lights on their chests? Enough about the dream because time is precious and every minute brings me closer to my demise, I would hate to die without getting to the good part of this story.

9.

Without waking anyone I left the house as quick as possible and when I was walking down the road last night I passed a little diner that was closed. I knew it'd be open this morning, I don't smoke so I needed a coffee to calm me down, that hope didn't last long when I realized I didn't have any money. I sat down with all my hopes gone before I remembered about the vibration from the mobile phone, the stranger from the phone booth gave me last night. I had a new message. It read 'things are not as they seem and you need to see clearly before the vision can be properly understood, see you soon' it didn't say who it was from. After that dream I just decided to run, things were way too messed up for me to comprehend logic and reason. I didn't get far before I noticed a car down the road pull a U-turn and pull over, I stopped dead because a few men in very nice suits got out and walked towards me. I also pulled a U-turn and walked even faster in the opposite direction, when I turned the corner I started to run. They couldn't see me anymore and I really wanted to get away.

I turned into an alley and noticed a homeless guy ahead of me asking me if I'm the one who brings the change. I told him I literally had no money to which he replied he didn't want money, but change. Then asked if I was the one who brings it. This was weird, and creepy. When he started walking towards me I could see why, it was the weird bearded dude from the other day. I really wanted to see him least of anyone I have met recently and even wished I was back with Cheeks tied up rather than converse with this guy. I ran back out of the alley and was about a block away from the hideout when I saw a police car creeping down the road. I hid behind the bus shelter and the phone in my pocket rang again, I went to see what the message said when I realized it was a call and I had accidentally answered it. I said hello but no one answered and as I was about to hang up the voice from last night spoke up. He said he had to be brief and told me I was being followed and if I called the police they would pin everything on me because I'm an

accountant for one of the companies involved. I asked if everyone was out to get me who can I trust and could I even trust him? if I cannot tell the police about this plan who can I give the file to, to thwart their plan? All he had to say to that was the answer to all my questions would be revealed in time but things have to go according to plan. He assured me that I wasn't alone in this and I had help but I'd have to trust him. I still didn't know who I was talking to and I was getting sick of people telling me I'd have to trust them, I said I wasn't saying one more word until I knew his name, I would destroy the phone and walk away from this whole thing. I knew I had the upper hand now because he suddenly wanted to answer me, I said I only wanted one answer and that was his name. He told me the smartest thing I should do was go back to the house. I remember he was persistent on not revealing his name and kept changing the subject. He said he understood if I didn't trust him but I must retrieve the Robinson file that's when I cut him off, WHATS YOUR NAME? I should have listened and asked him more questions cause he told me that I'd be stuck in almost the same situation I'm in right now and he could have told me how to get out it. I didn't let him I just asked him his name and he said this would be the last time that we could speak over the phone, but I could call him Rondulph.

10.

Once I hung up there wasn't anything I wanted to do more than leave this city forever. The only way I saw me doing that was getting the file so I stood up and surveyed the street. Nothing was out of the ordinary and the police car was gone so I went into the hideout and once inside I quietly shut the door. I could hear they were awake and in the kitchen so it wasn't like I was trying to sneak in. Cheeks was looking over a set of blueprints on large pieces of paper and when I looked closer I noticed the second person wasn't a guy but the woman from the chair. I didn't want to make eye contact because that would have been awkward so I looked at the plans too. She left with the Ukrainian man in a hurry and I asked Cheeks who she was and he said Rog's sister Serenity. They informed me of my boss working on a way to frame me for the missing money and he even put a hit out on me. I didn't believe them until they showed me a voicemail message that proved he was in fact going to do both. I had no choice but to expose his plot before he had a chance to blame me for it. Cheeks spent the next couple hours explaining things to me in detail and it just occurred to me how intricate and well thought out this plan was. He had every detail mapped out from blueprints, work timesheets, and even complete inventory lists. He had a blackboard kinda like I had in school and it looked like he was planning a football play. It was positions in which we'd move through the building, there was an X where the filing cabinet containing the file was and four numbers which were for us. He drew out plans and described the whole thing to me and asked if I understood what I was to do. At the time I had no idea because I thought I would be playing number four but I found out I was number one when it was too late to turn back. We were about to leave when I realized I was supposed to wear what I thought was dirty mechanic rags in the corner but it was part of the plan I guess so I suited up and we headed out. We got to the destination and I was to sit outside and pretend to be homeless while they went inside and got into formation. Wait until I saw a bald man with a turtleneck sweater enter the bank and then I was to follow him in.

I was waiting for longer than I had expected and was getting kinda antsy. I saw a man across the street also sitting on the ground, I didn't have to go across to know it was the bearded guy from the other day. This made it official, he was stalking me. I didn't know what to do so I stood up and started to walk away from the building but the man stood up and started to walk towards me. I kept thinking what if he was a cop and he was about to arrest me? My thoughts were running wild, I was thinking he might work for the socialites and that would mean h might be about to try and kill me. He tapped his writs again and honestly I had no Idea what he wanted but I didn't want to wait around and see. I went to walk inside and ran straight into a police officer, he grabbed my arm and pushed forward. I thought he was trying to arrest me but thankfully he was helping me regain my balance. When I turned around there was no bearded guy anywhere in sight. The cop, thinking I was homeless, gave me enough for a coffee and left. I had a gun in my waist so I'm glad it never fell out of the rags. Just as I might have just dipped and left this whole operation I saw the bald guy walking ahead. When I went inside I saw Cheeks in the corner posing as the blind guy, Rog in the other corner with the Ukrainian guy acting like they were discussing something important. Once they spotted me they knew the plan was put into action and Rog left for the bathroom.

11.

There were about ten people inside and we had only planned for maybe, six; we would have to work around it. Once the bald guy was inside he walked towards the back room and I looked for the thumbs up from the Russian. This meant that he has disabled the cameras and we can move to phase two. I then looked for Cheeks to get up and walk towards the lineup but he signaled me to go anyways without him. I stood in line, waiting to be served. I put my hand on the gun that was sitting in my waist, I didn't want to use it but it was my only protection if our plan didn't work. I quietly inquired about the Robinson file to which she replied that I would have to speak up... So I did. She asked if I was the person that was coming to activate the account. That's when things started to get weird and not according to plans. I asked her to give me the Robinson file and no one would get hurt. I was acting like a terrorist and not just a dirty homeless man in line. I ordered everyone to get on the floor and raised the gun into the air. Everyone did go down except the girl behind the counter, the Russian guy, and Cheeks. I pointed the gun at the girl and told her I wanted the file.

While I watched her type away I realized there was a man standing behind her, in the hall, and he was pointing a gun at me shouting about my tattoo -almost describing it out loud. He kept saying stuff like 'put the gun down Fox, this doesn't have to end like last time; or 'please do not do this, your streak is over; It was the bald man in the turtleneck and he thought I was this guy named Fox so I played along for some reason. We both had guns pointed at each other and neither of us were backing down. His gun was probably real so I knew he would win in a shoot out but I wasn't letting him know that. We stood in a stare down until the girl at the counter broke our silence, declaring out loud the Robinson file had been activated. All of a sudden I heard a loud bang from behind me and the bald guy dropped to the floor. Rog was out of the washroom and shot him but it definitely looked like I shot him to anyone who saw.

To anyone that's listening please know that I didn't want anyone to die, nor did I kill a single person. My gun is fake and I've be..”

BANG..click..BANG..

“Anyways back to my story, I hopped behind the counter but there were no filing cabinets anywhere in the room. I walked towards the back hallway when I heard more shots, I turned around they were shooting everyone else. Suddenly everyone was dead except me, Rog, Cheeks, the Russian, and the girl behind the counter. As soon as the last person hit the ground the girl filled a bag with something out of a few drawers. I yelled 'what's going on here?'

Cheeks replied that the plan was successful and the five way split meant they're all rich. I shouted 'where is the Robinson file and what is going on?' I was still very angry over the killings. A voice behind me said 'Don't you get it we're the bad guys, there never was a Robinson file' it was the bald guy walking past. I thought about the splitting five ways thing because by my count there was the three of them, the girl, myself, and now the bald guy. That's six people who wasn't getting cut in to the profits? Rog laughed at me and asked If it wasn't clear enough and suddenly it was. The bald guy lowered his collar and I saw the fox, the exact same fox that is on my neck. I'm the patsy, the buddy being set up, I walked right into this situation. I was an accountant working for one of the biggest companies in this corruption ring; it would be so easy to frame me.

Rog confirmed my suspicions when he pointed to Fox's missing finger, mine was made to look like his. They're going to shoot me and wait for the police to show up then I'll be framed as the Fox. I tried saying they'd never get away with this once the cops found out. They laughed so hard when i said this but I didn't see the joke yet. The bald guy took the bags and while laughing, gave me the stupidest bow/wave combo I have ever saw and left. I was backing up slowly while Rog was walking towards me with his gun waving asking me if I had any last words. I was confused and knew the cops should be coming soon so I asked how would Cheeks explain their presence at the scene of the crime. I was going to tell them everything, I knew the plan. Cheeks cut me off by saying they're waiting until the police to show up. They're going to frame me and no one will ever be the wiser. They explained that the cameras were recording a little longer than I believed and it showed me wire a lot of money to accounts of invisible people. It also shows me point a gun at the girl, who is now the only living witness. Rog cut the video before anyone got shot, now there are dead people and no proof that I didn't kill them.

I give Cheeks credit he really did plan the perfect heist but he didn't plan for me to do what I did next. I asked him again how he was going to stay here and get away with it. He reached into his pocket and showed me his badge, In fact all three of them were cops, I didn't see that coming. I couldn't even wrap my mind around what this meant, I get it now, they were going to pretend to be first on the scene. I asked them 'and what about him?' and pointed to the corner. It was enough for them to turn their heads and I ran into the hall. I leapt behind the first door I saw and locked it. I heard gunshots outside trying to get in here but they can't.

Cheeks called for backup stating I was heavily armed and already killed multiple people. I heard them say they were out of ammo. That didn't matter though, in fifteen minutes when their police friends get here they'll have new guns and ammunition. I already tried the phone Rondulph gave me but I'm pretty sure I'm in a vault of some sort, so I cannot make, or receive any calls. I thought I wasn't going to be able to tell anyone what happened to me the past couple days until I saw a voice notes menu on this phone and I see this as my only way to clear my name. It's been about twenty five minutes since I started recording and..."

"BANG..click..BANG..click"

"I hear them now finally about to open the door so it's time for me to face what's coming to me. if I die today at least I got to tell you my story. Siri you were right about everything, I love you..."

12.

The message does go continue but it's mostly speculation from here on out. It starts with the sound of the phone hitting the ground and then several loud bangs and scuffled movements. Brian could be heard breathing heavily under the desk for about a minute before he faintly said "I don't get it, what happened?" and then a few seconds later "It was you all along wasn't it, but why me? And how did you know?" There were other voices saying something but it was too quiet to hear. I don't know who sent me this recording but I've been a little bit crazy ever since trying to find out what happened. I desperately wanted to know what happened to Brian?

I first heard this tape about three years ago and I've been digging around trying to uncover this story ever since. I became an insomniac trying to find him or anyone else that might be able to explain what happened when the tape stopped. I did find out Brian got out of that vault and is alive somewhere but I've been unsuccessful in locating him. I couldn't tell you where, or what he's doing today, but I was able to track down a man named Roger Morrow. He admitted to being the same Rog from this tape, he's incarcerated serving a life sentence but I was able to interview him. He told me the same story that I heard on the tape which didn't help me much but he did tell me that Alexandr was the name of the Russian guy, and offered information about the location and date of the heist. Once I found out where it happened, I then found out about the surveillance video in the vault. I went to court for months trying to gain access to it. I had to have a good enough reason and writing this won me the chance to see the video.

I watched it and I saw Brian in the video hiding under the desk recording the message and I got to the point where he put

the phone down and the door opened by Roger followed by Alexandr and two other figures, none of which turned out to be Cheeks. They had their guns drawn as he tried to explain himself but didn't get a chance to say a word. They started firing and it looked like fireworks were going off inside that vault. I watched as roughly twenty gunshots from Rog and Alexandr were fired in Brian's direction. I bet even Neo from the Matrix couldn't even dodge that many from close range but when the firing stopped Brian was still standing there patting his body down surprised to be alive.

I saw the two other officers point their pistols at Rog and Alexandr and then arrest them. They left and another man came in the room. Brian and him stood looking at each other for a minute or two. He said they've been watching and following them for a while and knew they were the ones behind the circle cycle. They thought this plan was amazing but they didn't expect you to hide in the vault, they needed you dead so they could make it look like the bad guy died so no one will look for them afterwards.

When you hid they had to change their plans and if I hadn't been following you we would've never noticed you were being set up. These officers really would have thought you were robbing this place and shot you with them. This is when Brian must have first recognized him because it was the part on the tape where he said "it was you all along" then the second voice said that "the only to way to protect you and arrest them, would be to let them prove to the police their own corruption. They were told before entering the vault to only fire if provoked. I knew you weren't going to provoke them so I thought to play their own trick on them. The two of them were handed guns with blank rounds because I knew they would pull the trigger carelessly. I don't know where Adam is, or Cheeks as you would know him by, but he must have been wise to our plan. I don't know how, but he is gone. The other two will spend a long time in jail and so will the female witness. Speaking of females, I think I need to tell you something about your wife". Brian definitely recognized him now, he had long mangy hair with a matching beard. He looked right at the camera and I saw the creepy bulgy eyes and knew it was the creepy guy Brian kept running in to, the one person he didn't want to see actually ended up being the only one who could help him. When they started to walk out of the vault Brian was asking questions of how they pulled this off but just stopped and said thank you to the bearded man but stopped because I think he didn't want to say "thank you Mr. weird bearded dude" He asked his name and the guy said to call him Rondulph.

Here's a quick note I have looked for several weeks trying to find any cop or detective with the first or last name Rondulph but there is no one. There isn't even a cop by the first name Ron and last name Dulph, so my search goes on. There are still so many questions I have about this story and blanks that need to be filled. Who is Rondulph? What happened to Brian Miller after that day? What about Cheeks where is he? Did he meet up with the Fox? Where is the money the girl wired out when she activated the Robinson account? Did he set up Rog and Alexandr so they didn't have a cut of the profits? These are just a few of the questions I don't think I'll find the answer to, but at least I now know how Brian got out of that vault, and really that's all I set out to find in the first place. If anyone knows the answers to the other questions please contact me I would love to do a follow up report to this story but I hope this has intrigued you as much as it has me. If you find yourself in a situation like this I have one piece of advice for you: Don't snoop around because sometimes what you get may be way worse than what you expected to find.