

One
Foggy Bottom

Oscar Keye rode backwards on the train. Behind him, in the direction toward which he moved, all of Washington lay in deep fog.

Keye's eyes returned to the sign: IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING. And there, on the stained carpet at his feet: a black bag with no owner.

The shaking car slowed, stopped. The usual commuter panic ensued: doors opened; passengers squeezed out; passengers pushed their way into the overcrowded space. Crammed in like cattle, Keye thought, even during the shutdown.

The doors closed and the train started off. Keye rode backwards contemplating the threat of an ownerless bag at his feet, an unfinished report at work, and his kids at home to catch the bus alone. He glanced at the *Washington Express* on his neighbor's lap.

WORLD MARKETS UNSTEADY AS U.S. BUDGET IMPASSE DRAGS

SENATE ENDS GUN DEBATE BEFORE IT BEGINS

DECAPITATED BODY FOUND ON TRACKS

Distracted by the bag, Keye couldn't read past the headlines. He submitted to the shake and roar until they reached Foggy Bottom. A barely audible recording announced, "*Passengers are reminded that*

safety and security are everyone's responsibility. Please report unattended bags or suspicious behavior to Metro Transit Authorities by calling..."

The opening doors obliterated the contact info. Keye disembarked, clutching the plastic bag that contained his lunch. Ahead the human mass backed up on itself, commuters bumping him from behind.

I see something suspicious, Keye thought. All around, people stared at phones, plodding forward without seeing, risking a tumble on the escalator.

Which, it turned out, wasn't working.

Again.

Two

The Wheel of Death

Deep inside a federal building, down an obscure corridor on the second floor, behind a locked door marked Foreign Opinion Programs, Keye's terminal came slowly to life. First came the spinning wheel. The wheel got traction and the program opened. Keye clicked around for the daily activity plan drafted the day before. He hit send.

Having time-stamped his existence, Keye looked to the *Washington Post* for news of the deceased Metro rider. The search

wheel spun. While he waited, Keye forced himself to open the report he'd struggled with all week:

International public opinion overwhelmingly opposes the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) in monitoring populations throughout Latin America, a recent FOP survey shows. The region-wide opposition includes use of

drones to track and hunt known terrorists, and while more than 75% of the population in the 17 countries surveyed objects to UAV use in their country's air space, the greatest objection is found in...

“Malone! Vilsack!” The tough, urgent voice of Marjory Taylor stopped Keye reading. “My office. Now!”

Keye hit save though he'd changed nothing in the document, sure that he was about to be called before the Chief. While he waited for the guillotine to drop his name, he clicked to see what the spinning wheel had turned up regarding the Metro cadaver:

Washington October 2 – The body of a middle aged black male was discovered at the Georgia Avenue-Petworth station following the Thursday evening rush, the Metro Transit Authority confirmed late yesterday. Investigators have released no details about the discovery, and MTA

officials have said only that the discovery was first reported by a driver on the Green Line. MTA referred all inquiries to District police, who in turn referred them to the MTA spokesman's office, which couldn't be reached for comment.

Keye's phone trilled, the home number onscreen. "Dad." William's voice, a panicked hand reaching through the wires.

"You're not at school."

"We missed the bus, dad."

"How did that happen?"

"We had our shoes on, our coats on. But I needed to poop-"

"Oh."

"Keye!" called Taylor.

"Oh shit," Keye said, not meaning to say it aloud. He rubbed his forehead, thinking what a mistake it was to leave a third grader in charge of catching the bus.

"Dad?"

"Don't repeat that. It's the boss. Look, I-"

"Are we going to miss school?"

"Keye. Now!"

Covering the mouthpiece, "Right there, Chief!" He sucked his lips, an expression of guilt and incompetence. "Ok," he said. "Ok. Oh, boy. Look, I'm going call Mrs. Montegu and see if she can't drive you."

"Can't drive us?!"

"Can. Can-"

"Keye!"

William was crying. Keye pictured the boy standing in the kitchen holding the phone and crying, his younger brother beside him feeding on the panic.

"Mrs. Montegu will be right there," Keye lied. "She'll be there as fast as she can but I have to hang up and call her."

The skinny girl with the bland face but crooked nose was at his door, eyes wide and flashing. “Are you *coming*?!” Malone hissed.

He nodded and held up a finger.

“I have to hang up now,” he said into the phone. “It’s ok, can you stop crying so I can hang up and call Mrs. Montegu...”

Malone stormed off. “He’s on the *phone*. With his *kids*.”

“*Now* Keye. *Now*!”

Keye stared at the spinning wheel on his screen. He knew he was lost. Trouble at work. Trouble at home. He gave up. He set down the phone. Accompanied by the sound of William’s whimpering Keye pulled on his sport coat, picked up a notebook, and snuck out like a coward to face the Chief.