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Technical

by Ivor John

Carrying a mug of instant coffee and two pieces of buttered toast, wrapped in kitchen towel, he balanced them in one hand, enabling him to slide his pass card across the electronic door lock. The main office was large, open plan. Desks, littered with the usual office detritus. Unusually, no paperwork was allowed to be left out on desks, where it could be seen by visitors or staff who were not vetted. He went into a smaller room, in the corner of the main office, identified only as office 216, technical surveillance.

A DS, two detectives and a technician were the team. Casually dressed, tatty jeans and trainers de rigueur. Determined not to look like police officers, with tattoos and piercings. A whiteboard, with a pull down rollerblind covered one wall. The technician, Ian had a desk at the back of the office. Cluttered with tubes of solder, pliers, printed circuit boards. Around it were more tools in canvas tool bags, Kev's Ariels printed on them, an aluminium folding step ladder. Kev's Ariels was the teams alias company. Their hire vehicles were rented by Kev's aeriels.

Any internet search would take you to a web page, describing the non-existent company. The phone number rang to an answermachine in their office. Steve, the DS would listen to any messages and decide if they needed a response. Those that did were usually offered a slightly too high estimate or an unacceptable delay. Very occasionally they would arrange a trusted bona fide company to carry out work on their behalf.

If they were working on the plot, they would appear, on casual inspection to be an ariel company. Usually this simple deception was sufficient to assuage casual curiosity and avoid the need to explain who they were. Third party awareness is the often overlooked hazard for covert operatives. They were aware that their cover lacked the sophistication of their SOCA equivalents, who had fully formed shell companies. It would not pass a rigorous inspection but was sufficient for the targets they mostly worked on. Drug dealers, fraudsters and occasionally murder suspects.

Tina was already in the office, sitting in front of her two, large monitors, her headphones plugged in to her computer. On her screen a dancing sine wave, peaking at the sibilants of the voice she was listening too through her headphones. Using her mouse, she moved the cursor on the screen to mark the beginning and end points of parts she wanted to listen to more closely, later. Highlighting them, she dragged them over to her second terminal, to create a play list. This was a laborious job. Most of the twenty-four hours of recording would be silent or background noise. It had to be listened to. The software could pick out whenever the probe was active, which made the task easier. But this was not foolproof.

"Where are Ian and Steve?"

"They've gone to do a visual of the lock up. We know Bridger is bang at it, but we are not getting anything off the lines or the probe at his drum."

"So what is the plan for the lockup?"

"We are going to have a meeting later with the SV team, but he wants to do a creep at the unit to put in a probe and a camera. We don't think the team will do it though we would need at least twenty four hours lifestyle".

"What's there problem? Don't they realise how active he is?"

"Steve doesn't think they'll extend the warrant, based on what we've done so far. We are going live with the current probe, from tonight."

"Live, are you kidding, how the hell are we going to manage that."

Tina laughed, "You'd better tell Julie you won't be home for a few days."

"So have we got the team from tonight then?"

"Crime squad are covering it, they have a source who says he has threatened to kill the witness who has ID'd him."

He took a thumb drive from an envelope in the office safe. If they were going live, they would need to be up to date with what they had already. Plugging the drive into his computer, he put his headphones on and took a sip of his coffee.