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It was 7.08 pm. As the first signs of the closing storm splashed on the ground, an erratically driven car sped through the countrified estate towards Paul Kehoe's residence. At the perimeter of Paul's lavish home, the car stopped abruptly as the tall gates began to open at a snail's pace. Judging from the revving engine, the driver was in no mood to wait for long and resumed his speedy driving with the gates only partially open. Flooring the accelerator, the wing mirrors narrowly escaped being sullied by the slenderest of margins.

After racing up the remainder of the driveway, Frank Farley continued the rest of his speedy journey on foot. He looked back towards the gates with a petrified expression, willing them to close. "Come on!" he whispered impatiently, watching them shut as slowly as they opened. As a panicked Farley continued to stand there, his manner was incontinent - his hands shaking, his brow raw with restless rubbing. His eyes remained focused on the gates until they finally closed and then leaned forward against his car to exhale a deep sigh of relief. After a couple of seconds of composure, he swivelled around sharply and headed for the house, where Paul was waiting for him at the door. Frank's state was clear for him to see.

"Are you okay?" Paul asked, taking time out to study Frank's newly acquired bruise on his left cheek.

"I am okay, just a bit edgy."

"Do you want to tell me where you got that bruise?"

The nervous visitor held his hand up to his face for a second and processed the question. Silence reigned and Frank felt so uncomfortable that he was in two minds as to whether to stay or leave. Paul then made Frank's mind up for him. As he escorted him into his home, Paul could feel the nervous shivers emanating from his friend's quivering body. They entered the living room together and as the two sat down on the couch, Paul cast his eyes over Frank's tired, drained features and made no reservations as to his appearance. "You look terrible. What's going on? This is a far cry from how you were when I saw you yesterday?"

"I am alright," he replied, lowering his head and rubbing his temples. Paul remained unconvinced, but his imminent probing for more was cut short by Frank's admission. "No Paul, everything is far from all right."

"So, Chloe was right." Frank looked up at Paul with an inquisitive face that invited him to elaborate. "I bumped into her at the airport. She said she spoke to

you at Lakeside Mall and that you were acting erratically. So, are you going to tell me where you got that bruise?"

Frank exhaled a deep sigh in preparation for his explanation. "I bumped into my family Paul. They have tracked me down."

"What?"

"They jumped me, that's how I got the bruise."

Paul's face creased up with confusion. "What? How the hell did they find you?"

"There was a reporter outside my house. He was from the Tribune Sensational. They are convinced that I am the winner of the Michigan state lottery. News travels fast.....they have printed an article on their website," Frank said as he produced a crumpled printout of the article and handed it to Paul. He scanned it quickly, paying most attention to the startled photograph of Frank on it before shaking his head. "My step-parents are crazy, they want my lottery win!" Frank stated in no uncertain terms. "You know what they were like Paul, they treated me badly. It was a living hell for me."

Paul nodded. "You are right Frank, they were evil to you."

"Man, I need to get out of here!" he shouted with a clenched fist. Paul said nothing, moved over to his small drinks cabinet and took out the only bottle of alcohol in there. Paul poured a shot of Frank's favourite alcoholic drink, bourbon, reserved only for him – but to be used, preferably, for happier occasions.

Paul was well aware of Frank's step-parents and the torture they subjected him too when he was a child. He could remember the screams from Frank's house as his step-father beat him repeatedly and the cruel games his older brother played out on him, like tying him up in the basement and starving him for three days when he was only six years old. Frank was the black sheep, he was the nice person in a family that was not and it was this niceness that was exploited to the full. For sixteen years, until the day he escaped for college, every day of his childhood had been hell on earth. Paul handed the glass of bourbon to his guest and a shaking Frank Farley gratefully accepted it straight away. "Claim your prize money and disappear," Paul stated sitting down.

"What, and live my life as a recluse in fear all the time? They will be on my back. No, I want closure."

"I see."

"I need to fake my own death," professed Frank as he downed the shot of bourbon in one go. As his bloodstream absorbed the alcohol, it immediately seemed to change his mood and fuel his already heightened intention to deceive. Paul resumed the conversation, but Frank was sinking deeper into thought and as a result, Paul's voice began to fade away. Farley continued to look frail, but this would prove only a mask to hide what was now a scheming mind behind it.

"I think I know how to get out of this mess," Frank whispered, his eyes still glazed over with contemplation. It was not loud enough to break Paul's spoken words. "I think I know how to get out of this mess!" interrupted Frank, sharper and louder than before. This time Frank had Paul's attention.

"What do you mean?"

"I **do** want to fake my death" he replied, playing with his now empty glass.

Paul fell silent and waited a few seconds, allowing him to examine Frank's facial expression to see if he was serious. "How are you going to do that?"

Frank paused and took a deep breath - what he was about to suggest would change everything. Bracing himself for Paul's response, Frank slowly delivered his proposal. "What about your illusion machine? We can use it to fake my death." There was a deadly silence in the room as if someone, had in fact, passed away. It ended abruptly.

"No!" Paul blared without deliberation, standing up and walking a few paces across the room. Frank also stood up.

"Come on Paul, if this machine is as good as you say it is, then we can use it to help me."

"No, it's not going to happen," was Paul's flustered reply, but his strides up and down the living room were evidence that he had begun to consider Frank's idea seriously, although remained troubled by the possible consequences that consisted of more than just the permanent wear to his floor.

"I thought you were my friend Paul. They might kill me." Paul then stopped pacing. The final part of that statement left no doubt in Paul's mind, if there was any remaining, that Frank's proposition was a serious one. As his breathing became wheezy, Paul rummaged around in his pocket, produced his asthma inhaler and pumped on it hard. His mind was suddenly taken back to the incident in Marquette County when he was spotted in the quarry during the 'outside experiment'. As his airwaves cleared, he spoke in a croaky, yet dismissive voice.

"It is too risky."

"Please Paul, I need your help, or I am toast. Look what they did to me!" Frank babbled, pointing to his bruise as if Paul could no longer see it. "If your machine does what you say it does, then I don't see why we can't fake it? The sky is the limit with possibilities."

Paul turned his back on him, before swivelling his head to the right. "What about the police? They will be looking for a suspect and I don't want them knocking on my door."

"Yes, and they have three, my family." It was an obvious, yet malicious response. Paul turned around and looked at Frank with concerned eyes - he was being treated to a new side of him.

“What? Listen to what you are saying. I know your step-parents were bad to you but framing innocent people for a murder that hasn’t happened? Are you crazy?”

Frank did not answer the question directly, but his next words would help his cause. “The cops won’t suspect you Paul in a million years, you are a scientist and millionaire executive and besides that, why should they? You and I are good, close friends. People will testify to that.”

Paul felt a boiling sensation in the pit of his stomach and a sensation of dizzy listlessness. *Have I drunk some whiskey too?* Paul wanted to help him, but apart from framing Frank’s step-parents for something they did not do, something much more significant was at stake. Was it all worth further exposure of his machine? Frank had nothing more to say – his prolonged silence the greatest cry for a help yet. Paul held his hand up to his chin, massaged it gently and looked in the direction of his kitchen; but more importantly the garage beyond that and what it contained. He nodded, lowered his right-hand to stomach height and flicked his fingers with rapidity, prompting Frank to follow him. "Come with me," advised Paul, lowering his voice unnecessarily. He hoped he would not regret what he was about to do.

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Paul shot off out of the room leaving Frank to follow. For the first time in nearly twenty-four hours, Frank's face enjoyed a flash of optimism that it was traditionally used to, but which had abandoned him thanks to recent events. Things were about to get better, he could feel it.

Paul's journey took him through the kitchen and all the way to the garage where the fluorescence flooded the floor space and illuminated every corner. Frank frowned – despite the light, he could see no impressive piece of machinery, no technical wizardry and certainly no panacea to his problems. He looked at Paul with an expectant face before the latter made the short journey to the wall behind him to move an innocuous collection of what simply looked like rusted, discarded scrap. The homeowner's hand then hovered over a portion of the wall that was behind, before moving a small metal panel to one side, so perfectly concealed that it never looked as if it was there in the first place. The movement was significant because it revealed a pair of buttons – one red, one green. Paul hit the green one, a move that saw a section of the ground beneath their feet begin to open. In the middle of the garage's floor space, an opening appeared as two concrete segments slowly split apart, but the deep humming noise and that typically heavy feeling that accompanied it told of something more. A new hydraulic sound heralded a platform coming from sub-terrain depths that stopped with a judder once it got to ground level. As if a phoenix had risen from the ashes, resting on it was an unidentified object masked with tarpaulin, spread as if the caged bird underneath had its wings outstretched. Frank looked at his friend and raised an enjoyable smile. The outline had intrigued him and he was thirsty for more.

With a burst of energy, Paul whipped back the waxy sheath and Farley interpreted its alien lines for the first time. His eyes ran up its truncated legs, across the glossy mollusc-like shell, before he walked to the front of the machine to get a better look at its front. In his hand, Paul had a remote control and with a flick of a switch, its legs and antenna suddenly extended. Frank jumped back with shock. That was followed by a clicking sound where twelve separate missile shaped instruments appeared out of their previously hidden chutes positioned on all four sides of the machine. "It's like a...pebble," Frank whispered, "but maybe...."

"Okay watch this," Paul announced with excitable eyes as Frank's words faded to nothing. With another press of a button, something happened to give Frank a greater shock than the one that shook him several seconds ago. With a

mild whirring noise, something familiar appeared, yet abstract in format. A 1966 Mustang, partially built; but not because it had left the factory incomplete. Half of it was there, made up of diamond-shaped pixels, the rest was not. Suddenly the pixels merged and no borders remained, leaving a smooth, realistic body. But again, only half remained. By the time Frank blinked the car was complete and he found himself standing amongst it. He looked in awe, his jaw loose. With his head just overlooking the roof, he looked down, where he could see the car but could not feel any of the tangible material associated with a real one. As the concept of an entire vehicle surrounding him sunk into his brain, his legs felt numb as if the metal and glass of the real thing had conspired to sever them from the rest of his body. With eyes still fixed on the imaginary car, Frank walked a few more paces through the hologram towards Paul.

"I don't believe it," Frank muttered in disbelief, running his hands through his thinning hair before running them through the even thinner illusion to see them lost under the imaginary steel. His face was now ecstatic, with a bold grin as if he was one of the first prospectors in 1840's California, panning for gold who had just stumbled on his fortune.

"Good isn't it?" was the proud inventor's proclamation.

Good was an understatement. "Tell me more about it," Frank demanded, now so absorbed with this technical saviour that he had forgotten about his problem that had brought him there in the first place. Paul needed no encouragement and it was not long until he began discussing the technical specification of his inscrutable, new invention.

"What you are seeing is a reproduction of original objects, illuminated through laser light. Holograms such as this are made up of interference patterns, created between two beams of laser, reflected from those original objects. Those interference patterns encode and record the image, which then combines to engineer something I call the stereopsis effect."

"The stereo what?" Frank asked with a curled lip.

That smile was reciprocated by the machine's inventor who looked even more pleased that Frank had asked. "Stereopsis," Paul continued, engrossed in jargon, "is a term used to refer to the perception of depth of any object based on visual information seen through binocular vision, through the human eye for example. The machine produces images with full parallax, or visual displacement, giving the effect of a perfect three-dimensional structure."

"Wow," Frank enthused, his face lighting up - it was if all his problems had just faded into oblivion. "How does it all work?"

"The images you want to project are first recorded through a number of scanners that are positioned around the original scene or light field, which simultaneously project laser light to reproduce what is in effect, a reflection of

what was in that scene. That data is then uploaded to the illusion machine. Key to everything however, are the laser projectors," he explained, fingering one example at the front. "The stored digital display of these holograms is illuminated courtesy of the machine's internal laser light, which are then displayed externally through the twelve projectors that play back the original scene. This can be done, potentially, up to six hundred metres away, that's nearly two thousand feet, yet the projectors can still produce a perfect, three-dimensional image which can rarely be inhibited or distorted. It's virtual reality two point zero."

"Does it work outdoors?"

"Yes, I have completed tests outside," Paul relayed, recalling the ill-fated run in Marquette County.

"What images can it record?"

"Anything," Paul replied, looking serious. "Once the original, digital image is recorded, I can edit...dare I say manipulate those images thanks to a computer program I wrote so they can do, move or say whatever I want them to. The illusion machine has an internal hard drive that can store a wide range of holograms, including soundtrack."

"It's...it's amazing."

"It is. Its powers practically break the laws of physics, but like everything, it does have limitations. The images do have a schizophrenic personality, they look solid so as to absorb light, but in reality, molecularly, are made of little more than air, so produce no shadow. It's the greatest technological breakthrough as far as image development is concerned since the invention of the cathode-ray tube. But so it should, I have spent nearly six years of my life developing it. With a bit of imagination, it will certainly help you out of your problem."

"So are we going to do this, the fake murder I mean?"

Frank and Paul gazed at each other for what seemed like an eternity. "Frank, if we do this, you cannot tell anyone about it. I mean no-one."

"Listen, I am not going to tell anyone, believe me!" he babbled quickly, suppressing the recall of his admission about the machine to Conrad.

"Good."

"So, what are we going to do?"

In a matter of minutes, Paul had morphed from reluctant bystander to the main conspirator. "To put it simply Frank, we need a place, a time and plenty of witnesses, but more importantly we need a death where the body cannot realistically be found. As you won't really die, the death must occur in circumstances where no body can be potentially uncovered, which may mean we can only imply that a death has occurred. Remember all of this is just an image, with all the shortcomings that an image has. You can see it, but if you closed your

eyes you would feel nothing but air. So, if we are going to do this right, we can't afford to let anyone get close enough to the images to notice that they are not real."

"Yes, I understand," replied Frank, never realising that circumventing the truth would ever look this real.

"Have you got anything in mind?"

"No, but I can come up with something," responded Frank before pondering for a few seconds with eyes towards the floor. "Oh wait!" he shouted, his animated demeanour evidence that he had an idea.

"What?" Paul asked as he primed himself for Frank's plan.

"We could set a house on fire....that would be real," he began with waving arms and expansive eyes, "you could use your machine to generate an illusion of me rescuing a kid's dog or something, but fatally never returning." Judging from his less than enthusiastic body language, Paul was about to throw some cold water on Frank's fire plan.

"The fire department would expect to find your body."

"No problem, we get a dead body from the morgue and place it in the house before the fire starts."

"Steal a dead body? I don't think so," was Paul's adamant reply.

"I can do that then."

"Forget it. A pathologist will be able to determine that the body they find is the one stolen from the morgue from the records they keep. Height, dental records and DNA taken from the corpse will tell them it's the stolen body and not you."

"What about me falling into the Detroit River and being swept away?"

"That's no good either, what happens if someone jumps in after you? What happens if the current is not strong enough for you to be realistically swept away? It will look suspicious."

Frank looked frustrated. "Well, have you got any better ideas?!"

"Calm down Frank, we will come up with something."

"Make it quick, my family will track me down again very soon."

Looking rather disheartened, Frank exhaled vigorously during a lengthy gap where neither man said anything. The silence and an immediate lack of ideas prompted a lull in enthusiasm that afforded Frank some time to deliberate the morality of the plan - briefly seeding his mind with some doubt. "What do you think Chloe will say?"

"About what?"

"Me getting, killed?"

"It will obviously come as a huge shock to her. I think she still loves you."

With the 'love' word in the air, Frank's anxiety returned. "I need to tell her Paul before anything happens, I don't want her to worry unnecessarily."

“No!” Paul snapped immediately. “It might break our cover. Listen Frank, if you are serious about this then there are two stipulations you must abide by. One, no-one is to know about this, and second, you’ll have to go into hiding for about a year.”

“A year?!”

“Yes Frank, a year, and even after that, you will still have to keep a low profile outside of Michigan. If someone recognises you and your family find out, they won’t stop until they have tracked you down. Remember they have already acted quickly on the internet article so they mean business. Do you understand?” His words, and how he phrased them, haunted Frank and instilled a fear inside him he had not sensed since he was a child. Frank could do nothing else but nod.

“Yes.”

“Listen, after the illusion, I suggest you leave Michigan immediately. Hide your face wherever you go and pay for everything in cash as dead men tend not to use credit cards.” A rare element of sarcasm was heard in Paul’s voice belying the seriousness of the moment. “Don’t claim your lottery win either before the fake death because it will only make it look like your death and disappearance have been planned. Claim it in a year’s time when you have a new identity and all this is forgotten. I can give you some money to live on and in one month’s time, I will open a new bank account under the name John Smith for you to use. I will deposit the same amount in it every month for you to withdraw, sufficient for rent, fuel and food, but small enough to ensure that the police don’t start asking questions about it. After a year or so the issue will have hopefully blown over and the police will just have another missing person’s report to file. In twelve months, once you become more socially active, you can assume a completely new life, with a new name and address. I am sure that won’t be hard with twenty-eight million in the bank.”

“It’s still going to be tough.”

“I know, but it’s all worth it if you want the family off your back.”

Paul looked at Frank’s distant eyes – he looked as if he was having second thoughts. In a move that saw the tables turned, with Paul now driving the idea along and Frank reluctantly on board, the inventor reminded him of his predicament. “You do want your family off your back, don’t you?”

“Of course,” Frank affirmed.

Paul’s organised mind then stepped up another gear. “So, let us agree on a timeline here and now. After the fake murder, there is to be no contact between us for forty-eight hours, unless super urgent. I don’t want the police monitoring phone calls, they might get suspicious, so definitely don’t use the cell phone registered to you. In that time, I advise you to get out of Michigan. Once the

forty-eight hours expire, you ring me to tell me you are okay and then hang up. I don't want to know where you are or who you are with, it will only jeopardise the plan. We can agree to a drop-off point now, so in one month I can send you details of your new identity and bank account. After one year, you can think about re-emerging."

"It's like a second birth, isn't it?" was the philosophical response from Frank.

"It's certainly a new start," Paul replied, still weighing up possibilities, threats and consequences in his mind. He was risking a lot - but risking it for a friend that he cared about. Frank lingered on his last words for a few moments. He then looked up towards Paul, his face no longer distracted by his recent preoccupations.

"When should we do this?"

Paul whispered only four words. "As soon as possible."

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October 20th - 4:04 pm

The third Sunday in October initially brought with it a windy day. But as time ticked away - an impartial, carefree bystander - it faded. And with it, clouds as dark as night came to rest overhead, ensuring the premature installation of twilight conditions, quickly marginalising the autumnal sun, which now had little more to do other than slip quietly under the Michigan horizon.

Despite the conditions, the street was reasonably busy with activity that day, but not excessively so that a non-random event would be lost in a world of inconspicuousness and go unnoticed. At five minutes past the hour, a casually-dressed Frank Farley appeared, standing on the corner where East Lafayette Street was intersected by Beaubien Street. But what was more noticeable about Farley on this occasion, even more than his appearance in a fedora, was the small attaché case he had handcuffed to his left wrist. Farley took a deep breath, walked to the edge of the sidewalk and peered up at the buildings surrounding him. He gripped the handle of his attaché case tightly and began to walk down the street with a sanguine look on his face. It was one that would not last. In the near distance, some fifty feet ahead of Frank, a figure emerged from an adjacent alleyway. He was dressed in a dark hooded cloak that was draped over his head. That revealed little more than a black shadow that effortlessly masked his face and a haunting outline that seemed purged of any good. It looked as if he was a monk or some religious figure from a bygone era, yet he glided along the floor unnaturally as if he was an ungodly spirit. Despite other people in Frank's immediate eyeline, the figure stood out and seized his attention instantly. He then turned to face Frank head on and slithered slowly closer. Suddenly a gruff voice ripped through the airwaves with Frank's name in it. "Hey Farley!" the voice from the mystery man cried. Frank looked to see the tall hooded figure now heading with some resolve in his direction. "Hey Farley I am coming to get you!" he shouted, loud enough to alert most of the vicinity's passers-by, whilst pointing his index finger ominously towards Frank. It was the only flesh the man exposed. Already close by, the hooded man was zeroing in fast.

Frank began to walk in the opposite direction from his unidentified pursuer in tenacious fashion, which soon saw him sprinting away. His unbridled run saw him flee south down Beaubien Street, weaving in and out of other pedestrians with an expression on his face that clearly displayed the desperate desire for self-preservation. Suddenly, Frank felt a pounding grip on his shoulder that stopped him running. He spun around. The hooded man had caught up with him and the dark void inside his hood looked as if it was about to swallow Frank whole. “No!!” Frank screamed, as the bystanders stood by and simply watched. The hooded man tried to snatch the attaché case but realising that it was handcuffed to Frank’s wrist, immediately let go of it. With Frank now free from his clutches, he turned around and ran on.

His running had stepped up a gear by the time he turned left down East Fort Street, never looking behind him once to see if his pursuer had gained any ground on him. Frank then turned right and entered a thin alleyway in between two buildings marked with the words:

Le Meurtre

painted in graffiti. Frank stopped here, leaned against the wall and held his briefcase tightly against his chest with his arms folded across it. He then took a quick look behind him by shifting his head sharply around the edge of the wall. His eyes scanned the light crowd of people situated in the street and then paused for a moment. There seemed to be no sign of the hooded figure. Frank put his lips together to exhale and appeared to celebrate his reprieve by rubbing the cool leather of the attaché case across his sweat-laden forehead. Under heavy breathing, Frank sank to his knees, looked up to the heavens and afforded himself a hearty laugh. He then opened a door housed in the side of the building behind him and disappeared through it. On the other side was a dusty, barely furnished room, with one unexpected addition. Frank picked up a solitary walkie-talkie sitting on a worn stool and spoke into it. “Okay Paul, I’m ready.”

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No one saw Frank Farley leave that building off East Fort Street. Yet by some miracle, he reappeared five minutes later, albeit invisibly, and made the final few steps to the corner of East Lafayette and Beaubien, which is where he chose to stop. In the blink of an eye, a large, black 1968 Lincoln Continental with smoked windows materialised, crisscrossed past two stationary cars and crept stealthily to the corner where Frank was standing. Frank had been so busy looking behind him that he failed to notice the dark sedan silently encroach on his personal space in front of him. The sedan mounted the kerb before coming to a stop. The dark looming mass of the automobile could not escape Farley's attention for long and as he spun around, his gaze soon shifted to the back window that electrically lowered to reveal a familiar looking figure. In the passenger compartment sat the hooded figure. Unexpectedly, the sun then made its final, albeit brief reappearance of the day, streaking low across the street, but never mapping out even the smallest detail of the hooded man's face.

The hooded man then pointed a large pistol out of the open window towards Farley. Frank backed away hesitantly, clutching the briefcase with both hands as if his life depended on it. News of the gun had infected the dozen or so bystanders by the cacophonous tone of their screams. Whether captivated by the sheer morbid perverseness of events or gripped with the intense fear of moving just an inch, those who chose to stay were riveted solely by the standoff. Frank backed off further and looked behind him down Beaubien Street where he had just come from. *Run! Run!* Frank's expression seemed to be saying. But before he could convert that decision into motion, the man in the car stretched out his right arm, aimed his pistol at Frank and mercilessly fired two shots. The two blasts reverberated through the street with a chilling echo, drowned out only by the haunting screams from the remaining witnesses. Farley looked down at his chest and stomach where the bullets had entered, emitted a muted groan and then fell to the ground. The assassin immediately got out of the car and waved his gun at the crowd before approaching the stricken figure. That movement was enough to galvanise the remaining witnesses on the scene to move a safer distance away, as if they were being taunted by a pack of hungry wolves. The hooded man grabbed Farley with relative ease and propelled his felled body through the car's open door and onto the back seat. The shooter then got back into the Lincoln which roared off down Lafayette, where it turned quickly into St. Antoine Street only to disappear.

As the proverbial smoke faded at the scene of the crime, the first police vehicles appeared about six or seven minutes later. A patrol car came to rest next to where Farley fell, two police officers burst out of it and immediately responded to the flood of apprehension coming from the dozen eyewitnesses. With the cauldron of panic and confusion as to what happened still fresh, multiplying with every second as a greater concentration of people began to assemble to feed on the growing hysteria, no one spotted a man with a stooped head dressed in a thick waterproof walk towards one of the three police cars. The thick hood of his jacket was erect, effortlessly shielding his identity. The man took out a black wallet from his pocket, proceeded to place it on the front of a police car and then casually blended into the background.

Closer to the incident, one of the police officers stopped interviewing one of the witnesses, turned around and made his way back towards his vehicle. He paused as the outline of the wallet immediately took his eye; the black leather stood out prominently against the white paint on the car's hood. The officer picked it up and flicked through it, taking out the relevant particulars, starting with the driver's licence. He looked at the photograph of the man on it and his eyes then shifted to scan the name and address. The wallet and the credentials in it belonged to Frank Farley.

Over five hundred feet away, the man in the waterproof lifted his head only slightly and glanced back. He walked a few more paces and entered a deserted building further down Lafayette Street. The man then skipped up the hollow stairs two at a time onto a darkened second-floor, before opening a locked door. That move allowed the corridor to enjoy some much-needed light as it came streaming in from this new chamber; but it would only be temporary, as the figure closed it again once inside.

In the corner of a barren room of cracked walls and exposed floorboards, a machine stood, occupying roughly one-quarter of the floor space. It was situated next to a large, exposed window area, which was not boarded up, but instead had most of the glass removed, along with the some of the surrounding brickwork. The window overlooked the street below - exactly where Farley's shooting had taken place. The machine was still whirring as the man pressed a few buttons on an instrument in his hand, which witnessed its twelve inverted prisms fall

simultaneously back into the black shell, each covered slowly by their eyelid-like cover. The man wandered over to the window, peered down to the busy street below and stroked the purring machine as if it was his pet. The people down there looked like just ants and for a moment, he relegated them to just that. Two seconds later, the individual took down the hood and removed the waterproof altogether, so that the figure now resembled the monk-like assassin from the car. His hands then removed that hood to finally reveal his identity.

As Paul Kehoe watched more police cars appear to cordon off the scene of the 'crime,' he could hear Frank's laughter in the distance over the thick sound of sirens. Paul then pulled away from the window and walked over towards a laptop computer plugged into the side of his illusion machine. Paul's fingers then danced across the keyboard as he began the process of powering down his prized asset. He watched the antenna retract, before its insect-like legs truncated sharply, allowing the machine to stoop towards the floor. Watching him in control of his machine was like watching a master at work at the height of his professional powers; like Mozart putting the finishing touches to his latest symphony, like Marconi with his first radio. In fact, it seemed as if it had gone beyond that now, as if the machine had become a personal extension of the man who had invented it, like man and machine had become one. Paul's expression then evolved into one of self-congratulation that seemed to have no end.

But through the room's only door that had somehow slipped fractionally open, a pair of eyes took advantage of its narrow slit, to cast an envious glare in the direction of Paul's miracle machine.