"Remain Vigilant: Two Linked One-Act Plays"

Written by
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REMAIN VIGILANT

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Dedication

To my mu, as always
REMAIN VIGILANT

PART ONE- THE WATCHFUL EYES

Cast of Characters

KIERAN FAIRWEATHER

EDWIN HUNT
35. Not his real name. Level 6 clearance.

THOM WALSH
26. Level 30 clearance.

WARREN VOIGHT
33. Level 8 Clearance.

THE WATCHFUL EYES

INT A staff room. The surfaces are clean and empty. A single table with plastic chairs by it. There are at least three CCTV cameras, all bulky and obvious. A couple of posters on the back wall, saying 'SEE IT: REPORT IT.' and 'A QUIET WORKPLACE IS A SECURE WORKPLACE.'

EDWIN sits at the table, sandwiches wrapped in foil in front of him. On curtain up he is scribbling in a small notebook.)

He hears something, looks up frantically at the cameras, then puts the notebook safely away. He unwraps the sandwiches as KIERAN enters.

KIERAN
Newbie! How’s it going? Settling in?

EDWIN
Yes.

KIERAN
Good to hear. Good to hear. Think you’ll fit in well Eddie.

EDWIN
Edwin.
REMAIN VIGILANT

KIERAN
Seem fairly savvy. Got your head screwed on.

EDWIN
It’s Edwin.

KIERAN
What?

EDWIN
My name is Edwin. Not Eddie.

KIERAN
Same difference. What you eating?

EDWIN
Just sandwiches.

KIERAN
Sandwiches. You a joker?

EDWIN
No. Not a joker.

KIERAN
Classic. Look pretty good.

EDWIN
They’re alright. Is there a problem?

KIERAN
Just banter Eddie.

Pause.

Although...

EDWIN
What?

KIERAN
You got them scanned, right?

EDWIN
What?
REMAIN VIGILANT

KIERAN
First thing. All the security. Need to declare them.

EDWIN
I don’t understand.

KIERAN
Seriously? This is a problem. How do we know you’re not a terrorist? I mean seriously mate. It’s pretty much treason.

EDWIN
I didn’t...

KIERAN
Management will be angry. I need to take them.

EDWIN
Sorry?

KIERAN grabs the sandwiches from EDWIN.

EDWIN
Give them back!

KIERAN
No can do Eddie. I could be saving the nation right now.

EDWIN
(aghast)
What is wrong with you?

KIERAN sniffs the sandwiches

KIERAN
Hmm. Tuna mayo. No hint of anthrax.

EDWIN
Please give them back.

KIERAN
Sounds like a something a terrorist would say.

EDWIN
Why would a terrorist possibly say that?
REMAIN VIGILANT

KIERAN
Only one way to tell for sure.

EDWIN
They’re mine.

KIERAN
For Queen and country.

EDWIN
What?

KIERAN
Give my porn collection to charity if this doesn’t work.

KIERAN takes a bite.

Pause.

KIERAN looks at the sandwich, then at Edwin. He starts to cough, then grabs at his throat.

EDWIN
Alright. Very funny.

KIERAN falls to his knees, still coughing.

It goes on slightly too long.

EDWIN
Are you...?

KIERAN springs up, totally fine. He starts laughing.

EDWIN
Christ.

KIERAN
There you go.

He chucks the sandwiches back to EDWIN.

EDWIN
What was that about?

KIERAN
Your face! Classic!
EDWIN
I don’t appreciate being-

KIERAN
Seriously.

EDWIN
You can’t just walk in here and-

KIERAN
It’s just a joke mate.

EDWIN
Well it’s not funny.

KIERAN
Remember though, as your superior I can do that whenever I want and you can’t do jack. Seriously.

EDWIN
Right.

Pause.

EDWIN picks up the sandwich with a bite taken out of it, looks at it, then throws it down in disgust.

KIERAN
You’re a bit old. No offense.

EDWIN
None taken. This is a young department.

KIERAN
That’s the way Management like it. I’ve known computers all my life. It’s in my blood.

EDWIN
You can navigate the ins and outs of the system.

KIERAN
Damn right.

EDWIN
You must know all the back doors.
REMAIN VIGILANT

KIERAN
Know it like the back of my hand. Unlike older men.

EDWIN
I’ve got sufficient experience and skills for this position.

KIERAN
You’re picking it up alright. But it takes longer. Dad still writes passwords down on sticky notes and puts them by his computer. Bless.

EDWIN
I am not your father.

KIERAN
But you’re old enough.

EDWIN
I’m only thirty five.

KIERAN whistles.

KIERAN
Fuck me! Practically dead.

EDWIN
Many thanks for the vote of confidence.

KIERAN
Seriously? Thirty five?

EDWIN
Yep.

KIERAN
Wow. Wonder why Management picked you.

EDWIN
Because of my unique combination of skills.

KIERAN
Sure mate. Sure.
REMAIN VIGILANT

Pause. They examine each other for a moment.

KIERAN

Seen any naked birds yet?

KIERAN sits opposite EDWIN.

EDWIN

What?

KIERAN

Naked birds. On their laptops.

EDWIN

I don’t think that’s... right.

KIERAN

Sure, get a conscience now. Already spying on them, might as well get something out of it.

EDWIN

It just doesn’t seem ethical.

KIERAN

Seriously. You need to take advantage. Take this Saturday. Went to this club, got chatting to this right tidy piece- her arse was...

EDWIN

I’m sure.

KIERAN leans over and takes a sandwich.

KIERAN

Lost her. But I had her phone number. Jackpot.

EDWIN

That’s mine.

KIERAN

Got back to mine. Dialled in.

EDWIN

My sandwich!

KIERAN

Chill out Eddie.
REMAIN VIGILANT

EDWIN
I was just about to-

KIERAN
This bird right, cracking arse, tight black dress. Was so pissed I lost her. Should have seen her mate. Nice tits as well. I got back-

THOM enters. EDWIN coughs.

THOM
Alright fellas.

EDWIN
Hi?

KIERAN
Thom.

THOM
What are you chatting about?

EDWIN
Oh, nothing.

Pause.

THOM
Warm welcome as always.

KIERAN
Don’t you have tea to be getting?

THOM
I’m on my lunch.

KIERAN
Again?

THOM
No, first time.

EDWIN
Good afternoon. I don’t think we’ve met.

THOM
New recruit?
REMAIN VIGILANT

KIERAN
That’s right.

EDWIN
Name’s Edwin.

THOM
Thom. With a H.

KIERAN
With a H. Dick.

THOM
Sorry?

KIERAN
Nothing.

THOM
Nice to meet you anyway.

He shakes EDWIN’s hand.

KIERAN
Ew!

THOM
What?

KIERAN
You got the newbie stink.

THOM
Sorry about Kieran. Some of our staff haven’t evolved much beyond the stone age.

EDWIN
It’s fine.

KIERAN
How’s it down in Data Entry?

THOM
Fine. Better than you plebs up here in Information Monitoring.

KIERAN
Going to get beyond level thirty this year?
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
Kieran’s a real joker.

EDWIN
I noticed.

THOM
Shame none of his jokes are funny.

EDWIN
A bit unethical I find.

KIERAN
What’s it to you?

Pause.

EDWIN
Nothing.

THOM puts a kettle on.

KIERAN
Bit embarrassing. Stuck at a low level at twenty six.

THOM
This is why I always enjoy coming up here Kieran. Your brilliant company.

EDWIN
So what does that make me?

KIERAN
You just started mate. You’ll be going through the levels in no time.

THOM
I wouldn’t listen to a thing he says. It’s all lies.

KIERAN
Shut up. Avoid Internal Ethics and you can advance. Start earning the big bucks. I started where you are fresh out of school. Few years ago now. Mates thought I was a mug for not going to uni. Now level fifteen. Earning more than they ever will.
REMAIN VIGILANT

EDWIN
Oh. Right.

THOM
He won’t let you forget it either.

KIERAN
Some of us take pride in our work.

THOM
What, watching ordinary people go about their business? Say what you will about data entry, but at least it’s honest.

EDWIN
I’m still getting used to it myself. Seems... weird.

KIERAN
Takes some time mate. But adapt and survive, that’s what I always say.

THOM
Funny that. It’s the first time I’ve ever heard you say it.

KIERAN
You never listened in the first place.

Pause. The kettle boils away.

THOM
Still up for football tomorrow?

KIERAN
Wouldn’t miss it. I’ll kick your arse.

THOM
He says that a lot.

KIERAN
You should come along Edward.

EDWIN
Edwin. And its not really my-

THOM
It’s only a few of us. Inter-departmental
REMAIN VIGILANT

thing, been going a month or so.

EDWIN
I don’t play.

KIERAN
Nor does Thom.

KIERAN laughs. No-one else does.

THOM
Remind me, what was the score last time?

KIERAN
Piss off.

EDWIN
No. It’s not my thing.

THOM
Shame.

KIERAN
This bird right. I have a little VPN set up and-

EDWIN
Can you do that?

KIERAN
Sure. It’s easy.

EDWIN
But if Internal Ethics catch you-

KIERAN
All anonymous. They can’t prove anything.

THOM
Kieran’s a ninja when it comes to getting his rocks off.

The kettle has boiled. THOM pours a cup of tea. Whilst he is doing this, KIERAN grabs the foil from the sandwiches, scrunches it up and throws it at THOM.

KIERAN
Prick!
THOM
Alright! Calm down mate.

KIERAN
Why are you here? You have your own kitchen. With the lower levels.

THOM
Wanted to see your lovely face.

KIERAN
Prick.

EDWIN
Are you allowed to use another department’s staff room?

THOM
Sure. I don’t think it’s a problem.

EDWIN
I thought this place would be more secure.

THOM
Well there’s some areas you can’t go to. You need higher clearance.

EDWIN
But this is fine?

THOM
Sure.

EDWIN
Internal Ethics wouldn’t have a problem with it?

THOM
What they don’t know won’t hurt them.

KIERAN
Exactly. Like my web of beautiful, unknowing cam girls.

THOM
Take everything this one says with a pinch of salt will you?
REMAIN VIGILANT

EDWIN
I will.

KIERAN
Nah, he can’t be trusted.

EDWIN
No-one is to be trusted, isn’t that the official motto?

Slight pause.

KIERAN
Yeah. Yeah it is.

THOM
Where’d you hear that?

EDWIN
Just around.

KIERAN
Right.

Pause.

KIERAN reaches over and takes the other sandwich.

EDWIN
Excuse me!

KIERAN
What?

EDWIN
That’s my lunch.

THOM
His lunch now.

EDWIN
(Sighing.)
I suppose you think your crude attempts to intimidate me are going to work?

KIERAN
Got balls newbie? Want to take me on?
Unseen to KIERAN, WARREN has entered. He stands in the doorway, surveying the scene.

Everyone else freezes.

KIERAN
Come on then? Prick.

WARREN
Mr Fairweather. A delight.

KIERAN turns around.

KIERAN
Warren. Didn’t see you there mate.

WARREN
I’m not your mate. And it’s Sir or Mr. Voight to you.

(K) (Quietly)
Oh right. Sorry.

WARREN enters and crosses to the sink. He wears elbow length gloves, which are covered in blood.

THOM gets out of his way.

WARREN
Thank you Mr. Walsh.

He starts to wash his gloves. THOM just nods., trying to be invisible. It doesn’t work.

WARREN
This is the Information Monitoring staff room, is it not?

THOM
That’s right.

WARREN
Data Entry has their own room. Downstairs.

THOM
Our kettle is broken. I wanted a cup of tea.
WARREN
Whilst unfortunate, that is a matter for Maintenance, is it not?

THOM
I guess.

WARREN
But you still enter a staff room that isn’t yours.

THOM
So have you. You’ve got your own kitchen down in Interrogations.

WARREN
I have higher clearance than you.

THOM
Didn’t think it was a-

WARREN
Ah! What a pleasure. I see we are graced with the presence of-

EDWIN stands quickly and thrusts his hand out.

EDWIN

Pause.

WARREN
Of course. ‘Edwin’. A pleasure to make your acquaintance.

EDWIN
Nice to meet you.

WARREN
You’ll forgive me if I don’t shake. I am a little... indisposed.

EDWIN
Not a problem.
Pause.

WARREN
I trust your colleagues are instructing you well.

EDWIN
I’m learning a lot from my superiors.

KIERAN
Showing him the ropes.

WARREN
Of course. I’d expect nothing less.

KIERAN
Yeah, he’s settling in.

WARREN
Good to hear.

EDWIN
That’s right. I’m getting to grips with the basics.

THOM
It’s what it’s all about.

WARREN
Level thirty aren’t you?

THOM
That’s right.

WARREN
Don’t address your superiors in that fashion.

THOM
Like what?

WARREN
Damn your insolence.

THOM
Sorry?

KIERAN
Mate, leave it.
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
I didn’t...

WARREN
You shouldn’t even be up here.

WARREN gets out a pad and scribbles something down.

WARREN
Tut tut. Such disobedience. Go to the archive in Sub-Basement Three and find this file.

THOM
What?

KIERAN
Go on mate.

THOM
I don’t...

KIERAN
It’ll be easier.

THOM
I’m on my lunch!

WARREN hands THOM the piece of paper. THOM looks at it, sighs.

THOM
Fine, see you in a bit Kieran?

KIERAN is silent.

THOM sighs and exits.

EDWIN
Does that happen a lot?

KIERAN
Bit harsh.

WARREN
You are questioning my methods?

KIERAN
Nah. Just saying.
REMIND VIGILANT

WARREN
Has he been instructing you in the ways of perversion yet?

EDWIN
He mentioned a few things.

KIERAN
Got bored in your basement did you?

WARREN
I do like to observe the cattle in their natural habitat.

KIERAN
Been prosecuted by the Geneva convention yet?

WARREN
For the protection of Queen and country Mr Fairweather. But of course you are ignorant of such matters.

KIERAN
Nah. Busy doing actual work.

WARREN
Oh, that is what you call it?

KIERAN
Vital work.

EDWIN
It certainly appears to be fulfilling.

WARREN
Right. This conversation bores me. Mr. Fairweather, Go retrieve your daily log.

KIERAN
What? Why?

WARREN
Yours is not to question why. Just do.

KIERAN
Aren’t even in our department.
REMAIN VIGILANT

WARREN
But I do have significant clearance as a level eight. Make haste.

KIERAN
Oh for fuck’s-

WARREN
Language.

KIERAN
Fine.

He stands up.

KIERAN
Back soon newbie.

WARREN
Don’t dawdle.

KIERAN
Don’t listen to the prick.

KIERAN exits.

Pause.

WARREN
Well now.

EDWIN
Well.

Pause.

WARREN removes his gloves and places them in the sink.

WARREN
Do we suspect he has travelled far enough?

EDWIN
Probably.

Slight pause.

EDWIN
Jesus Warren, you could have given away my
REMAIN VIGILANT

cover.

WARREN
My apologies Chris. I was foolish.

EDWIN
I noticed.

WARREN
I didn’t think.

EDWIN
Well clearly.

WARREN
Who is the target?

EDWIN
Take a guess.

WARREN
Mr Fairweather?

EDWIN
Got it.

WARREN
But he’s only level fifteen. He is an imbecile.

EDWIN
Internal Ethics thinks otherwise.

WARREN
Oh? How intriguing.

EDWIN
We have been tracking his data usage for some time. Got quite a lot of evidence against him.

WARREN
So your role is simply clean up.

EDWIN
Exactly.

WARREN
Did they not consider you a bit old?
EDWIN
That’s been the worst of it. I don’t think he realises, but it’s hard to tell. He keeps a lot to his chest for someone who talks nonsense all the time.

WARREN
He is not to be trusted.

EDWIN
No one is. That’s the motto. I know that much.

WARREN
So how has Mr Fairweather been utilising the data?

EDWIN
I can’t tell you that.

WARREN
If it’s an issue of national security I would rather-

EDWIN
Your clearance isn’t high enough.

WARREN
I see.

EDWIN
Sorry. Just the way it is.

WARREN
No, I quite understand.

EDWIN
Just know he has been accessing material above his security clearance. We’ve noticed for a month or so now. Built up evidence against him. I’ve been observing his behaviour in the office.

EDWIN gets out his small black notebook.

EDWIN
I have enough. I’ll strike soon.
REMAIN VIGILANT

WARREN
So you are going for his throat.

EDWIN
Indeed.

WARREN
Do you need an accomplice?

EDWIN
I’m sorry?

WARREN
I have despised Mr Fairweather since I first made his acquaintance. His manner is supremely irritating to me. He is not the sort of person who can be trusted with the burden of national security.

EDWIN
A pincer movement.

WARREN
Indeed. I don’t have to know all the details. Just the essentials.

EDWIN
I’m not sure.

WARREN
Together we could force a confession out of him.

EDWIN
You’re not just doing this as a favour of course.

WARREN
Chris. I’m shocked you would slander my good name in that manner. Can I not help a friend out?

EDWIN
So. You are level eight at the moment.

WARREN
Indeed.
REMAIN VIGILANT

EDWIN
It would be useful to have another pair of eyes and ears.

WARREN
It would be a personal pleasure.

EDWIN
So. Terms.

WARREN
Level six.

EDWIN
Never going to happen.

WARREN
Why not?

EDWIN
I can get you a bit more access to a few specific files and if that goes well we can consider it down the line. I could maybe move you from Interrogations.

WARREN
I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else.

EDWIN
You sick bastard

WARREN
Well, you have to love what you do.

Slight pause.

They look at each other and laugh.

EDWIN
Alright. I’ll see what I can do. No promises though.

WARREN
Oh believe me, this will be more pleasure than anything else.

EDWIN
Charming.
WARREN
I don’t think fools like Mr Fairweather should be allowed the privilege of higher clearance.

EDWIN
He is good at his job though, that’s the issue. His record shows an unqualified hit rate. He can scan through data and webcams like no-one’s business.

WARREN
And yet.

EDWIN
And yet we know he’s found a back door into the network. He accesses it at home. Already, we have a problem there. The network is only to be used here, where it is secure. We can’t risk outside access. National secrets are held here. He’s using a VPN, but it’s one we got to years ago. Not so private. We can figure out whose using it. And it led right back to Kieran. Another problem, why the anonymity? Or attempt at it. Final problem: he’s logged on a lot. All through the night sometimes.

WARREN
What are the files he is-

KIERAN enters again, clutching a file.

KIERAN
Alright pricks.

EDWIN
I don’t think you should speak to superiors like that.

KIERAN
Shut up Eddie.

EDWIN
Edwin!

KIERAN hands the file to WARREN.

WARREN
My utmost thanks Mr Fairweather. I do appreciate your co-operation.
REMAIN VIGILANT

He opens the file, starts to read.

EDWIN
So tell me more about this girl.

KIERAN
Right...

He glances at WARREN.

WARREN
Oh, don’t mind me Mr. Fairweather.

Slight pause.

KIERAN
Where was I?

EDWIN
You got home after losing her.

KIERAN
Oh yeah, so logged into the VPN. Easy to set up. Completely anonymous as well. Went through a back door into the system. Gets me full access. Anyway. I had her phone number. Plugged it into the system, located it, found where she had gone through GPS tracking.

EDWIN
And that’s quite easy.

KIERAN
Oh yeah. Child’s play when you look at it. We’ll start you off on that soon. From there, just a case of pinging the phone, see other devices IP addresses from the same location.

EDWIN
Cunning.

KIERAN
Cheers mate. Found the one for her laptop, activated the camera.

EDWIN
And they never know?
REMAIN VIGILANT

WARREN
Fascinating.

Pause.

KIERAN
They never realise. Why would they? It's just a camera. No light turns on. We made sure of that. No one every thinks they're being watched by the same devices they use all day. Anyway, this bird cracking arse and it’s brilliant mate. Happy days.

EDWIN
What’s she doing?

KIERAN
Changing out of that tight black dress. Her body is stunning. She strips off, slowly, revealing little lacy panties. No bra so I can stare at her lovely tits. She’s giving me my own private show and-

WARREN
This is an appropriate use of national resources?

KIERAN
What?

EDWIN
Seems you are abusing the trust the public put in you. The system is set up to catch criminals, not to make them.

KIERAN
We’re already watching them anyway

EDWIN
For issues of national security. To protect the nation. Not to watch half naked girls for our own pleasure.

KIERAN
What’s it to you newbie?

EDWIN
(Sarcastically.)
Ha. Funny.
REMAIN VIGILANT

WARREN
I must thank you for fetching your daily log Mr Fairweather. Very informative.

WARREN stands up, then slowly rips sheet after sheet from the log in two.

KIERAN
What the hell?

WARREN
Informative, but completely irrelevant.

KIERAN
Warren, seriously-

WARREN
It’s Mr. Voight.

KIERAN
Right sorry mate-

WARREN
Not your mate.

KIERAN
Right. Why did you want me-

WARREN
You imbecile.

EDWIN
Do you think Internal Ethics would be happy with your little set up?

KIERAN
Don’t see what-

EDWIN
You misuse national resources for your own perverted kicks.

KIERAN
They should have built the network to be more secure. What the hell?

EDWIN
I’ll be sure to pass that message along.
REMAIN VIGILANT

KIERAN
Weirding me out now.

WARREN
You Neanderthal. You cretinous lichen.

KIERAN
Big words don’t make you clever.

EDWIN
What puzzles me is why you would say these things when you know you are being monitored.

He points to the cameras.

KIERAN
I know that.

EDWIN
We have to monitor the staff as well as the public. To ensure security at every level.

KIERAN
You forget.

WARREN
Forget?

KIERAN
The cameras are there. You just get used to it. Newbie, seriously, this isn’t funny.

EDWIN
Stop calling me Newbie.

KIERAN
What’s happening?

WARREN
You still don’t get it.

KIERAN
Newbie? Edward mate?

EDWIN
First off you numbskull, it’s Edwin. Secondly, it doesn’t matter because that’s not my name.
REMAIN VIGILANT

KIERAN
I don’t...

EDWIN
I’m with Internal Ethics. Security clearance level 6.

Pause.

KIERAN
Nah, Don’t mess me around.

EDWIN
It’s true.

KIERAN
Fuck off.

EDWIN
Warren?

WARREN
I’ve made his acquaintance for years. Pops up now and then.

KIERAN
You’re having me on.

EDWIN
Nope.

WARREN
I’ve waited a long time for this.

KIERAN
A joke right?

Pause. WARREN and EDWIN don’t say anything.

Shit.

EDWIN
Shit indeed ‘Mate’. Shouldn’t have stolen my sandwiches, should you?

KIERAN
Look, all that stuff I said, about the VPN, I was... just joking.
REMAIN VIGILANT

EDWIN
Sure.

KIERAN
Testing you. Testing your limits mate, that’s all it was. Like the sandwiches. Test your limits.

EDWIN
Warren, check and see where Thom has got to? I would hate for us to be interrupted.

WARREN
Certainly.

WARREN crosses to the phone.

He dials and waits.

EDWIN
I want to spend some time getting to the bottom of this. Can’t have anyone bursting in.

WARREN
Good afternoon? Is Thom there?

EDWIN
Let’s take our time over the finer details.

KIERAN
Mate, I haven’t done anything.

EDWIN
OK then.

WARREN
He came down a little while ago.

EDWIN
If you lie now, it’s only going to be more difficult later.

WARREN
Good day.
REMAIN VIGILANT

He hangs up.

WARREN
Archives say they haven’t seen him.

EDWIN
Odd. Maybe we should open an investigation on Thom as well.

WARREN
He was in the wrong staff room.

EDWIN
It hasn’t gone unnoticed. Lock the door will you.

WARREN
With pleasure.

WARREN locks the door.

EDWIN
Now I know you’re acquainted with Mr Warren Voight. I’m sure you have heard some of the techniques he uses in Interrogations.

WARREN
I have a variety of unique and interesting methods.

EDWIN

KIERAN
Nah I never.

WARREN
Sounds like treason to me.

EDWIN
Against Queen and Country.

WARREN
Tut tut. Enemy of the people.
KIERAN
Mate, I never did it. It was just banter.

WARREN
Oh, come off it Mr. Fairweather.

KIERAN
Just made it all up. Seriously.

EDWIN
I find that hard to believe.

KIERAN
Just to test you. As a newbie.

EDWIN
It will be quite a lot easier if you confess.

KIERAN
I haven’t done anything mate.

WARREN
Traitor to the country. And a liar.

KIERAN
It’s not.. how? Against the country?

EDWIN
We need to be constantly vigilant against any sort of threat the nation may face, stopping crimes and treason before they happen. The monitoring of the populace ensures safety for all. You have access to the most sensitive files. Sure, you are only level fifteen, but that give you access to far more data than the average person. You may think that grants you immunity, but in fact we need to track you closer. That is where I come in. Now Mr Fairweather, please. Tell me why you were accessing the network in your own time.

KIERAN
Jesus.

WARREN
Please continue.

KIERAN
Didn’t do anything.
REMAIN VIGILANT

EDWIN
So you keep saying.

Pause.

KIERAN suddenly stands up and runs for the door.

With surprising speed, WARREN grabs him and drags him back to a chair.

WARREN pushes KIERAN down and holds him in place

WARREN
It’s locked you idiot. Don’t even try it.

EDWIN
Disappointing.

KIERAN
I didn’t do anything.

EDWIN
Then why try and run?

KIERAN
Just want to go back to work.

WARREN
You think think is some sort of game?

KIERAN
No!

WARREN
You maggot. You traitor.

KIERAN
No!

EDWIN
Lets keep this civil, shall we? I’m sure you don’t want to go with Mr. Voight down to the basement.

WARREN
I’ve always hated you.
EDWIN
So let’s keep it civilised.

WARREN
I have tools and implements. I can show you if you wish.

KIERAN
I didn’t mean to...

EDWIN
Accessing sensitive data beyond your clearance.

KIERAN
I didn’t!

EDWIN
Accessing the network outside of work hours.

KIERAN
Alright, I had a VPN. But only for work

WARREN
I would make it slow.

KIERAN
Seriously?

EDWIN
You used your VPN for work?

KIERAN
That’s right.

EDWIN
We have logs. You were on it all night sometimes.

KIERAN
Impossible. It was anonymous.

WARREN

EDWIN
Anonymity is a dream. You should know that by now. The state sees everything. We know it was
REMAIN VIGILANT

you.

KIERAN
I blocked my IP.

EDWIN
And we got around it. Child’s play, like you said.

KIERAN
So what, you have logs?

EDWIN
So it was just for work.

WARREN
Nonsense.

KIERAN
That’s right.

EDWIN
Then why were you logged onto the network at three am on Saturday?

KIERAN
I had some work to catch up on.

EDWIN
You don’t work the night shift.

KIERAN
No.

EDWIN
We have people who do that.

KIERAN
Sure.

EDWIN
So why did you need to log on?

KIERAN
I...
WARREN
In more civilized times, we used to put people like you in the Tower.

KIERAN
I’m not a traitor.

WARREN
You would be tortured and killed. Your head would be placed upon a spike as a warning against other people who would commit treason. An elegant solution, I’m sure you’ll agree.

KIERAN
Only to look at some naked birds.

EDWIN
So you admit you used it?

KIERAN
Used the network to perv on some birds undressing. It’s not the end of the world. Only a few times. Seriously, I’ve seen others do worse at work.

EDWIN
But you weren’t at work. You were at home. Masturbating.

KIERAN
I get it. I’m a pervert. Comes with the job.

EDWIN
Mr Voight?

WARREN
Sounds to me like gross misconduct. Mismanagement of security resources. Violation of network access without permission.

EDWIN
Phew. That’s quite a lot there.

KIERAN
Look, I’m sorry alright. I didn’t realise mate.
REMAIN VIGILANT

EDWIN
Oh dear Kieran. Oh dear.

KIERAN
What happens now?

EDWIN
You’re in a whole world of trouble. Internal Ethics have a lot of evidence against you.

He waves his small black notebook at KIERAN.

KIERAN
Warren mate, help me out?

WARREN
I am not your mate. I don’t even like you.

KIERAN
I’m sorry. I used the VPN to watch pretty ladies get naked. I shouldn’t have done it. Not with the network. I compromised the security of the nation and violated the trust placed in me. OK mate?

Pause.

EDWIN
Well that’s admirably honest.

WARREN
Shame. I was looking forward to using my toys.

WARREN starts to stroke KIERAN’s face.

EDWIN
You need to learn your place in this organisation. It is bigger than you. You are nothing. A level fifteen drone. We keep the nation safe from harm. How are we meant to do that when people like you compromise our security?

KIERAN
I’m sorry, alright mate? I get it.

EDWIN
Tell me.
REMAIN VIGILANT

KIERAN
It’s Queen and country.

EDWIN
Exactly. Sacrifice for the common good.

KIERAN
Alright. Alright.

EDWIN
Of course, there is the matter of you accessing files beyond your clearance.

KIERAN
I don’t know anything about that.

WARREN
Liar!

EDWIN
Oh dear, you’ve made Warren here mad.

KIERAN
What?

WARREN grabs KIERAN’s neck.

WARREN
Traitor!

KIERAN
Mate!

EDWIN
Tell us Kieran.

KIERAN
I don’t know anything!

WARREN
Enemy of the people!

EDWIN
Internal Ethics will have no problem dragging you away.

KIERAN
Seriously!
REMAIN VIGILANT

WARREN
I will make you squeal!

KIERAN
I don’t-

EDWIN
Liar!

WARREN
Traitor!

EDWIN
SCUM!

WARREN
You piece of shit.

EDWIN
You weasel.

WARREN
I will cut you.

EDWIN
Why do you hate the nation?

WARREN
Why Kieran?

EDWIN
Why do you hate freedom?

KIERAN
I... I...

WARREN
Terrorist!

EDWIN
Treason!

WARREN
Scum!

EDWIN
You are nothing, you understand, nothing!
REMAIN VIGILANT

KIERAN
(Calmly, much posher.)
I think that’s enough.

Pause.

WARREN is grabbing KIERAN’s neck tight. EDWIN is leaning in close.
KIERAN lifts his hand and indicates for WARREN to let go.
KIERAN stands up and shakes WARREN’s hand.

KIERAN
Many thanks Warren.

WARREN
Was that alright?

KIERAN
Very good, thank you.

EDWIN
Sit the fuck down!

KIERAN
Oh dear Chris.

EDWIN
Sit down!

KIERAN
I’ll speak to you in a moment Warren. But good job.

EDWIN
I don’t understand.

KIERAN
Did you think you were immune?

EDWIN
From what?

KIERAN
Old chap, please stop causing a scene.

EDWIN
Why are you still talking back?
KIERAN
That’s enough now.

EDWIN
I don’t-

KIERAN
We have to monitor everyone. Everyone.

EDWIN.
What?

KIERAN
Don’t trust anyone. That’s the old motto.

Pause.

EDWIN
Oh.

WARREN
I think he’s got it.

EDWIN
You’re Internal Ethics as well?

KIERAN
Bingo, old chap.

EDWIN
I’ve never met you before.

KIERAN
Of course not. We can’t risk such a high security secret getting out. I won’t give you mine name dear chap, because you aren’t authorized to know it. But here is my clearance.

He brings out a badge.

EDWIN
Level three.

KIERAN
Marvellous.
EDWIN
I don’t understand.

KIERAN
Sit down for a moment. I’ll give you some time. Must be a frightful shock.

WARREN
Are we done, Sir?

KIERAN
Very well done. To debrief, I thought you handled the situation well. Clearly, you brought him along with you and convinced him that interrogation was the way forward.

WARREN
Very good.

KIERAN
Yes, I’ll ensure this looks good on your performance review.

WARREN
Thank you sir.

EDWIN
Warren?

WARREN
What is it?

EDWIN
I’ve known you for a couple of years now. I never knew about this. How come?

WARREN
A need to know basis. I’ve been involved with the higher levels of Internal Ethics for a few months.

KIERAN
Above your security clearance of course.

EDWIN
I checked your file.
REMAIN VIGILANT

KIERAN
Amazing how easy it is to block data from prying eyes.

EDWIN
But you’ve never been at departmental meetings.

WARREN
We are classified. The less people know, the better.

EDWIN
But... the logs-

KIERAN
You said it yourself, this whole operation is bigger than you are.

EDWIN
Right.

KIERAN
We need to check up on those in Internal Ethics as much as the rest of the staff. How else can we ensure absolute security? How else can we ensure the protection of the nation?

EDWIN
How far does it go? Do you have people checking up on you?

KIERAN
Checks and balances Edwin. Always watching.

Pause.

EDWIN
So this was a sting.

KIERAN
In a way.

WARREN
Do you need me at all sir?

KIERAN
No thank you Warren, you’ve been very helpful.
REMAIN VIGILANT

WARREN
Chris. A pleasure as always.

EDWIN
Piss the fuck off Warren.

WARREN
Charming I’m sure.

WARREN exits.

EDWIN
You set me up.

KIERAN
In a way.

EDWIN
I pulled up your files. All your work history in this department.

KIERAN
Very easy to alter when you have my sort of clearance. You should have checked when they were changed. Easily overlooked, but the devil is in the details. I’ve actually only been this department for a couple of months.

EDWIN
Right. Look. I know some of my methods were unorthodox, but I got results. Not major violations by any means.

KIERAN
Well that’s not technically true. You acted on lack of evidence. You were too fast to move to interrogation.

EDWIN
(Waving his notebook.)
I had evidence.

KIERAN
You had some rough logs of network usage and a story from a loudmouth. Anecdotal. That’s all.

EDWIN
But you baited me.
And you fell for it. You should have resisted, gathered more evidence against me.

There wasn’t time.

Warren played his part well. Another failure, bringing a lower lever clearance with you. And conducting the interrogation in a public space. Not good. Sloppy methodology.

I wanted to get a confession.

I’ve been looking at your results from the last year. They’ve dropped off dramatically.

Look, I know I’ve been slack. Investigations have gone nowhere. I just can’t get the data. But that will change. And I will find corruption and problems in this organization I promise you. I will find those employees who are not pulling their weight. Or who are using dodgy methodology. Those who are compromising the safety of the nation.

That’s a good sentiment Chris, it really is. Honestly old chap, it’s good to keep in mind.

Thank you.

But I can’t keep you in Internal Ethics.

But... seriously? I’ve put years of my life into this organisation.

It’s my job to keep it secure. And you are a major weakness at the moment.
REMAIN VIGILANT

EDWIN
But...please.

KIERAN
I’m moving you to Maintenance.

EDWIN
Oh come on.

KIERAN
Based on the data I’ve gathered and what I’ve observed today, I don’t think you’re right for Internal Affairs. Maintenance is much... safer.

EDWIN
A caretaker? After all I’ve done for this organisation. You cannot be serious.

KIERAN
I’ve made the decision.

EDWIN
Shit.

KIERAN
Your security clearance will need to be downgraded of course.

EDWIN
What?

KIERAN
Level twenty five. Effective immediately.

EDWIN
Twenty five? You can’t do this.

KIERAN
You should have just slowed down. We need accuracy, not paranoia and stress.

EDWIN
Shit. You can’t do this. You can’t.

KIERAN
You’re still involved in the heart of secrecy. It’s bigger than you are. I just think you can
REMAIN VIGILANT

do your best without so much responsibility.

EDWIN
I...

KIERAN
Keep you head up, old chap. We aren’t all cut out for it.

EDWIN
I don’t understand.

KIERAN
You’ll have time to process it, I’m sure.

EDWIN
But...

KIERAN
My sympathies old chap.

KIERAN reaches over and squeezes EDWIN’s shoulder.

Pause.

EDWIN doesn’t look at KIERAN, but stares at his feet, dumbstruck.

KIERAN gets up to exit.

KIERAN
Oh and this is effective immediately. Report to Maintenance on the third floor. Your files are now locked, so don’t try and access your computer.

KIERAN exits.

EDWIN is left staring at the ground, mesmerized.

Pause.

EDWIN gets out his black notebook and tears out page after page.

Fade out, then CURTAIN.
Cast of Characters

YVONNE
42

PAM
63

THOM WALSH
26- Same character as 'The Watchful Eyes'.

PAPER TRAIL

INT. Sub basement three within the same government department as 'The Watchful Eyes'.

Huge stacks of papers and files cover the whole stage. Massive book shelves covered in papers line the back of the stage, leading to yet more shelves and yet more papers. There is a door to a kitchen and on the other side a door to outside. At the front of the stage two desks are facing each other. One probably has a computer on it, somewhere. Both are completely covered in paper and files.

YVONNE is sat at the desk with the computer. She isn’t using it, but is instead looking through post. A phone starts ringing, somewhere under all the paper. YVONNE picks up file after file, frantically trying to find the phone. She finds the phone. It stops ringing.

YVONNE
Bastards!

Pause.

YVONNE
I mean, honestly, can you believe it?
REMAIN VIGILANT

Pause.

YVONNE
I mean, what do they want from us, blood? Stupid stupid... Bastards!

Pause.

YVONNE
(Calling.)
Pam?

PAM
(off.)
Coming!

YVONNE
What’s taking so long?

PAM enters carrying two cups of tea. She moves slowly, with complete concentration.

YVONNE
Finally!

PAM
Sorry Vonnie, don’t be mad.

YVONNE
Took you a while.

PAM
It’s so complicated.

YVONNE
I know darling. It’s tough.

PAM
I just want to get it right.

PAM approaches the desk. Carefully, she places one of the cups down.

YVONNE waves a letter.

YVONNE
They want us to find a file!
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM

No!

YVONNE

I know!

The phone rings again. YVONNE snatches it up, knocking over one of the cups of tea.

PAM

Oh no!

YVONNE

Right. Fine.

She slams the phone down.

YVONNE

Bastards!

PAM

My tea!

YVONNE

Oh.

Pause.

YVONNE

Oh Pam, I’m so sorry.

PAM

Oh.

YVONNE

I’m so, so, sorry darling.

PAM

I spent so long.

YVONNE

I know, I know. Shh. It’s OK, It’s OK.

YVONNE stands and strokes PAM’s hair.

PAM

I really tried.
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
I know you did.

PAM
I did not mean to.

YVONNE
It’s not your fault.

PAM
I’m sorry Vonnie. I want you to have a cup of tea.

YVONNE
Pam, you made one for yourself as well, yes?

PAM
Yes.

YVONNE
I can have that one. Then you don’t have to worry.

PAM
I would like that.

YVONNE
Thanks Pam.

PAM
Do you mean it?

YVONNE
I do. You’ve done really well.

PAM
Oh! Thank you!

YVONNE
Don’t worry darling.

PAM gives YVONNE the other cup of tea. She holds it out like a religious offering.

YVONNE
Thank you for the gift.
PAM
What about Mister Cooper?

YVONNE
I don’t think he’s thirsty.

PAM
He never is.

YVONNE
No. He’s quite happy though.

PAM
Must be nice to be Mister Cooper.

YVONNE
So. Pam.

PAM
Nothing to worry about.

YVONNE
Pam?

PAM
Vonnie?

YVONNE
Management want us-

PAM
Bastards!

YVONNE
I know. But they want us to find a specific file and deliver it to them.

PAM
Deliver it to them?

YVONNE
I know. Up on the seventh floor.

PAM
I hate upstairs.

YVONNE
I know Pam, but we still need to find it. I’ll
REMAIN VIGILANT

deliver it if needs be.

PAM
Do not make me take it Vonnie, do not make me.

YVONNE
I won’t. I’ll do it.

PAM
You would?

YVONNE
Of course. But I need you to find it for me. Can you do that? For me?

PAM
Of course! Of course!

YVONNE
I’ll write it down and make it nice and easy for you.

PAM
I will try my best.

YVONNE grabs a piece of paper, double checks it, then looks around the desk.

YVONNE
Pen... Pen.

PAM picks one off the desk and holds it out.

YVONNE doesn’t notice.

YVONNE
I had one just a minute ago. Where’s it gone?

PAM
Vonnie.

YVONNE
It was just here. Bastards!

PAM
Vonnie?
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
Not now.

PAM
Is this it?

YVONNE
Yes. Why didn’t you say?

PAM
I...

YVONNE
Come on Pam.

PAM
Sorry.

YVONNE
Right, here is the file I want you to find.

She scribbles a number on the paper.

PAM
I don’t want to mess up the system.

YVONNE
Sometimes it has to be done.

PAM
You will not shout?

YVONNE
Of course not.

PAM
You do sometimes.

YVONNE
Sometimes I get angry or frustrated. It won’t happen this time.

PAM
Promise?

YVONNE
I promise. Now go find it for me.
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM
OK Vonnie!

PAM runs off to the rows of shelves at the back of the stage. She walks between the stacks and vanishes.

PAM
(off.)
I’m being useful!

YVONNE
Yes Pam!

The phone rings.

YVONNE
(Sighing.) Bastards.

YVONNE lets it ring a couple of times, staring at the phone in hatred.

She sighs and picks it up.

YVONNE
Yes?

Pause.

YVONNE
No. That’s fine.

Pause.

YVONNE
I’ve got my best person on it.

Pause.

THOM enters, unseen by YVONNE. He looks around sheepishly.

YVONNE
Yes. I understand.

YVONNE slams down the phone.

YVONNE
Stupid, bloody bastards!
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
Um, excuse me?

Pause.

YVONNE freezes, turned away from THOM.

THOM
I was looking for Sub-Basement 3. I guess this is it?

Pause.

YVONNE doesn’t move at all.

THOM
I can see you, you know.

YVONNE
Er...

THOM
I can see you.

YVONNE turns to meet him, trying to be professional.

YVONNE
(Overly polite.)
Good afternoon sir, welcome to the Archive. We can assist you with all your needs.

THOM
Hello, I-

YVONNE
Hello.

THOM
Hi, I need-

YVONNE
Hello?

THOM
I was sent down to find a file.

YVONNE
Oh. Right. By management.
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
No, by someone upstairs.

YVONNE
Upstairs eh?

THOM
Yes?

YVONNE
You don’t look like one of them.

THOM
Thanks. I think.

YVONNE
The last one they sent was old. You’re young. Got good bones.

THOM
OK. Could you help me find the file?

YVONNE
You have a reference?

THOM
Yes, somewhere here...

YVONNE
What’s your clearance?

THOM
Level thirty.

He gets out a badge. YVONNE looks at it for a long time, then scribbles down something on another file.

Pause.

THOM
I...

YVONNE
One moment!

THOM
Only...
YVONNE
Please! I am trying to do my job! Sir.

Pause.

YVONNE hands the badge back to THOM.

THOM
(Reading.)
The reference is number three four six slash
two zero one four slash a slash six seven two
six one slash abb slash five wbw.

YVONNE
You can’t just walk in here and expect to pick
up a file.

THOM
But I thought you had all the files.

YVONNE
We do.

THOM
Christ, has Warren sent me on a wild goose
chase again?

YVONNE
You need to follow the right system.

THOM
I don’t see the issue.

YVONNE
We have a delicate, precise system of filing
and archiving.

THOM
(looking at all the piles of paper.)
I can see that.

YVONNE
We can’t just pull files out willy nilly. We
need time to comb through our index before
extracting the appropriate file. We typically
ask for all requests to be submitted in
writing, three working days in advance.
THOM
Look, I was just sent down here to get it. I can wait if needs be.

YVONNE
What was your name?

THOM
It was on my clearance.

YVONNE
Remind me.

THOM
Thom. With a H.

YVONNE
Well, Thom with a h, you're just going to have to wait. Without a written request it may take longer. I have my esteemed colleague looking for a file at the moment.

THOM
And you can't look I suppose.

YVONNE
Someone needs to be present to answer the telephone.

She stares at the phone for a moment as if expecting it to ring. It doesn't.

THOM
Right. OK. Whatever.

YVONNE
She won't be long.

THOM
Was meant to be my lunch break.

YVONNE
Boo hoo. My heart bleeds.

THOM
Well. Anyway, I want to get back to it.
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
You upstairs people think you are so much better than us. Mr Cooper was the same.

THOM
I don’t think I’m better.

YVONNE
Then why do you want to go? Hmm?

THOM
I left my sandwiches up there. Cup of tea as well, probably gone cold by now.

YVONNE
Always the same. Ridiculous.

THOM
No, that’s not what I’m saying.

YVONNE
Thinking we’re worse off, just because we don’t have any windows.

THOM
I didn’t say that. It’s just I’m missing my lunch.

YVONNE
Well we may not be as fancy as you upstairs bastards. I know Management look down on us, but we’re proud.

THOM
I can see that.

YVONNE
You can?

THOM
Yes, you seem to be... um, very on top of it.

YVONNE
So what are you saying?

THOM
Nothing I-
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM runs out of the stacks, clutching a file.

PAM
Vonnie! Vonnie! I found it! I found it!

YVONNE
Well done darling.

PAM
I found it! I- Oh.

YVONNE
Now Pam, darling, don’t be scared.

PAM
Stranger!

YVONNE
It’s ok.

PAM
Is he from... upstairs?

YVONNE
That’s right.

PAM
Like Mr Cooper?

YVONNE
That’s right. Like Mr Cooper.

THOM
Excuse me, are you going to help me?

PAM
What shall we do?

THOM
What’s going on?

YVONNE
Pam?

PAM
(Woodenly.)
Good afternoon sir and welcome to the Archive department. I would be happy to assist you
with any query you may have today and to help you find the information you require. Now, what is your problem and how can I help?

THOM
I just want to find a file.

PAM
Umm...

PAM holds out the file she has just found.

YVONNE
Not that one.

PAM
Oh. What is the reference. Sir?

THOM
Oh my God!

YVONNE
It’s OK darling. Don’t be so harsh on her please.

THOM
I told you all this before.

YVONNE
She’s fragile!

THOM
Right, let me get the reference out.

YVONNE
I can see you’re annoyed. But please refrain from using aggressive language.

THOM
What aggressive language? I’m going round in circles here.

YVONNE
Pam, the reference is number three four six slash two zero one four slash a slash six seven two six one slash a bb slash five wbw.
REMAIN VIGILANT

Pause

THOM
Um... yes. That’s exactly right. Wow.

YVONNE
Well I don’t know what happens upstairs, but we take pride in our work down here.

THOM
Well done.

YVONNE
I’ll get Pam to find it for you.

PAM stands, chanting the reference under her breath.

YVONNE
She’s just processing it. Won’t be a moment.

Pause.

THOM
Alright...

YVONNE
So what department are you from?

THOM
Data Entry.

Pause.

PAM stops chanting. YVONNE stares at THOM.)

YVONNE
Say that again.

THOM
Data Entry. Why?

Pause.

YVONNE looks slowly to PAM, who is breathing heavily.

THOM
Is there a problem?
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM
How dare you? How dare you?

YVONNE
Pam. It’s ok.

PAM
No! you should not have come down here. You
think you are so much better than we are. You
are awful. I hate you. I hate you.

YVONNE
Pam. Sit down.

PAM sighs and sits down.

YVONNE
Now turn around.

PAM
Oh but Vonnie!

YVONNE
Just do it.

PAM turns her chair away. She takes deep breaths to calm herself.

YVONNE
I’m sorry about her. It’s just Data Entry give
us the majority of the files.

THOM
Well yes, but not all of them.

YVONNE
What do you mean?

THOM
It’s mostly on computers now. There’s not much
actual paperwork. Apart from log files.

YVONNE
I don’t understand.

THOM
It’s a bit old fashioned all this, isn’t it?
We mostly just store files digitally now.
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
It’s a system. It works.

THOM
Right. Why don’t you just digitize the files?

YVONNE
I’m sorry Thom with a H, I don’t understand.

THOM
Put them on a computer?

YVONNE stares blankly at THOM.

THOM
Computers?

YVONNE
Nope?

THOM
There’s one there. On your desk.

YVONNE
The square lamp?

THOM
No, I- Um.

Pause.

YVONNE
Excuse me a moment.

THOM
Oh for- can I get this file or not?

YVONNE
One moment sir.

THOM
Oh my God.

YVONNE bends down to talk to PAM. THOM stands around awkwardly.

PAM
I am sorry Vonnie. I didn’t mean to. I am sorry
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE strokes Pam’s hair.

YVONNE
Shh my darling. Don’t worry. It’s OK. It’s OK.

PAM
I didn’t mean to shout. But he’s from upstairs. And Data Entry. The bastards.

YVONNE
I know.

PAM
So he is bad.

YVONNE
I know darling.

PAM
I was scared.

YVONNE
I don’t like him either.

PAM
We can not let him mess up the system.

YVONNE
No.

PAM
So what are we going to do?

YVONNE
I have a plan.

PAM
You aren’t going to let him go?

YVONNE
Of course not darling. Be calm. it’s all in control.

THOM
Look, I’m sure that file doesn’t matter too much. Warren can get it himself.
YVONNE
Ok Pam? Like before.

PAM
I apologise deeply for the inconvenience.

THOM
Thank you ever so much for the complete lack of help.

THOM goes to exit.

YVONNE
I’m so sorry Thom with an H. Please, take a seat and we will find the file for you.

THOM
Seriously?

YVONNE
Of course. We’re here to help you.

THOM
I can give you the reference again.

YVONNE
No, that’s alright. We can find it from the information you have given us.

THOM
Finally. OK. We’re getting somewhere.

YVONNE
Take a seat. It may take us a little while to find it. Can I get you a tea or coffee whilst you wait?

THOM
A tea perhaps?

YVONNE
Here we go sir.

She hands him the tea PAM made.

PAM
I made that for you!
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
Shhh. It’s ok.

THOM sits down on the office chair.

PAM
But-

YVONNE
Now Pam! Hold him down!

THOM
What?

PAM jumps on THOM, forcing him down. He struggles, holding the cup of tea and trying not to spill any whilst also trying to push PAM off. She is surprisingly strong.

THOM
What is-!

PAM
I’ve got him! I’ve got him!

YVONNE
Hold his arms down!

PAM
Got them!

YVONNE grabs thick packing tape or rope and wraps it around THOM’s arm and the chair arm.

THOM
What the hell?

PAM
Yay! Vonnie! Yay!

YVONNE moves quickly, securing THOM to the chair.

YVONNE
Get the other arm!

THOM
Jesus! Get off me!
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM

Got it!

YVONNE tapes his other arm to the chair.

THOM

What the hell?

YVONNE

Don’t struggle. It’ll be easier.

THOM

What the fuck are you doing?

PAM

Bad word!

YVONNE

Be still.

PAM

Shhh.

YVONNE finishes taping him arm to the chair.

YVONNE

There.

THOM struggles quite a bit.

THOM

What the hell are you doing? Let me go?

YVONNE

Sorry for the inconvenience, but we can’t do that.

THOM

You’re crazy.

YVONNE

Pam? Could you do his chest?

PAM

Yay!
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM takes the tape and starts to wrap it around THOM’s chest and the back of the chair.

Whilst she is doing this she also goes over the arms to ensure they are secure.

The phone starts to ring.

THOM
Jesus.

YVONNE
Bastard. Can’t let you go back upstairs and spread lies about this department.

THOM
This is a joke isn’t it?

YVONNE
Got to keep it secure. It’s your fault you know.

THOM
Kieran! I know you’re watching the security camera at the moment, pissing yourself laughing!

YVONNE
You think you’re so much better than us.

THOM
Alright, it’s not funny any more. Ha ha. Well done.

YVONNE
Well you’re not! We control the files. We have access to all the information.

THOM
Nice one mate.

The phone stops ringing.

YVONNE
You are nothing. Security Level Thirty.

PAM
Data Entry!
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
You make our lives miserable. Send down file after file and expect us to put them away.

THOM
It’s not my fault.

YVONNE
You’re a terrible person.

THOM
It’s those who are higher up.

PAM
(Confused.)
Higher than upstairs?

THOM
No I mean, Management. They force us to do the paperwork. Don’t want to do it. It’s just a job. But they make us fill out endless forms and files and reports.

YVONNE
But those bastards aren’t down here. You are.

THOM
I know, but-

PAM
It has been such a long time since someone came to visit. Not since Mr. Cooper.

THOM
I’m sorry, but that’s not my fault.

YVONNE
Just once they could say ‘Good job’ or send someone down to do an inspection or a spot check or something. Bastards. Don’t even get mentioned in the minutes any more.

THOM
Kieran, it’s well funny mate. Let me go now.

YVONNE
No. You don’t know what it’s like.
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
I can speak to people upstairs. I can get you invited to meetings.

PAM
He is lying.

THOM
I can speak to some people and try and get the files moved to digital.

PAM
What is dye-gye-tol?

THOM
All of this can be stored on a computer.

Pause.

YVONNE
But they won’t fit in the square lamp.

THOM
Doesn’t matter.

YVONNE
Look at you with your fancy upstairs words like ‘digital’.

THOM
That’s not it.

YVONNE
How do you know management? You’re only a level thirty stupid.

THOM
I have friends.

YVONNE
I don’t believe you.

THOM
I do! I can at least get you into some meetings.

PAM
He is pretty.
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
A new toy.

PAM
Oh good. Mr Cooper is getting smelly.

Pause.

PAM strokes THOM’s hair.

PAM
We are going to have lots of fun together. I hate you. But I think you’re pretty.

THOM starts to laugh. Looks at a security camera.

THOM
Alright, Kieran. You got me. Good one mate, good one. I bet this is revenge for me winning at football. It was a fair goal! So well done Kieran mate. You got me this time, you massive, massive prick.

YVONNE
Who are you talking to?

THOM
I’m sure Kieran is watching the camera right now laughing his head off.

PAM
Who is Kieran?

THOM
You don’t have to pretend any more. I know Kieran set you up. He’s a complete bell end and this is exactly something he would do.

YVONNE
Is that another bastard from upstairs?

THOM
Oh nice one. Well done Kieran. You got me good.

YVONNE
That camera doesn’t work.
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
Sure it does. Everywhere is monitored in this place.

YVONNE
Pam?

PAM stands on a pile of papers.
She reaches up and lifts the camera off the wall.

PAM
It stores tea bags!

YVONNE
See? We are ignored.

THOM
Oh.

PAM
Who is Kieran?

THOM
It doesn’t matter.

Pause.

PAM
What shall we start with?

YVONNE
He’s yours to play with.

PAM
I am going to have lots of fun with you. Pretty.

YVONNE
Remember where he’s from. He’s not to be trusted.

PAM
I know.

THOM
Please let me go.
YVONNE
You’ll only go upstairs and laugh about those people in Sub Basement Three.

THOM
I can help you.

YVONNE
Not at level thirty.

THOM
Please...

PAM
Shall I get the tools?

YVONNE
If you want my darling.

PAM
Oh goodie!

THOM
Just wanted my lunch break.

(AM looks through a drawer on her desk.

YVONNE
What tools do you have today?

PAM
Stapler!

As she says each item, she brings them out of the drawer and holds them above her head like trophies.

YVONNE
Good!

PAM
Letter opener!

YVONNE
Excellent!

THOM
What?
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM
Staple extractor!

YVONNE
Well done.

THOM
Tools?

PAM
Compass!

YVONNE
Well done darling. Well done.

THOM
I don’t know what you’re planning-

YVONNE
Shh Thom with an H. It’s OK. It’ll be over soon.

THOM
You need to let me-

PAM
Oh, I’m going to have so much fun!

THOM
I’m-

PAM
Which one shall I use first?

THOM
I-

YVONNE
Maybe the letter opener under his fingernails!

THOM
I’m Internal Ethics!

Pause.

YVONNE
Hang on Pam.
PAM
Oh.

YVONNE
One moment.

PAM
What is he saying Vonnie?

YVONNE
Shh Pam. It’s OK darling.

THOM
You need to untie me.

YVONNE
Internal Ethics? Is that so Thom with an H?

PAM
Oh no!

THOM
That’s right.

PAM
Oh no. Oh no no no.

THOM
And I am not impressed with the treatment I have had today. To say the least.

YVONNE
So why does you badge say level thirty on it?

THOM
A cover! In reality I am clearance level five and am authorized to investigate every department.

PAM
We are sorry!

YVONNE
Shh Pam, It’s ok.

PAM
We did not mean it.
It’s alright.

I did not realise!

I came down here to check how the department was being run. A routine investigation just to check upon the processes with the most sensitive files. And I am not impressed.

Do not be mad!

I have found this department to be slow and completely inefficient. And that was before you insulted me and tied me to this chair.

We are sorry.

I mean. Look at this place.

It’s fine.

Random piles is not ‘fine’. You have files on almost every citizen, all just lying around. It is unacceptable.

We can change. We can make it better.

No. There’s a system.

I find that hard to believe.

There is.

We have a system.
YVONNE
I don’t expect you to understand.

THOM
Well it seems ridiculous.

YVONNE
Bully for you. Just because you lack the brain
capacity to understand it.

THOM
Please untie me so I can continue the
investigation.

PAM
OK. Do not be mad.

THOM
Please let me go.

PAM
Of course.

PAM goes to untie him from the chair.

YVONNE
Pamela.

PAM
Vonnie?

THOM
Come on. I can’t be here all day.

PAM
Sorry Sir.

YVONNE
Don’t.

PAM
But he’s Internal-

YVONNE
Don’t my darling. Just don’t.
Pause. PAM freezes, unsure of what to do.

THOM
I don’t appreciate still being tied to this chair.

PAM
Vonnie?

YVONNE
It’s OK darling.

PAM
I should let him go?

YVONNE
No.

PAM
Why not?

YVONNE
Please Pam. Trust me.

Pause.

So you’re Internal Ethics.

THOM
I told you. Yes.

YVONNE
Come to investigate our department.

THOM
That’s right.

YVONNE
And you have security level six. But no way of showing it or proving it to us.

THOM
We have to operate on some levels of secrecy.

YVONNE
OK. I can see that.
PAM
Vonnie! He is doing his job.

YVONNE
You don’t have another name tag.

THOM
Let me go. I will go up to my desk and find it.

PAM
Vonnie? Should I let him go?

YVONNE
No. What clearance level did you say you were?

THOM
Six. I just said.

YVONNE
You said five earlier.

Pause.

THOM
You must have misheard.

YVONNE
No. You said five earlier.

THOM
That was not what I said. As the manager of this department I think you need-

YVONNE
Oh, I’m not the manager.

THOM
You must be-

YVONNE
Pam?

PAM
Manager? Yes. I’m the manager. I manage.

THOM
You run this department.
PAM
I’m the ‘man-a-ger’.

YVONNE
Pam ensures the day to day smooth running of the Archive department.

THOM
Right.

Pause.

YVONNE
Is there an issue?

THOM
No. So Pam?

PAM
Yes?

THOM
Can I call you Pam?

PAM
That is my name.

THOM
Right.

YVONNE
It’s OK darling. Talk to the nice man.

THOM
What do you think can be done to improve the day to day operation of the department?

YVONNE
It’s OK.

PAM
More tea?

THOM
I meant operationally.

PAM
I like tea.
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
Like, in terms of the systems in place.

PAM
Do you want a tea?

YVONNE
Not now Pamela.

PAM
Oh. But he looks thirsty.

YVONNE
I know.

PAM
Do you want another tea Vonnie?

YVONNE
No thank you.

PAM
I might get one.

YVONNE
But you’re speaking to Thom with an H, who may or may not be in Internal Ethics.

PAM
OK.

THOM
What is a typical day for you Pam?

PAM
I’m sorry?

YVONNE
Answer the nice man’s question.

PAM
I don’t understand?

THOM
How do you manage?

PAM
Oh!
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
There we go darling.

PAM
I get in.

THOM
Good start to the day.

YVONNE
Let her speak.

PAM
I sit down. I make a cup of tea for me. I make a cup of tea for Vonnie.

Pause.

PAM
Ummm...

THOM
How do you manage the department?

PAM
The department?

THOM
Yes.

YVONNE
Show him your management Pam.

PAM
Really?

YVONNE
Go on darling.

PAM
OK. I manage well.
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM slowly picks up a seemingly random pile of papers.

Looking at THOM, she walks across the room, clutching the papers. THOM and YVONNE watch her as she walks.

She gets to the other side of the stage. She places the papers on another pile.

PAM looks back to the others and smiles, pleased with herself.

PAM
Management!

Pause.

THOM
Well. Thank you Pamela. That was... enlightening.

YVONNE
You’ll be mentioning that in your report.

THOM
Of course.

YVONNE
The report to Management.

THOM
That’s right.

YVONNE
About this department.

THOM
Of course.

YVONNE
That you are definitely going to write.

THOM
Yes.

PAM
Did I do good Vonnie?

YVONNE
Of course.
THOM
I’m also going to mention the assault and the enforced imprisonment as well.

YVONNE
I’m so scared.

THOM
Oh, they’ll hear all about this.

YVONNE
Who will? Bastards?

THOM
Management. When I make my report.

PAM
Shall I untie him?

YVONNE
No.

PAM
But he’s writing a report.

YVONNE
And giving it to Management. Which is very odd indeed, because only level threes and above get to report directly to Management. And you said level seven

THOM
Level six

YVONNE
You said 5 earlier

Pause.

THOM
They will see it.

PAM
We should let him go.

YVONNE
No.
PAM
But he is so pretty. Not like Mr Cooper.

YVONNE
We can’t.

THOM
You are in a lot of trouble.

YVONNE
Pam darling, I want you to go find a file for me.

PAM
Now?

THOM
I wouldn’t be surprised if you were fired.

PAM
Fired?

YVONNE
Don’t listen to him darling, he can’t fire you.

THOM
Or thrown in prison.

PAM
I do not want to go to prison.

YVONNE
You won’t.

PAM
But he said-!

YVONNE
He says a lot of things darling.

PAM
I like it here.

YVONNE
And you’ll stay here.
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
I’ll close this department down.

PAM
Vonnie!

YVONNE
Just don’t listen to the bastard. Go to the personnel files. Find a file marked Thom Walsh.

THOM
That’s not necessary.

YVONNE
But you haven’t shown us sufficient clearance. How can we trust you?

THOM
I am Internal Ethics.

YVONNE
Oh it’s fine. Pamela believes you even if I don’t.

PAM
I do!

THOM
Then what’s the issue?

YVONNE
You’ll forgive me a little bit of diligence. I need to be sure.

THOM
There’s no reason to keep me tied up.

YVONNE
Go find the file darling.

PAM
Ok!

PAM runs off to the stacks and disappears.

THOM
So what, she comes back with the file, you see
I’m in Internal Ethics, then what?

YVONNE
No, I’ll see you’re lying.

THOM
Right. That isn’t going to happen.

YVONNE
You don’t seem very confident.

THOM
I know I’m Internal Ethics. I don’t need to prove it.

YVONNE
Well I’d like to make certain.

YVONNE sits on the desk and picks up a stapler.

YVONNE
I know you aren’t anyway.

THOM
I am though.

YVONNE
If you say so. It’s been so long since we had someone from upstairs come visit us.

THOM
I don’t know how to convince you of the truth. You are in a lot of trouble.

YVONNE
OK then.

THOM
You’re an antiquated department anyway. This is just a waste of paper.

YVONNE
All this paper is important. There is a system.

THOM
What I am going to propose is we fire you both, scan all the documents. Then destroy
REMAIN VIGILANT

them all.

YVONNE
No! You wouldn’t do that.

THOM
After what you’ve done to me?

YVONNE
It’s fine. It’s fine. You aren’t Internal Ethics.

THOM
Sure.

YVONNE
You aren’t.

THOM
OK then.

Pause.

YVONNE
I’ve put my whole life in this department. My whole life. You don’t know what that feels like. You’re still young. But it’s been twenty five years of maintaining all the files. Now, it may not be perfect. I know I’ve let it go a little in the last few years.

THOM
Let me work with you.

YVONNE
I know we are not popular upstairs. I haven’t been to a meeting for years. They just leave us down here in our department, on our own. Watching the files stack up. Never checking up on us. Never even acknowledging us. I’m older now. Tired. I’ve seen enough bullshitters in my time to recognise people like you.

PAM emerges from the stacks, blinking.

PAM
Vonnie?
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
So why would Internal Ethics suddenly take an interest in us? After all this time?

THOM
I-

PAM
I could not find it Vonnie.

YVONNE
It seems strange.

PAM
Don’t be mad.

YVONNE
According to Management, we don’t exist. Except when they need something.

PAM
Sorry.

YVONNE
And now you don’t either.

PAM
I’m sorry.

THOM
They’ll come find me. Come looking for me.

YVONNE
Someone might shake their head in a few weeks and say ‘Has anyone seem Thom?’ And everyone else will shrug. Then a couple of weeks later your job will be filled by someone else. And no-one will notice.

THOM
They will.

PAM
I checked the personnel files and it was not there.

YVONNE
Did you double check?
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM
Three times

YVONNE
Are you sure?

PAM
Yes.

YVONNE
Guess I’ll have to go look myself.

PAM
You’re not mad Vonnie?

YVONNE
No darling. Look after the boy will you?

PAM
OK!

YVONNE
And Pam?

PAM
Yes Vonnie?

YVONNE
Don’t untie him.

THOM
Please!

PAM
Ok.

YVONNE
It’s important Pam, darling.

PAM
I won’t!

YVONNE
Promise?

PAM
Promise Vonnie!
REMAIN VIGILANT

The phone starts to ring.

    YVONNE
    Ok Pam. I know I can trust you.

Pause. The phone is still ringing.

    YVONNE
    Bastards!

YVONNE picks the phone up.

    YVONNE
    Hello?

Pause.

    YVONNE
    Thom who?

    THOM
    What?

    YVONNE
    We haven’t seen him I’m afraid.

    THOM
    Warren!

YVONNE draws a finger over her throat.

    YVONNE
    Good day.

    THOM
    Help! I-

But YVONNE has already hung up.

    YVONNE
    (To THOM.)
    See? No-one cares. I’ll be back, you piece of shit.
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE exits to the stacks.

Pause. THOM and PAM look at each other.

THOM
How long have you worked here Pam?

PAM
I dunno.

THOM
Ten years? Twenty?

PAM
I feel like I have always worked here.

THOM
Do you like it?

PAM
It is scary upstairs. There is light and machines.

THOM
No-one is going to make you move.

PAM
I do not want to.

THOM
It’s ok. It’s ok.

PAM
You can not make me.

THOM
I won’t. You’re safe here.

PAM
Mr Cooper was from upstairs and he wanted me not to work here any more.

THOM
Right.

PAM
He was scary but now he is friendly.
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
Mr Cooper?

PAM
That’s right. You can play together.

THOM
OK then Pam. I’m sure I’ll get on with Mr Cooper.

PAM
You will. He is very nice.

THOM
My arms are hurting. Can you untie them?

PAM
Vonnie said not to.

THOM
But she’s not here. She’s looking for the file.

PAM
I know.

THOM
The file is going to say I’m Internal Ethics Pam.

PAM
It is not!

THOM
Then you are going to be in big trouble.

PAM
I do not want to be in trouble.

THOM
Unlucky. You’re going to be in a lot of trouble.

PAM
No!

THOM
Unless you untie me.
REMAIN VIGILANT

Pause. PAM wrings her hands.

PAM
I can not.

THOM
No?

PAM
I’m sorry. Don’t be mad. I can not.

THOM
Why not?

PAM
Because Vonnie said.

THOM
I see.

PAM
So.

THOM
You are the manager though.

PAM
Yes.

THOM
Do you know what being a manager means?

PAM
It means I manage.

THOM
Not quite.

PAM
It means I make tea.

THOM
No. It means you are in charge.

PAM
I am in charge. I manage.
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
But you do what Vonnie tells you to do.

PAM
She knows better than me.

THOM
You can tell her what to do.

PAM
I could not do that!

THOM
You give the orders.

PAM
No!

THOM
But Vonnie would have to do it.

PAM
Vonnie is better than I am. I listen to Vonnie.

THOM
You don’t have to! Jesus Christ, don’t you understand? Don’t you see? You’re in charge here!

Pause.

PAM
You shouted.

THOM
I’m sorry.

PAM
You shouted at me.

THOM
It’s OK, It’s OK. I was angry. And scared. Because I’m tied to this chair and I don’t know what’s going on.

PAM
Why would you shout?
I’m sorry Pam. I’m sorry. Please. Just look inside yourself. I know Vonnie says a lot of good things. I’m meant to be on my lunch break. I don’t want to be tied to a chair. It hurts Pam.

Vonnie told me.

I know. I know.

For a moment it looks like she is about to untie THOM. Her hands idle on the packing tape.

Mr Cooper asked the same things.

Please...

He was like you. He wanted me to let him go. He promised me a window put in here. I could look out and see the trees.

I can help.

No! Vonnie told me he was lying. That all of Mr Cooper’s words were lies. He was a nasty person.

He came from upstairs. He said they wanted me to ‘re-tyre’. They would give me lots of money. I do not want money. I just want to be here.
REMAIN VIGILANT

THOM
Pam. I’m not Mr. Cooper. I’m different. I can help.

PAM
We could not let him go after that. Vonnie told me so. Such a shame.

THOM
You don’t have to listen to her.

PAM
You’re so pretty.

THOM
She doesn’t always think of you.

PAM
Poor Mr. Cooper.

THOM
Look. She’s selfish. She wants to keep you here by yourself. Instead of letting you out and allowing you to see the trees she is keeping you in this basement to help her out while she does nothing.

PAM
No.

THOM
She makes you do things for her while she does nothing. She’s made you a servant.

PAM
That’s not true.

THOM
You make the tea. You get the files. You-

PAM
SHHHH!

YVONNE enters from the stacks, brandishing a file.

YVONNE
So then.
PAM
You found it!

YVONNE
Mr Thom Lukas Walsh.

THOM
Yes.

YVONNE
You reckon you’re Internal Ethics.

THOM
You don’t have to do this.

YVONNE
You walk into my department. My house almost. I mean, this is sacred territory.

THOM
Please. Pam.

YVONNE
You ask for a file. When you’re from Data Entry. When you generate all the files here. You mess the system up.

PAM
Why would you want to do that?

YVONNE
Then you try to claim you’re from Internal Ethics.

PAM
Is he Vonnie?

THOM
Please. Help me.

Pause.

YVONNE
No. No he isn’t.

PAM
Oh!
YVONNE
Says in the personnel file right here. Thom Walsh. Data Entry. Level Thirty. Internal Ethics is shielded from everyone, but not the personnel files. It’s not here.

PAM
He lied!

THOM
Can you blame me?

PAM
You lied.

THOM
Help me Pam.

PAM
Are you going to shut this department down?

THOM
No.

YVONNE
He has no power. He knows nothing.

PAM
Oh!

YVONNE
He won’t be missed.

THOM
Please.

Long pause.

YVONNE
Well now.

Pause.

YVONNE
What are we going to do with you?

PAM
Why are we keeping him then?
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
Shh now.

PAM
If he has no power?

THOM
It’s not funny any more.

YVONNE
We don’t take too kindly to liars.

THOM
Kieran! You bastard!

YVONNE
We need to teach you a lesson.

THOM
Please! Please. You don’t have to. Please...

YVONNE
Pam darling?

PAM
Yes Vonnie?

YVONNE
Introduce our guest to Mr Cooper.

THOM
No!

PAM
OK!

THOM
No! I don’t want to see him! No!.

PAM
He seems upset?

YVONNE
He’s just lying again. Go on Pam.

PAM
But he’s sad.
REMAIN VIGILANT

YVONNE
He’s a liar. He’s lying.

THOM
No. Don’t. No.

PAM
But..

YVONNE
Pam!

PAM
Yes Vonnie.

THOM
No. It’s OK. I don’t want to see him. I don’t. I don’t.

PAM
He’s very friendly.

THOM
No. Please no.

PAM moves some papers and finds a cabinet.

THOM
God no!

PAM opens it. Takes something out, her back to the audience and THOM.

PAM
Say hello.

THOM
No! God No! NO!

PAM turns around. It is a skull.

She places it reverently on the desk.

PAM
Say hello to Mr Cooper.
REMAIN VIGILANT

Long Pause.

THOM can no longer speak. He stares at the skull, making choking sounds as if he is trying to form words.

YVONNE
Let's start then.

PAM
Vonnie?

YVONNE
Yes Pam darling?

PAM
Why are we keeping him here?

YVONNE
Because he's from upstairs.

PAM
He can not hurt us.

YVONNE
He's Data Entry. The enemy.

PAM
Oh.

YVONNE
He made all these files. Gave us all this work.

PAM
I like the work though.

YVONNE
Come on Pam darling. Let start.

Pause.

PAM
OK.

YVONNE
Good girl.
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM walks over to the desk.

Pause.

PAM picks up a pair of scissors.

THOM
No... Please...

PAM walks over to THOM, brandishing the scissors.

She holds them over him.

THOM
PLEASE!

Pause.

She cuts through the packing tape on one of his arms, quickly.

THOM looks at his arm in disbelief.

PAM quickly cuts the tape from the other arm.

Pause. THOM looks at PAM.

YVONNE
What the hell are you doing?

Pause. No-one moves for a moment.

THOM suddenly rips the rest of the tape off and runs for the door.

YVONNE
Don’t just watch him!

But PAM watches him exit.

Long pause.

YVONNE
What have you done?
REMAIN VIGILANT

PAM turns slowly to look at YVONNE with new found anger and confidence. She is panting. She still holds the scissors.

YVONNE and PAM look at each other.

    PAM
    Management.

The two watch each other, waiting for the other to make the first move.

CURTAIN.
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REMAIN VIGILANT

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Other Books
Amber Stars: One Night of Stories is available now.