

"THE TRIALS OF ELIOT FRANKLIN"

Written by

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Tl;dr - I wrote it; Marvel owns it.

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TEASER

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - COULSON'S OFFICE - MORNING

COULSON and ELIOT are alone in the office, Coulson behind the desk and Eliot across from him. The door is closed. There are two slices of PIZZA on a plate in front of Coulson.

COULSON

Are you sure you wouldn't like a slice, Mr. Franklin? It's still hot.

He lifts a slice for emphasis, waving it subtly back and forth like a cobra charming a mouse.

ELIOT

No thanks. I just ate.

Coulson shrugs and takes a bite. He tosses the slice back onto the paper plate.

COULSON

Or should I call you Dr. Franklin?

ELIOT

I haven't been Dr. Franklin in at least five or six years.

COULSON

I think you have. I think that you're involved in all of this somehow, I just can't prove it yet.

ELIOT

You're mistaken.

COULSON

We'll see.

He takes another bite of his pizza, sets it down and wipes his hands with a paper towel.

COULSON (CONT'D)

My apologies. Stopping your friend from stealing millions of dollars of alien technology really worked up an appetite. My choices are eat in front of you or make you sit in a room all alone while I have dinner.

ELIOT

You can't hold me forever. I have rights.

COULSON

You signed a lot of those rights away when you let our doctors stick their needles in your body.

ELIOT

Not all of them.

COULSON

Enough that I promise you I can get away with keeping you here long enough for my agents to scrub your apartment clean. It'll go faster if you tell me about any storage facilities or other property now.

ELIOT

Nope, just the apartment. They won't find anything, Agent. Bringing me here was a mistake.

COULSON

I bet they'll find enough to prove you haven't stopped your real work.

ELIOT

I keep up on the required, reading, sure, but I don't have any equipment or secret lab or whatever you seem to be looking for. I don't know what you think a stack of research papers and trade journals will prove.

COULSON

Why did Xiao Feng call you if you aren't involved?

ELIOT

It's weird hearing a white guy call him that. I never noticed it until now. Dirk always called him Little Feng.

COULSON

I speak a little Mandarin.

ELIOT

You should learn more. It'll come in useful.

(MORE)

ELIOT (CONT'D)

Xiao Feng knows me and Dirk are tight. We go to his restaurant every once in a while after work to relax. They got cheap, good food there. We helped him out of a jam a few times before. I thought he was joking about hitting the DC warehouse, but when he called me I knew he was serious.

COULSON

What can you tell me about Xiao Feng?

ELIOT

Not a lot, but I don't think I should say anything.

COULSON

Why is that?

ELIOT

There's a rumor that anyone who crosses him ends up dead or crippled. I'm a little worried that might be true, too.

COULSON

You have the night to think about it Dr. Franklin. We'll resume our conversation in the morning. You get to stay on a cot in my office tonight. Don't worry. We won't let the bad man get you.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

INT. ELIOT FRANKLIN'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Light streams through the windows. The BROKEN WINDOW remains unfixed, but the curtain has been tied to the side to save it from getting pulled out.

There's some scratching at the door, a small grunt.

The doorknob turns, the door opens. MAY walks in, followed immediately by WARD and SKYE.

They close the door behind them and start moving around the apartment.

WARD

What are we looking for?

MAY

Got me. Put anything interesting in a pile for Skye to sort through. You've done this before.

WARD

Not to one of our own.

May stops, looks at her partner.

MAY

He's not one of ours.

WARD

He was. Didn't you read his file last night?

May starts her search back up. She walks over to the couch and picks up the GREEN BOOK he left opened on the cushion.

MAY

I did.

WARD

This guy and his friend The Wrecker are where they are because of S.H.I.E.L.D.

MAY

They're where they are because of their own choices.

She closes the book, gives a smirk at the title and lays it back down on the couch.

WARD

This guy was a leading physicist; now he's a construction worker.

MAY

A well-paid construction worker. Pile everything next to this primer on how to be an evil genius.

As they search, they start piling up what they find on the couch. Books, pamphlets, a laptop - all land on the pile.

WARD

I know we have to arrest The Wrecker. He killed someone. But this guy hasn't done anything and now we're confiscating his stuff like...

MAY

If you use the word jackboot or thug in the next sentence I'm punching you in the throat.

WARD

Like he's guilty of something. And we can't even say of what. What gives us the right to be here and to make that poor guy sleep on a cot all night.

MAY

You're the one that didn't want to do this last night because you were tired.

WARD

We'd already been here twice. Whatever we find here won't be so important it couldn't wait.

May shakes her head at the logic, exasperated.

MAY

Just keep looking. I'll clear one of the other rooms.

She walks to the hall, starts down it.

WARD

You know I'm right.

She disappears from sight.

MAY (O.S.)

You talk too much!

SKYE

Why do I always feel like a third wheel with you two? You don't act like a married couple, you act like a bitterly divorced couple.

WARD

I forgot you were here.

She lifts an eyebrow in his direction.

WARD (CONT'D)

I preferred it that way.

He turns from her, dismissive, and goes back to his search.

CUT TO:

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB

FITZ-SIMMONS is in the lab with Coulson and Eliot. Eliot is sitting on a chair. Simmons is DRAWING a VIAL of BLOOD from his arm. Coulson is taking food out of a brown PAPER BAG. Fitz is already hard at work studying the BOMB with one of the many machines they have available.

COULSON

Breakfast is on us this morning,
Dr. Franklin. I hope you like
pancakes.

ELIOT

How can someone not like pancakes?

SIMMONS

I've often wondered the same thing.
(to Coulson)
Did you bring enough for the whole
class?

COULSON

I did if the two of you don't mind
sharing. I didn't expect you both
this early, which is nothing more
than a testament to how much sleep
I'm running on today.

ELIOT

You didn't have to stay here
with me all night, boss. I
haven't slept on a cot like
that in a long time, but it
was more than comfortable.

FITZ

I'm not hungry. I ate a
granola bar on the way to
work?

COULSON (CONT'D)

I guessed. Your snoring kept
your buddy Dirk awake all
night, which meant Skye and I
got to take turns keeping an
eye on him.

SIMMONS

When did you start eating
granola bars?

ELIOT
 Why are you keeping us here?
 You don't seem really
 equipped for this.

FITZ
 I found some with sickly pink
 frosting on them and thought
 I would try them.

ELIOT
 We'll have Mr. Garthwaite
 moved somewhere more secure
 as soon as someone's
 available. He's safe where
 he is for now. You'll be
 going home today if you're
 telling the truth.

SIMMONS
 Sickly pink frosting is
 usually delicious.

Fitz squints at the monitor, then smiles. Coulson hands one
 of the boxes of food to Eliot.

FITZ
 Coming in early may have actually
 been worth it.

SIMMONS
 Is there anything in the world that
 makes waking up to granola worth
 it?

His smile turns flat, something's serious.

FITZ
 It really wasn't as bad as you
 think.

SIMMONS
 I attempt to disbelieve.

She pulls a many-sided die out of her pocket and rolls it.

SIMMONS (CONT'D)
 Nuts! A one.

FITZ
 Congratulations, you now love
 granola bars. I'll bring you some
 tomorrow.

(to Coulson)
 Boss, I think you should take a
 look at this.

Coulson notices his expression.

COULSON
 What is it?

FITZ

This might be worse than we
thought.

CUT TO:

EXT. LITTLE FENG'S HOUSE - MORNING

A small, neatly kept suburban home - unassuming except for a pair of movers that have been loading furniture into a truck all morning. It's a large moving truck, only half full but packed tight, the load held in place with sturdy BARS.

HENRY and BRIAN, well-muscled and a tad too well-dressed for regular movers, are standing in the back.

Brian grabs one of the bars holding the load and shakes it roughly.

HENRY

Don't do that. You wanna pull it
off?

Henry moves to the edge of the truck, jumps down.

BRIAN

I'd rather have to put this back on
than have the whole thing come
apart while we're drivin'.

Henry turns, looks at his partner.

HENRY

It ain't gonna fall down, and even
if it does ain't nothin' gonna
happen to us. It's safe in there.

Brian seems satisfied with the bar's stability.

BRIAN

I'm glad you're sure o' that, cause
I'm not completely comfortable
about having this thing behind me.

He jumps out of the truck. They both grab a door.

HENRY

This is going to be easy. All's we
gotta do is exactly what the boss
said.

BRIAN

And if things don't go exactly how they're supposed to go?

HENRY

Then we don't do nothin'. We're just two guys gettin' paid to move someone's furniture across the country. Hell, even if nobody stops us I'll take the paycheck we're gettin' for this. Easiest ten grand I ever made for a week of drivin' across the country, and it's on the books, too. What's there to complain about?

SLAM! They close the doors. Brian steps to the center, clamps the catch down.

BRIAN

What about going to jail? Is that worth complaining about.

Brian snaps a large PADLOCK onto the door and locks it.

HENRY

Not when it ain't an issue. All the bases are covered, man.

BRIAN

Is blowing up an issue worth complaining about?

HENRY

Ain't nothin' gonna happen.

Brian looks sideways at the doors of the truck.

BRIAN

I'll take your word for it.

HENRY

Just get in the truck.

They walk around to the front and get into the cab.

CUT TO:

INT. ELIOT FRANKLIN'S APARTMENT - A SHORT TIME LATER

Skye and May are boxing up what they found. There are at least four or five boxes, nearly all of it books, pamphlets, loose papers and the like. There is also a computer tower.

Ward is on the other side of the room, holding his phone to his ear.

WARD

We're on our way back. We didn't find anything.

There's a short pause. His face shows a look of consternation.

WARD (CONT'D)

By nothing I mean less than anything. We found exactly what he said we would find and none of it is a clue to anything we need to worry about, as far as the three of us can tell. We're bringing back sixty or seventy pounds of paperwork and a computer for you to sift through yourself, though.

Skye and May finish up. May picks up two of the boxes and walks out.

WARD (CONT'D)

I'm not taking apart the poor guy's computer just so he can put it back together again. It's not heavy. We'll just bring the whole thing. At least then he can get away with just plugging everything in when he gets it back.

SKYE

Taking a hard drive out of a computer really isn't that hard.

WARD

(to Skye)

Nobody asked you.

(to the phone)

Not you, sir. We'll be back at the office in a half an hour.

He listens for another half a second and then hangs up the phone. He walks over to the pile of stuff, picks up two boxes.

Skye grabs all of the loose papers, books and file folders and stacks them on top of the boxes Ward is holding. She gets the last of it onto the pile, notices the computer tower still setting on the couch.

She picks it up, smiles at Ward.

SKYE

I got this, don't worry.

WARD

I reserve a special kind of hate in my heart for you.

SKYE

You are in a horrible mood today. We'll fix that. I'm going to sing Lisa Loeb songs to you all the way back.

He glares at her, turns and walks toward the exit. Skye follows behind.

SKYE (CONT'D)

(singing)

Sorry sir, I stole your money!
Sorry sir, I feel but it's oh so
twisted, so unreal.

CUT TO:

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB - CONTINUOUS

Coulson turns off his phone and shoves it in his pocket. He turns to Eliot, who is drinking a cup of coffee with a mostly empty Styrofoam tray of pancakes in front of him.

COULSON

They're on the way back with some of your things. Your story seems to be checking out.

ELIOT

I told you. I'm one of the good guys. I tried to be one of the great guys and it didn't work, that's the only crime I'm guilty of.

COULSON

Trying to achieve greatness isn't a crime.

ELIOT

Where I come from, it's a crime if you try and fail. I need to come clean with you, agent.

He looks over at Fitz-Simmons, motions to them.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

You two may want to hear this.

The three give him their attention.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

I invented the bomb you're examining.

FITZ

This is *that* bomb?

ELIOT

I don't know what other bomb it could be.

COULSON

I'm not a doctor of physics, so if you could explain to me how you invented this bomb yet aren't responsible for it - or the one that went off yesterday.

FITZ

The rumor is that none of these were ever manufactured, that you weren't able to work it out practically.

ELIOT

That rumor is wrong on purpose.

Eliot looks around, spots a pencil, grabs it and starts scribbling something on a napkin.

SIMMONS

They were stolen and nobody was supposed to find out?

COULSON

Can we please start from the beginning!

Eliot hands the napkin to Fitz.

Fitz looks at it. Realization dawns.

FITZ

This is the last piece.

ELIOT

It won't help as much as you think.

FITZ

I have to run some tests.

He eagerly moves back to the machine, with Simmons right beside him. Eliot turns his attention squarely on Coulson.

ELIOT

After I graduated from university, I was recruited by all of the big names. I didn't know any better and by sixteen I was making almost six-figures to study gamma radiation for Richmond Enterprises.

COULSON

And four years later you left them to join the program. You stayed in the program for a year, then left due to medical reasons. Since then you've lived an unassuming life as a demolitions expert. I've read the file thoroughly.

ELIOT

Does the all-knowing file explain why I left Richmond Enterprises?

COULSON

You destroyed a large amount of your research in a dispute with the company executives. It was your research, but they owned it. They wanted to sue, but we convinced them to drop the charges and let you come with us.

ELIOT

The research I destroyed was the recipe for making that bomb you guys are having so much trouble with.

SIMMONS

You were on track to becoming a legend. We had the capability to build large gamma bombs, but when it was announced that you had invented a smaller, more weaponizable version, it was a milestone.

FITZ

I've read about that. The rumor was that the research wasn't sound.

(MORE)

FITZ (CONT'D)

Someone disproved it and rather than look bad you destroyed all the evidence. Everyone thought you cracked.

ELIOT

That was just to get people from paying too much attention. Richmond thought they could duplicate the results, but if people knew it was true other companies would put more effort into catching up. Their plan worked. Nobody that I've heard of has been able to figure out the secret and a lot of people don't think it's possible at all.

COULSON

Yesterday's events changed all that. What about the two bombs causing all this trouble? Somebody built those.

Eliot looks over at Fitz-Simmons.

ELIOT

With the pattern map I gave you, do you think you can build a scanner?

SIMMONS

It wouldn't be powerful, but it wouldn't be difficult, either.

ELIOT

No matter how powerful you make it, a scanner won't be able to pick that up more than 100 yards out. Unless you know more than me.

COULSON

Do you think there's another bomb somewhere?

ELIOT

I know there is. Before I left, three prototypes were made. The math is self-explanatory.

COULSON

Do you know where the third one is?

ELIOT

I would put my money on Xiao Feng knowing.

COULSON

He's not in the country any more.

ELIOT

How do you know?

COULSON

He got on a plane two hours after you talked to him. By now he's somewhere over the Pacific Ocean. You think he has a bomb on that plane?

ELIOT

Not at all.

COULSON

Then what are you getting at?

ELIOT

I don't think anything you know is right. This guy isn't some street crook trying to make a buck. You think he didn't already have a buyer lined up for that hardware he was trying to get his hands on?

COULSON

So what is right?

ELIOT

Xiao Feng wasn't on that plane. Have someone pick that guy up wherever it lands and you'll figure that one out easily enough. The bomb isn't on that plane. That's probably still here in New York, or close by. That isn't getting moved in any vehicle an inspector is getting anywhere near. That's just sloppy. And wherever that bomb is, Feng isn't in the same place. He's shrewd- too careful to get close enough it would hurt him, either by going off accidentally or by being in possession of it if you guys find it.

COULSON

You suddenly know a whole lot more than you did last night.

ELIOT

I slept on it. I have a grudge against S.H.I.E.L.D. thanks to the pain I'm stuck with the rest of my life, but I want to be one of the good guys.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB - A SHORT TIME LATER

Coulson and Eliot are in the lab with Wade, who just arrived with a box that is beside him on the counter.

WARD

Where are the bubblemint twins?

COULSON

They're going to try and find a bomb with a scanner they built out of spare parts.

WARD

Another one? Are we starting a collection?

COULSON

A collection of what - scanners built out of spare parts? We already have a collection?

WARD

Are we starting to collect highly-dangerous explosives?

COULSON

No, this is the last one. What we're working on now is finding it.

WARD

That's disappointing. I was hoping to blow something up.

COULSON
 You might still get that wish,
 depending on what Fitz-Simmons
 finds.

WARD
 Where did Eek and Meek go?

COULSON
 They're running down a moving van.
 We think Xiao Feng is going the
 hide-it-in-plain-sight route.

WARD
 Makes sense.

He motions towards the box.

WARD (CONT'D)
 Where do you want this stuff?

COULSON
 You can leave it in my office.
 Just put it beside the desk. I
 thought there was a lot. Is this
 all of the "a lot" you brought
 back?

He looks at the box, unimpressed.

COULSON (CONT'D)
 Is this always what you mean when
 you use the word huge? If this is
 a huge pile of papers, I'm
 concerned you've been lying to
 women for years.

Ward picks up the box, gives Coulson a smirk.

WARD
 Cute. The rest is on its way.

He walks off. Coulson turns to Eliot.

COULSON
 I think we can safely say you're
 free to go, Dr. Franklin. Can I
 get you a lift home? We can call
 you a cab or Skye can take you.

ELIOT
 How about I stick around a while
 longer, just in case I was wrong.
 (MORE)

ELIOT (CONT'D)

If your agents don't find that bomb
on the truck, I might be able to
help you track it down.

THUMP! The door swings open and Skye comes in pushing a
furniture dolly piled high with boxes, a computer tower
balanced among them. Before she can get all the way through
the door, it swings closed - BUMP! - and pushes her most of
the way back.

She backs up quickly, runs forward. THUMP! CRACK! The door
flies open and slams against the wall, giving her room to get
in the door. She sprints forward fast enough that it just
misses her.

THUD! The door slams shut behind her.

She stops her momentum. The pile leans. The top box falls
off, hits the floor.

Papers scatter.

COULSON

Where is Agent May?

SKYE

She went to get gas.

COULSON

Really?

SKYE

I think she just didn't want to
help.

Skye takes her hand off the dolly and steps in front of it,
bending down to pick up the box. The weight of what's on the
dolly counterbalances it and the whole thing falls backward.

She jumps to stop it, just a second too slow. CRASH!
Everything, everywhere.

SKYE (CONT'D)

Oh, god! The computer!

ELIOT

I can help with this, too.

He steps up to the mess, bends down.

He picks up a handful of papers, looks at them, looks at
Coulson.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

I can even organize it some. It'll be easier to go through that way.

COULSON

That would be a help. Maybe I was wrong about you, Dr. Franklin.

ELIOT

You were, agent. But that's okay. I'll see to it everything works out.

CUT TO:

INT. FITZ-SIMMONS' CAR - DAY

The car is on the highway, headed out of the city. Traffic is light and they're moving fast, whipping across lanes and passing on whichever side is available.

Fitz is driving. Simmons is holding her phone, watching a map with two dots slowly getting closer to each other.

SIMMONS

Is this too easy?

FITZ

What do you mean?

SIMMONS

I mean this all feels too easy to me. What are we expecting to happen? We'll drive down the road until we see the truck, ask them politely to pull over, take what we need and then go on about our business?

FITZ

In a perfect world.

SIMMONS

This isn't a perfect world, but today feels like it. Things are falling into place *too* perfectly.

FITZ

Why can't you just be happy that things are going smoothly?

SIMMONS

Just a gut feeling. I'm not liking it.

FITZ

The likeliest scenario is that there won't be anything in the truck at all. We're just checking one possibility off a very impressive list. There are a lot of other scenarios we have to consider. Today could be another long day.

SIMMONS

I hate that word.

FITZ

Which word?

SIMMONS

Scenario. It always makes me think of the academy, bored me crazy.

FITZ

Scenario training. It's actually important to what we do.

SIMMONS

How hard is it. Figure out everything there is to do and then do it. They just made us do it over and over and over and over and over and over

FITZ

I get it!

SIMMONS

And over and over!
And over!
Until I wanted to find a third rail to pee on!

FITZ

It wasn't that bad.

SIMMONS

I hated it for all the same reasons I hate most of those online games you play. How many rats or bunnies or sabretooth buttermoles do I have to kill before I've proven I know how to kill them.

FITZ
Sabretooth buttermole?

SIMMONS
Seriously. We're on our way to stop a truck and see if something bad is in the back. It's a standard moving truck with two employees riding in it. We know this because we have all of its information, including maintenance records, from the company that owns it. That company also had the foresight to put a GPS on the truck, which we're using to track it to within ten feet.

FITZ
Sabretooth buttermole?

SIMMONS
It doesn't matter what happens when we get there, unless it's something we're completely unprepared for in the first place. We've run every possible scenario so many times in so many ways that I could do it in my sleep. When we get to this truck, it's going to feel like we've done it before - because we have!

FITZ
What are you ranting about, seriously?

SIMMONS
I don't know! I'm just nervous.

FITZ
Don't pet the sweaty things.

SIMMONS
Sweat the petty things.

FITZ
This is the kind of thing we trained for.

SIMMONS
I know. I'm just worried that we're missing something.

FITZ

If we are then we'll deal with it
when the time comes.

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB - DAY

Coulson is standing in a group talking to May, Ward and Skye.
Eliot is at a machine, inspecting the CROWBAR.

COULSON

Right now there are at least a half
dozen people pulling up whatever
intelligence they can on this Xiao
Feng, or Little Feng.

WARD

He's not in the database?

COULSON

Not that we've found, but it'll
take a while. Xiao Feng is an
incredibly common nickname. We'll
find something on him somewhere.
Until then, we're to treat him as
if he's capable of anything.

WARD

If that thing is as dangerous as
you say, shouldn't there be more
effort being put in on the ground.

COULSON

Other people are busy doing other
things. Unless this escalates or
we lose the thread, this is our
responsibility.

SKYE

I can't get over it.

WARD

What?

SKYE

That's *Doctor* Eliot Franklin.

Eliot smiles. He can hear them.

WARD

So?

SKYE

Don't you know anything?

WARD

I know what I need to do my job.

SKYE

That man knows more about radiation, gamma or otherwise, than the four of us will ever think about knowing. He's known as the black Bruce Banner.

Eliot's smile disappears. SMACK! He hits the machine with his palm hard enough to shift it a little.

SKYE (CONT'D)

Eep!

The agents turn towards him. He looks back at them.

ELIOT

Why the hell do I have to be the *black Bruce Banner*?!

He takes a step toward them, speaking emotionally.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

Why isn't he the *white Eliot Franklin*? Do you know how many times he called me up asking for advice on a problem he was having, asking me to look over a formula? And what do I get out of it? Nothing.

Skye looks mortified, May wary, Ward interested and Coulson is wearing his usual passive face.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

I figured out how to change the world and I ended up with a pink slip, saddled with a nickname that pegs me as the Boy Friday to some dumb white boy with anger issues.

SKYE

I am so sorry, Doctor. I didn't mean-

She looks like she's going to cry.

ELIOT

Easy girl, I know you didn't mean anything by it. Nobody ever means anything by it, except the people saying it just to be mean.

(MORE)

ELIOT (CONT'D)

I've learned to live with it. I just haven't had to hear it in a while and it took me by surprise.

WARD

I'm surprised with everything that's been done to you, you're still here.

ELIOT

If you wouldn't have brought me in yesterday, I probably wouldn't be, Agent Ward. But I've thought about a couple things today.

That bomb was my fault. Even if I didn't have anything to do with putting it there, I'm the one that built it. I tried to ignore everything going on, and it led to this anyway. If I'm even partially responsible, I need start acting like it.

Second, I'm sick of settling. I'm responsible for this because I'm the greatest gamma specialist that ever lived. The explosion was proof of that. I had started to believe the people saying that I lost my mind because my experiment failed. I started to think that maybe I was wrong from the beginning.

Not anymore. I'm going to get what I earned and what I deserve or I'll go down swinging. Starting with this work with you, before I'm done they'll be calling Banner "Ringo."

INT. FITZ-SIMMONS' CAR - A SHORT TIME LATER

They're going slower, but still faster than the flow of traffic, which has gotten considerably lighter as they get further out of the city.

SIMMONS

Slow down a little more. They're less than a kilometer in front of us.

FITZ

Let me get behind them.

He speeds up while she extracts a small machine from her backpack. It looks like a cobbled together navigation compass with a light on it.

FITZ (CONT'D)

Be careful with that.

SIMMONS

Obviously.

FITZ

Besides making this drive out here useless, if something happens to that there are seven different things back at the office that won't work any more.

SIMMONS

You can fix them.

FITZ

That won't stop you from whining because you haven't been able to make a cappuccino for two days. Those need special parts to fix.

She looks at it, turns it around in her hand.

SIMMONS

Which piece is from the cappuccino machine?
Whoa!

She jerks forward as he slows down quickly and pulls into the right lane.

FITZ

There they are.

She looks ahead, confirms they're close enough and pushes the only button on the scanner.

Nothing happens.

SIMMONS

It's broken.

FITZ

It just needs a few seconds to warm up. Let me get closer, we might need to be half this distance. I'm still not sure how well this works.

SIMMONS
Does it work at all?

FITZ
It worked in the lab before we
left.

SIMMONS
Maybe this bomb has a different set
of rules we need to figure out.

The light turns GREEN. The COMPASS ARM slowly ROTATES to
point directly FORWARD.

SIMMONS (CONT'D)
I don't think that's what I wanted
to happen.

FITZ
I told you it works.

SIMMONS
Don't do anything yet. Let's talk
to the boss first.

FITZ
Are you still nervous?

SIMMONS
I'm telling you, this is just too
easy.

FITZ
I prefer it easy.

SIMMONS
You would. Let me call Coulson.

CUT TO:

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Coulson takes his phone away from his ear.

COULSON
That was Fitz-Simmons. They've
confirmed the bomb is on the truck.
They're going to stop it as soon as
they find a safe area.

WARD
They're going to stop it?

COULSON

Don't get cheeky. You and May get to where they are. They're just going to confirm it is what we think it is.

WARD

So why can't they bring it back?

COULSON

It's a long drive back. We're not the only ones tracking that truck. You can get there in less than twenty minutes by air. I want it transported back the same way.

May looks at her phone, taps it.

MAY

They're close. Fifteen minutes if I'm flying.

She turns and heads for the door.

WARD

Tell them not to do anything until we're nearly there.

He follows May.

COULSON

I think they're able to decide that for themselves. I told them to make the call.

CUT TO:

INT. FITZ-SIMMONS' CAR - A SHORT TIME LATER

The car is just behind the truck, less than ten feet from its rear bumper. Simmons is staring at the light.

SIMMONS

I was hoping it would go off. If it goes off it means it's broken, right?

FITZ

Yes. That isn't what is happening.

She turns it off.

SIMMONS
It's broken.

FITZ
No it isn't.

She turns it back on. The light comes alive.

SIMMONS
Nuts!

FITZ
Ask them to pull over.

He jerks the car into the other lane and speeds up to get beside the other vehicle.

SIMMONS
What do you mean?

Fitz points to the window. They're even with the other driver.

FITZ
Ask them to pull over. Who we are is written on the car. If they're legit movers, they'll pull over.

SIMMONS
And if they're bad guys?

She starts lowering her window.

FITZ
They'll shoot at you and drive faster. Don't worry, we got backup on the way.

SIMMONS
I feel comforted already.

She turns her attention to the truck. She leans out the window.

SIMMONS (CONT'D)
Excuse me!

Henry is driving the truck. He rolls down his window.

The truck is an older model. Simmons has to wait while he cranks on the window.

HENRY
Waddya need!

SIMMONS

Pull over! I need you to pull over!

He gives her a dirty look.

HENRY

I didn't do nothin! I don't have to pull over!

FITZ

Why don't we have lights?

SIMMONS

(to Fitz)

We're not the police. We don't get lights.

(to Henry)

I know you didn't do anything! We need to look in the back!

She points towards the rear of the truck for emphasis.

HENRY

I'm on a schedule!

He looks at the emblem on the side of the car. A resigned look crosses his face.

HENRY (CONT'D)

Make it quick! I'll pull off at the next exit!

He starts rolling up his window.

SIMMONS

Thank you!

His window is closed. Discussion over.

FITZ

See, easy enough.

SIMMONS

He seemed annoyed.

FITZ

Wait until he learns why we're stopping him.

Fitz slows down, gets behind the truck.

SIMMONS

Keep your eyes open.

FITZ

When we get back, I'm demanding
lights.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB

Eliot, Coulson and Skye are standing beside the machine
holding the crowbar.

ELIOT

Over ninety-nine percent of the
energy emitted by the bomb is
inside this crowbar, yet the amount
of radiation that comes off of it
is so slight an instrument would
have to be in the room to detect
it.

SKYE

The explosion at the dock was only
one-percent of the size it was
supposed to be?

ELIOT

How do you think I survived it?
That bomb should have levelled a
city block. This crowbar stopped
that from happening.

COULSON

How does a crowbar stop an
explosion?

ELIOT

By absorbing it. I designed these
to only explode on one condition.

SKYE

Get smacked by a crowbar? That's a
pretty specific condition.

ELIOT

To come in contact with the exact same metal from which the case is made. The secret that nobody has been able to figure out, the one that makes it all work, is how to contain it. That's why the entire thing has a shell around it only a few molecules thick. It holds everything together.

SKYE

And nothing can break that shell?

ELIOT

Nothing but a very specific metal. The field itself is actually nothing more than an energized form of that metal. The explosion isn't actually caused by the metal touching so much as it is by the field breaking.

COULSON

I'm not sure I understand.

SKYE

I think I do. Let me try.

ELIOT

Give it a shot.

SKYE

The field flows around the metal, but isn't attached directly to it. It's not a ceramic shell; it's more like a layer of grease designed to cover the sphere in an even coat.

ELIOT

That's one way to put it. How does the firing mechanism work, then?

SKYE

The field is programmed to recognize the metal. When another object tries to touch the bomb, the field works as a shield against it, unless that object is made from the same steel as the sphere, in which case it attempts to flow around the new object. That movement makes the integrity of the field weak enough that it just rips open.

ELIOT
Exactly. The next question is
where did he get the crowbar.

COULSON
When you destroyed the information
on the bomb, did that include the
information on the metal?

ELIOT
No.

COULSON
What did you do with that
information?

ELIOT
I never had it.

COULSON
Then who made it?

ELIOT
I don't know.

Coulson looks at him skeptically.

ELIOT (CONT'D)
I'm serious. I did it as a
precaution. At the time these were
made, Richmond Enterprises was
sharing a lot of research and
manufacturing facilities with
Advanced Idea Mechanics. I had
these shells made in one of their-

He stops, a slightly stunned expression on his face.

ELIOT (CONT'D)
-labs in China. That's how Xiao
Feng knew to look for me.

COULSON
How long have you known him?

ELIOT
Not very long. Maybe two years.
I'll bet anything he's working for
whoever knows the elemental
cocktail that went into making
these.

Skye walks over to a computer, types something.

SKYE

I'll start searching the employee and contract records for both Richmond Enterprises and Advanced Idea Mechanics for any trace of a Feng, ever.

COULSON

Good idea. Dr. Franklin, I still don't understand how the crowbar absorbed the blast.

ELIOT

I can't explain that right now. I need a little more time with it.

COULSON

Take whatever time you need.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - A FEW MINUTES LATER

The car is parked ten feet behind the truck, which is still closed up. Fitz-Simmons are standing in the parking lot, talking to Brian and Henry.

FITZ

Thank you for stopping. Could you open the back for us?

BRIAN

Sure. What's this about?

Brian walks over to the back of the truck, pulling a key out of his pocket on the way.

SIMMONS

Do you know what you're carrying?

HENRY

Furniture and boxes of clothes, mostly, as far as we could tell. Everything was already boxed and piled when we got there. We just put it on the truck. If there's drugs or somethin' in there, it ain't ours.

Brian takes the lock off, pries the catch loose.

FITZ

We know that. Don't worry. You aren't in any trouble.

HENRY

Good.

BRIAN

See, I told you this was too good to be true. Who pays 10K for a mover.

He swings the door open. Henry walks over to help him secure them to the sides of the truck.

HENRY

Rich people that don't want their things broken.

Fitz walks to the back of the truck, climbs in. Simmons follows him, hands the scanner to him.

Fitz approaches the load bar and starts taking it down, while Brian and Henry watch him. Simmons looks at the two movers, then walks back to the car and stands beside the driver door.

CUT TO:

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB - CONTINUOUS

Eliot is standing at the machine. Skye is still on a computer. Coulson is reading something on his phone.

ELIOT

Here's a thought.

COULSON

You figured it out?

ELIOT

I still can't tell you how this absorbed the blast, but I just thought of something else.

COULSON

What's that?

ELIOT

I know why Dirk is so strong.

Skye stops what she's doing, turns toward him. Coulson looks up from his phone.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

His radiation is in tune with it.

SKYE

Now I'm lost. That sounds a little metaphysical.

ELIOT

Almost everything emits radiation of one form or another. Humans all give off a form of radiation.

SKYE

Not gamma radiation.

ELIOT

Not everyone lived through a gamma explosion, either. Dirk was part of a secret S.H.I.E.L.D. initiative to make superhuman soldiers. Just because it failed doesn't mean it didn't change him.

SKYE

The radiation from the explosion caused the serum in his blood to mutate?

ELIOT

I think it did. The blood and metal transformed in the same way, causing a bond between them. Whenever he's got a hand on it, the stored energy can channel into him.

SKYE

Are you sure?

ELIOT

I'm not and I don't have a robust enough biology background to be sure. That's where Banner had my number. I do know that the majority of those of us that went through the program were treated with gamma irradiated serums.

COULSON

How did the explosion affect you?

ELIOT

What hit me was all concussive energy, and even that was at a fraction of a fraction of the strength it should have been. I got lucky. If this hadn't worked different than intended, I'd be dead right now. I should be dead right now. Before you put the genius in jail that figured out how to pull this off, thank him for me.

COULSON

How did this Xiao Feng get the crowbar to Mr. Garthwaite? Both Skye and I have talked to him and we both agree that he genuinely has no idea what's going on.

ELIOT

That's easy. Dirk's always hitting things with it, like he's sad he didn't play pro ball or something. He leaves it in his tool box in the back of the truck and it's almost always unlocked on site, so switching it out would take no time.

SKYE

But why him? He doesn't seem like the best candidate, and barely fell into doing the job Xiao Feng wanted done.

ELIOT

Maybe to make sure it worked? I like the guy, but he's not a genius mastermind. He's much more a bumbling henchman. Chances are, now that Xiao Feng knows it works, he's planning on using the last one to do it again, this time in a more controlled setting.

COULSON

That's an incredibly expensive experiment, especially knowing that Garthwaite would probably get caught.

ELIOT

You may want to speed that along, Agent.

(MORE)

ELIOT (CONT'D)

There's a good chance that whoever
he plans on doing this to next will
come to break Dirk out after it
happens.

INT. MOVING TRUCK - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Fitz is in the back of the truck. He's removed the two bars
holding the load and set them to the side. A few boxes are
stacked against one wall, pulled from the pile to make a hole
for Fitz to search deeper.

He reaches down and grabs a BOX on the floor. He tries to
pick it up.

It doesn't move. He bends his knees, gets a good grip and
tries again.

It still doesn't move. He grabs the edge of the box and
pulls backward to slide it rather than lift it.

RIP! The side of the box rips straight down the edge. He
tumbles back.

THUMP! He lands on his butt.

SIMMONS (O.S.)

(yelling)

You okay!

Fitz turns his head and yells out the back.

FITZ

Yeah, I'm fine!

He looks annoyed as his head turns to look at the box. His
eyes open wide.

FITZ (CONT'D)

(gasping)

Oh, my god.

He peels back the side of the box to better reveal what's
inside - a STEEL BALL almost two feet across, polished but
giving off a light green aura.

He backs up a foot, SHUFFLING like a crab.

FITZ (CONT'D)

You're not going to believe this!

Simmons runs from the car, pushes Brian and Henry out of the way and climbs into the truck. Fitz hears her and turns around.

FITZ (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

She takes a step forward, eyes wide in awe.

SIMMONS
He didn't say it would be so big.

Fitz sees movement. He LEAPS toward the back of the truck.

FITZ
No!

Simmons turns around.

SIMMONS
What is it?

SLAM! The doors close, cutting off all light except the sickly glow from the metal ball and the bright light of the scanner.

SHUNK! The catch grinds shut right as - SMACK - Fitz slams into the door.

There's LAUGHTER from the outside, but the door doesn't give.

The small space lights up as Simmons gets her phone on.

SIMMONS (CONT'D)
No signal.

FITZ
That isn't a surprise. Damn it!

There's the sound of the lock clicking shut.

BUMP! BUMP! A thump on the side of the truck.

BRIAN (O.S.)
You might wanna get that load secure!

FITZ
Why did you get in the truck?

SIMMONS
I thought you needed help!

SLAM! The sound of a truck door closing.

FITZ
I did need your help! Outside!

SIMMONS
Why would you need me outside!

SLAM! The other door closes, just as the engine starts.

FITZ
To prevent something like this from occurring? Maybe?

SIMMONS
Those guys weren't acting weird.
It looked safe.

FITZ
It always looks safe. That's the point of an ambush! This is why we do scenario training!

The truck lurches forward and the two are thrown against the back. The light on the scanner goes off. The place is almost completely dark, doors so tight they let no light in.

SIMMONS
Now it's broken.

CUT TO:

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. HELICOPTER - DAY

May is piloting the helicopter, Ward scanning the ground intently.

MAY
See anything?

WARD
No sign of them. I see their car,
but there's no truck in sight.

MAY
I'm going to put it down.

She adjusts the controls, the helicopter dips toward the ground.

WARD
I told these idiots to wait for us!

The helicopter is right above the parking lot. May adjusts and they settle to the ground.

MAY

As soon as you're in the car, I'm out.

WARD

Take off as soon as the door closes. I have a feeling they're going to need us back at the office sooner rather than later.

MAY

We can just leave it?

WARD

No, there's equipment in the truck and data in the dash.

MAY

Good point.

She looks over at him.

MAY (CONT'D)

So get out, already!

Ward jumps out of the helicopter.

May watches as he runs across the parking lot to the car. As soon as she knows he's clear, she takes off.

CUT TO:

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB

Skye is working on a computer, deep in concentration. Eliot is still hard at work inspecting the CROWBAR.

Coulson walks in. He looks harried.

COULSON

Skye.

She looks up.

SKYE

Yes, sir?

COULSON

I need you to get Mr. Garthwaite together. As soon as May and Ward are back, we'll be moving him.

SKYE
To the helicarrier?

COULSON
Possibly. I'm waiting on orders.

She gets up from her seat, leaves.

Coulson turns to Eliot.

COULSON (CONT'D)
Any luck?

ELIOT
A lot, actually.

COULSON
Good. We're going to need as many answers as you can give us.

ELIOT
You look anxious. Is anything wrong?

COULSON
The truck disappeared. We're going to need your help tracking it down.

ELIOT
Are your agents all right?

COULSON
I don't know. They disappeared with it.

ELIOT
How's that?

COULSON
They checked in, said they were going to verify the bomb was onboard. Four minutes and sixteen seconds later, they both dropped off our radar. Ward is there now, looking for anything that can give us a clue.

A look comes over Eliot's face, as if he had an epiphany.

ELIOT
I get it. Dirk wasn't an experiment at all.

COULSON

What do you mean?

ELIOT

He didn't draw the short straw just so Xiao Feng could make sure his experiment worked. He was used to get your attention.

COULSON

He has it. How could he have planned something like this?

ELIOT

Feng is brilliant, Agent Coulson. I'm willing to wager that he used Dirk to get me and you together.

COULSON

That doesn't make sense.

ELIOT

It does if part of his goal all along was to get two of your team as hostages. If he knew I was the only person able to track one of these bombs-

COULSON

Why do these people always want hostages?

ELIOT

Hostages are more valuable than money when it comes to situations like this.

COULSON

Sorry, that was rhetorical. A better question is why go through all this trouble in the first place. Wouldn't it have been easier for Xiao Feng to do this experiment on Mr. Garthwaite in private?

ELIOT

Not if his resources are limited. If he learned of Dirk's involvement in the program and connected him to me, then it was an obvious choice. I don't think it's easy to find program rejects that were administered that exact serum.

(MORE)

ELIOT (CONT'D)

To do it in private means asking permission. I don't believe Dirk would have given it. Just look how he acted when it did happen. What little thinking he was capable of flew right out the window. I suggest working out how the information got to Xiao Feng in the first place. There has to be either a leak in your organization, or at DC.

COULSON

What do you think his end game is?

ELIOT

I'll be able to answer that after Agent Skye brings in Dirk. I have a question I need to ask him.

COULSON

You think he has any answers? I thought you said he was essentially a patsy.

ELIOT

I don't think he knows a lot, but he knows enough to answer this one.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB - A SHORT TIME LATER

Coulson and Eliot are still talking. Coulson is holding the CROWBAR.

ELIOT

Squeeze down on it as tightly as you can.

Coulson grits his teeth, squeezes hard.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

Can you feel it?

Coulson relaxes.

COULSON

A little. It feels like it's humming.

ELIOT

Exactly. It's alive with energy trying to escape without knowing how.

COULSON

It's a powerful weapon.

ELIOT

It's a powerful *tool*, Agent Coulson. This is a crowbar, not a gun or a bomb.

COULSON

That thing has the potential to be more powerful than any conventional bomb or gun on this planet.

ELIOT

In the end, it's just a lever. It could be used to help build the greatest buildings man has ever seen. We've spent the last few thousand years debating how people with limited technology moved the stone for the Great Pyramid, what did they use to lift them and put them so snug together. Can you just imagine the manpower and imagination that took?

He looks at the tool in Coulson's hands.

ELIOT (CONT'D)

With that, Dirk could do it himself.

As if he were summoned, the door opens and DIRK walks in, directly in front of Skye. Dirk's hands are cuffed with steel mitts. A chain runs between them, connected to steel boots that cause him to shuffle forward.

Skye has her gun drawn.

Coulson looks at the pair. He hands the CROWBAR to Eliot.

COULSON

Put this back and lock the machine down. We don't want to give him any incentive.

Eliot looks down at the CROWBAR in his hands.

CUT TO:

INT. MOVING TRUCK - DAY

The back of the truck is dark, except the light from a pair of phones in the laps of Fitz-Simmons. Somehow, they've managed to get the boxes back in place and secure the load. Now, they're resting against one wall.

SIMMONS

I'm sorry.

FITZ

I said not to worry about it. I meant it. Save your energy for figuring out what we do next.

The truck goes over a bump, jostling the two.

SIMMONS

Where do you think they're taking us?

FITZ

A secret volcano lair.

SIMMONS

I hope they don't have sharks with lasers on their head.

FITZ

They have a truck with some kind of dampening field that prevents us from getting any kind of signal out of it and hundreds of pounds of steel containing what's probably enough of a gamma charge to turn the Bronx into a really big mud puddle.

SIMMONS

That means they could have laser sharks.

FITZ

It does.

SIMMONS

If they have this spiffy dampening field, why were we able to detect the bomb in the first place?

FITZ
They didn't turn it on until we
both got in the truck.

SIMMONS
What would they have done if we
hadn't gotten in?

FITZ
We'll have to ask them when we stop
for snacks.

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB

Eliot is still looking at the CROWBAR. Coulson is turned
toward Dirk and Skye.

COULSON
You can have a seat, Mr.
Garthwaite. Your ride will be here
in about ten minutes.

He takes a couple of steps towards them, motions to a seat.

Dirk walks over to it.

DIRK
(to Skye)
You're lucky you got a gun, girlie.

ELIOT
Dirk!

Dirk's face shows surprise. He hadn't seen his friend. His
face gets angry.

DIRK
What are you doing here? You
working for them now?

ELIOT
I need to know something, man?

DIRK
Sure you do. What's that?

ELIOT
If someone tried to break you out
of here, what would you do?

DIRK
Whaddya mean?

ELIOT
Are you ready to take
responsibility for what you did?

DIRK
I didn't do nothin'. If someone
tried to break me out'a here, I'd
help them.

Coulson looks back at Eliot, a little puzzled.

COULSON
Is that what you needed to know,
Dr. Franklin?

ELIOT
It is.

COULSON
And what's the conclusion?

ELIOT
My conclusion, Agent Coulson, is
that everything seems to be going
wrong for you today.

COULSON
I already knew that.

ELIOT
Let me remind you of two things I
said.

COULSON
I'm listening.

ELIOT
I told you that one of the
objectives was to get us together.

COULSON
Yes, I remember. The second?

ELIOT
After I'm done, Dr. Bruce Banner
will be a footnote.

He smiles.

ELIOT (CONT'D)
Why would you just hand me
something as powerful as this
crowbar? You don't even know me.
(MORE)

ELIOT (CONT'D)

How can someone in your position trust someone like me with something like this.

COULSON

Fitz-Simmons confirmed there wasn't a connection between you and that thing. It really doesn't do anyone but Mr. Garthwaite a whole lot of good.

DIRK

That's right! Give it back to me!

He starts to stand up, but Skye's body stiffens up, her stance gets deadly serious.

SKYE

Sit down!

He sits slowly, a glare in his eye.

DIRK

You're lucky, girl. Just let me get my hands on you.

COULSON

Where you're going you won't get your hands on anyone. It will be easier on you if you come to terms with that now.

ELIOT

He's not going where you think he is.

COULSON

I thought you said you wanted to be one of the good guys, Dr. Franklin.

ELIOT

I lied.

COULSON

What makes you think that you can get past two trained S.H.I.E.L.D. agents with a weapon you can't use?

ELIOT

You forgot about one variable in the equation.

He leaps forward. Coulson draws his gun. Skye turns her gun on him as well.

Dirk jumps up and charges at Skye, forcing her to turn again. Coulson get his gun up, but before he can fire Eliot swings the CROWBAE, SMASHING through the machine holding the GAMMA BOMB like it was paper mache.

BOOM! The bomb EXPLODES.

CUT TO:

INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - DAY

The large machines that once dominated the factory interior have been removed, leaving a vast, open space. Light spills through broken windows high on the wall and holes in the ceiling, highlighting the large beams that rise up to hold what's left of the roof in the air.

The MOVING TRUCK is in the center of the floor. Brian, Henry and XIAO FENG are standing behind it, holding AUTOMATIC RIFLES pointed at the rear of the truck.

Fitz is standing in the factory behind the truck. The doors are open wide. Simmons jumps to the floor.

XIAO FENG

Hello, Agents. I am Xiao Feng.

They look at him quietly, memorizing his features.

XIAO FENG (CONT'D)

I am sorry we have to meet under these conditions, but I'm sure you understand. It is all part of the excitement you signed up for, after all.

SIMMONS

What now? You trade us for Mr. Garthwaite?

XIAO FENG

No. Dirk will be along shortly. For you, there are different plans.

FITZ

What do you mean he'll be along shortly?

XIAO FENG

An associate of mine is freeing him from your organization as we speak.

SIMMONS
Associate?

Xiao Feng smiles.

XIAO FENG
Enough questions, agent. We need
to put you someplace safe.

He motions with his gun toward the back of the factory.

CUT TO:

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB

The office is wrecked. Tables are overturned, machines destroyed, glass and debris strewn everywhere. There's a large hole in the wall.

Skye is crumpled against one wall, Coulson another. Dirk is unconscious on the floor, but he's starting to stir.

There's SHUFFLING, a LOW MOAN comes from the hole in the wall.

A bit more noise of movement and Eliot's hand appears. He grips the broken edge of wall, pulls himself through the hole. He's carrying the CROWBAR.

Dirk comes to. He opens his eyes, sees Eliot.

DIRK
See, I knew you'd come around.

He sits up, puts the steel mitts against the ground, tries to push himself up.

One of the mitts slips and he falls. Eliot doesn't seem to notice as runs to Coulson.

DIRK (CONT'D)
A little help! Get these things
off me!

Dirk holds his hands in the air. Eliot continues to ignore him, choosing to make sure Coulson survived the blast.

ELIOT
Relax. We'll be on our way
shortly.

Satisfied the S.H.I.E.L.D. agent will live, Dirk runs over to Skye.

DIRK

Forget about her! I'm taking her
head off before we leave!

ELIOT

You're doing nothing of the sort.

Skye isn't dead or dying. Eliot walks over to Dirk.

DIRK

Who the hell do you think you are?
I ain't taking orders from you!

ELIOT

As long as I'm holding this, you
are.

He lifts the CROWBAR over his head, ready to strike.

DIRK

That's mine!

Eliot swings. Dirk turns his head, flinching from the
attack.

CLANG! The crowbar smashes the chain holding Dirk's hands
together.

He swings again -CLANG- this time breaking the chain
restricting Dirk's legs.

Coulson starts to stir.

ELIOT

I'm leaving. Either you're coming
with or I'm knocking you back out.

Dirk holds up the metal gloves.

DIRK

Get these off of me!

ELIOT

No. Not till we get to where we're
going.

DIRK

Why?

ELIOT

I don't trust you.

DIRK

You son of a-

CRASH! Something in the back of the room tumbles down.

DIRK (CONT'D)
Fine, let's go.

Eliot grabs one of the man's hands, helps him to his feet.

DIRK (CONT'D)
But I want my crowbar back.

ELIOT
You'll get it back when I'm ready
to give it to you. Now move.

He pushes Dirk towards the door.

END ACT FOUR

TAG

INT. ABANDONED FACTORY - AFTERNOON

Xiao Feng, Henry and Brian are sitting around a small FOLDING TABLE playing three-card poker, rifles next to them. Fitz-Simmons are nearby, secured to a support beam.

Eliot and Dirk walk into the factory. Xiao Feng puts his cards on the table facedown, then stands to greet them.

XIAO FENG
It's good to see you two.

After a second the other two follow their boss's lead.

ELIOT
It's great to see you.

DIRK
I'm still waiting for someone to
tell me what the hell is going on.

He lifts his hands.

DIRK (CONT'D)
And take these things off!

Eliot looks over Henry and Brian.

ELIOT
(to Xiao Feng)
Do these two know everything?

HENRY

We don't know anything.

BRIAN

We know about the bomb.

HENRY

Yeah, but that's about it.

DIRK

There's another bomb? Someone really needs to start explaining things.

SIMMONS (O.S.)

It's all about money, Wrecker! They're holding us ransom, with a bomb big enough to level the city!

Eliot notices the agents. He smiles, walks towards them.

ELIOT

I trust you two have been treated well?

FITZ

No complaints. I could use a cup of coffee, though.

SIMMONS

Coffee would be bad. It would make you have to pee.

ELIOT

Don't worry. You two will be out of here before long if everything goes as smoothly as it has been.

FITZ

You're not going to be able to use us for any leverage with S.H.I.E.L.D. They don't play games.

Eliot looks back at Xiao Feng.

ELIOT

You haven't said anything to them?

XIAO FENG

Of course not. I haven't told anyone anything they didn't need to know.

ELIOT

I knew there was a reason we found each other.

XIAO FENG

I found you.

ELIOT

Regardless, you're a good man, Charlie Brown.

(turning back to Fitz-Simmons)

You're not here as hostages. We've got plenty we're planning on holding hostage. S.H.I.E.L.D. might not care if we threaten the two of you, but what will they say when we tell them we're ransoming New York?

SIMMONS

You can't be serious?

XIAO FENG

Agent, you're currently attached to a pole in the middle of an abandoned factory miles from anywhere you're familiar with, in the company of people capable of destroying anything that gets in their way. Why wouldn't we be deadly serious?

FITZ

Then what do you need us for?

ELIOT

You're bait, agent. Just bait.

INT. S.H.I.E.L.D. OFFICES - LAB - CONTINUOUS

Wade storms into the office, takes two steps and pulls up short. The door SLAMS against the wall.

The room is still a mess. Skye is cleaning an area, preparing a cobbled together workspace. Coulson is talking to May in the middle of the mess, gesticulating as he explains what happened. All three look over at him.

WARD

Unbelievable.

COULSON
Believe it, agent.

Ward moves a couple more steps, head rolling around as he takes in all the wreckage. Everyone remains silent while he absorbs it.

The door opens again. Ward SPINS around, drawing his gun as he does.

Agents SHARON CARTER and JAMES "JIMMY" WOO walk in.

SHARON
Why is it every time I see you,
you're pointing a gun at me?

Ward stands there, still confused. He lowers his weapon.

JIMMY
He still hasn't changed.

SHARON
Did you expect otherwise?

JIMMY
I don't expect anything when it
comes to this one.

COULSON
Glad you two could make it.

Sharon looks around at the mess.

SHARON
Didn't we tell you no parties while
we were away?

JIMMY
Is the babysitter dead?

COULSON
No, but some of the kids are still
missing.

SHARON
And what did we learn from all
this, young man?

COULSON
Don't trust civilians?

SKYE
We're not equipped for
incarceration?

MAY

We're not equipped to store bombs?

WARD

Don't you still owe me money?

SHARON

No.

SKYE

For real? That's where you go?

WARD

Twenty bucks. You still owe me
twenty bucks.

SHARON

You bought the drinks, agent. Just
because you got shot down later
doesn't mean I suddenly have to pay
you for them.

MAY

That's low, Ward. Even for you.

WARD

That's not it at all. She owes me
for the second round.

SHARON

You should be glad you only got
taken for two drinks. Next time do
some homework before you approach
your training supervisor in a bar.

SKYE

She was your training supervisor?

WARD

I didn't know. Training didn't
start until the next day. I was
trying to have some last minute fun
before I gave up having a life.

MAY

Why am I not surprised?

COULSON

I'm sorry to break up the nostalgia
party, but there will be plenty of
time to harass Agent Ward about
this after we've taken care of our
more pressing business.

Jimmy slaps his hands together, rubbing them back and forth furiously in excitement.

JIMMY

Let's go catch us some bad guys.
Where can we find them?

COULSON

That's the question we're trying to answer.

Skye notices something on the computer closest to her. She GASPS.

COULSON (CONT'D)

What is it?

SKYE

I think we have a lead.

Everyone moves towards her to see what's on the computer.

SKYE (CONT'D)

A factory just outside of the city just exploded.

COULSON

What makes you think it was them?

SKYE

It was gamma. I think the third bomb just went off.

THE END