

-|- DELTA GREEN SECURE SERVER v24.9 -|- FILE VIEWER 3.2 -|- PGP DECODING ENABLED -|- WATCH YOUR BACK JOE -|-

Received: from ASX55.COM (10.199.28.51) by ASX55HMPS303.Sorebrek.COM (10.197.152.98) with Microsoft SMTP Server (TLS) id 14.2.309.2; Mon, 08 Apr 2002 06:26:39 -0500

Received: from asxssl104.Sorebrek.COM (10.197.152.153) by asx7s303.Sorebrek.COM (10.164.14.41) with Microsoft SMTP Server id 3.3.4.1; Mon, 08 Apr 2002 06:26:36 -0500

Authentication-Results: asxssl104.Sorebrek.COM;

X-SBRSIP: 174.9.22.2

X-SBRS: 5.6

X-HAT: Sender Group None, Policy \$ACCEPTED applied.

X-MAIL-FROM: x@socom.mil

X-RCPT-TO: X@Sorebrek.COM

X-LoopCount0: from 199.199.201.4

X-IronPort-Anti-Spam-Filtered: true

X-IronPort-Anti-Spam-Result:

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X-IronPort-AV: E=Sophos;i="4.90,885,137109";

d="scan'208,217";a="14223"

Received: from vlaw.socom.mil (HELO NVZRJ02-N.private) ([199.199.103.222]) by ausxssl104.Sorebrek.COM with ESMTPTLS/AES128-SHA; 08 Apr 2002 06:26:14 -0500

Received: from dagnvzr.socom.mil ([174.234.1.279]) by CASNVZR.socom.mil ([214.1.4.111]) with mapi id 1.127.13218.000; Mon, 08 Apr 2002 07:26:35 -0400

From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Missing Canary>

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Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Mon, 08 Apr 2002 11:26:12 +0000

Message-ID: <766C3DHF2hj38ah378hajdbaE0C@dagnvzr-n.socom.mil >

Accept-Language: en-US

Content-Language: en-US

X-MS-Has-Attach:

X-MS-TNEF-Correlator:

x-originating-ip: [111.25.1.245]

Content-Type: multipart/alternative;

Alphonse,

I think we've got a situation developing. One of my canaries just pulled a Judge Crater.

Here's the skinny:

The canary's name is Luther Marks, a history instructor at Loyola University in New Orleans. He's a Jesuit Father, been around the planet twice and seen some seriously bad shit. And not just the usual genocides and nazi-style anti-insurgency campaigns you get in those perpetually doomed Third-world toilets. He's seen our particular brand of seriously bad shit too.

I first used Father Marks as a researcher on a night at the opera in New Orleans six years ago, the Krewe

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of Cassilda situation. Without him we would never have gotten Pomeroy locked up at Southeast Louisiana Hospital in Mandeville. Marks kept an eye on Pomeroy afterwards and warned us during the winter of '99 about his second attempt to manifest the King. Father Marks is not squeamish about the work we do. He kept watch for the hospital staff while Agent Charlie and I performed the trans-ocular lobotomy on Pomeroy.

Father Marks has been the perfect New Orleans canary. He's a local and is well versed on all the dirt the local families, politicians and notables are carrying around with them. Plus he is an excellent researcher. Fluent in Latin, French, and Spanish, not to mention a half-dozen defunct medieval languages. He has first-rate contacts with the various departments at Loyola, the Archdiocese, and Tulane University. Without those contacts in the Archeology Dept. at Tulane, we wouldn't have been able to intervene as quickly as we did when that "Jade Skirt" thing started drinking blood back in '98. No telling how high the body count could have gone if he hadn't detected and reported the preternatural elements of the case.

So, short version is that he's sharp, reliable, and doesn't jump at shadows. He's never sent us anything he didn't thoroughly check out first, so when I get a tip from him I know its solid. He's even sniffed out one or two of our operations in progress, which I dutifully brushed him off of.

Anyway, the last couple of months something has been making Father Mark nervous. He dropped some hints the last couple of times we communicated through the dead drop, but wouldn't give me any details. He kept insisting that he just wasn't ready, that he wanted to be sure before he made a fool of himself.

This morning I went to service the dead drop in Audubon Park and what I found alarmed me. The text transcribes as follows:

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"Graham,

4/6/02

"I know you've told me you cannot answer questions about the Group, [It's what he calls us. I've never shared anything with him about Delta Green, but he's pretty much figured out we're public sector and that our mission is geared towards dealing with paranormal threats to public safety and national security that other agencies aren't equipped to handle.] but perhaps you can ask yourself this question about the Group:

"What's the biggest crisis the Group is capable of handling? At what point are events simply beyond your peoples' means to control? That may seem like an odd question, but it's one that has been occupying my every waking thought for the last weeks.

"I'm afraid that the secret I've stumbled onto may be too big, too deep, and too old. I can't say much here, except that it has to do with New Orleans politics and corruption. And when I say corruption, I'm not talking about the usual bribes and kickbacks. I'm talking about the stink of the rotting dead.

"It's a singularly loathsome secret, my old friend. A secret that may be the underlying foundation of this festering, over-built swamp we call a city.

"Maybe it was planned this way from the beginning? All the way back to 1718, when Nouvelle-Orleans was nothing more than a cluster of shanties built by convict labor? Even in those first days, this was a city of slow death and debauchery. Yellow Fever, sometimes called "Yellow Jack," regularly boiled out of the swamps to ravage the population. While the last great epidemic was in 1905, for two centuries the plague season from

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July to October was the dominating principle of every resident's life. Young or old, rich or poor, everyone bowed before Yellow Jack. The outbreaks between 1850 and 1855 were the worst, with something like ten percent of the city's population dying every year. Of course, at the same time, New Orleans was at the pinnacle of its power, wealth and influence as the most important port in the nation.

"At first I thought that there was a connection between the city's economic success and the plagues, as if the plague victims were sacrifices to some hungry god to ensure a successful harvest. But now I think the cadavers themselves are really the fuel for some terrible engine.

"Before I can tell you what I think is going on, I need proof. Otherwise I'm just another conspiracy theorist crank. New Orleans has had more than its fair share of those, and I don't care to be lumped in with the likes of Jim Garrison. Even so, I couldn't take the chance that something could happen to me before our next scheduled dead drop. Maybe this is just high drama. I can't seem to differentiate between paranoia and prudence.

"If anything happens to me before my next dead drop, I urge you to look hard at the circumstances, no matter what they may appear to be or who may presents the facts to you. I'm on to something and I feel as if they are also on to me."

"L.M."

The drop was dated two days ago. Or at least the letter was. I have no clue when he dropped his letter off, but having read it I immediately called him. He isn't a paranoid. He isn't prone to fearful ranting. To get something like that from him means that he's into something he needs help getting out of immediately.

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When I called, he didn't answer at his shotgun in the Black Pearl, but the N.O.P.D. did. Seems the Crescent City's finest had turned up on an anonymous tip and the patrolmen had seen a child porn tape playing on the TV through the front window. Felony in sight, they forced the door, seized the tape, and made a search of the premises for Father Marks. Unable to locate him, the uniforms called the detectives and got a warrant to search the rest of the place. I badged my way in and checked the place out.

The locals had found a pile of kiddie porn. Whoever planted it did a shitty job of making it look like it wasn't meant to be found. It was just piled up on shelves in his closet. The cops had already bundled his computer up. They were into all his books, just bundling things up and tossing it into cardboard file boxes. I took a quick look around trying to see if there was anything obvious that might suggest what Father Marks was working on. I decided not to waste too much time. Whoever bad jacketed the Father had probably already given the house the twice over. If he had any notes, they'd be gone. The computer might be wiped clean too. Won't know until we get access to the N.O.P.D. evidence room. I'll get to work on that through my people.

So here's the wish list.

First, this should be reprioritized as an Opera. Maybe Father Marks just ran afoul of some bent city councilman or mob mouth-breather, but we have to be sure, and fast. I want to call in the rest of my Cell: Garret and Gillian. I could also use some back up. Agents, Friendlies or soldiers of fortune, I don't care who they are as long as they have some experience in New Orleans. I don't want to have to waste any time bringing anyone up to speed on the way things work in this open sewer.

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Second, I want the locations and combinations of the New Orleans area Green Boxes and safe houses. I know a few of them, but I want to make sure that I know all of them.

Third, I'm going to need one of Wu's tech geeks to get into the computer system at Loyola. We need access to Father Marks' account, there's no telling what we might find in there. Also, if Wu can manage it, I'll need credit card records, phone records and Internet account traffic on Marks.

Fourth, I'm off to burglarize Father Marks' office at the University. If I can. I'd rather get in there before the guys who did this to him have a chance to clean it out, or the Crescent City's finest contaminate the scene.

And Fifth, maybe you know what's the biggest crisis we're capable of handling? Because I sure don't.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

boundary="_000_7623874jhsj3782hsdkndnmzali829776jj02nje_"

MIME-Version: 1.0

Return-Path: <GRAHAM>

X-MS-Exchange-Organization-AuthSource:

AUSX7.Sorebrek.COM

X-MS-Exchange-Organization-AuthAs: Internal

X-MS-Exchange-Organization-AuthMechanism: 10

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Opera Tickets>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Mon, 08 Apr 2002 11:45:19 +0000

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Alphonse,

This is now a full fledged Night at the Opera. Get on the horn. Get G cell in here pronto.

I left Father Marks' place to the locals and rushed over to his office in Bobet Hall. His junker was parked in faculty parking. I Slim-Jim-ed the door, popped the hood and yanked the distributor cap. I knew the kiddie porn wrap was bullshit, but thought he still might rabbit on me. Kiddie porn tends to make folks' brains turn off and their emotions turn on. It's why it's so good for bad-jacketing a target.

And if it wasn't Father Marks I wanted to make sure that whoever was driving his car around didn't make a quick getaway.

The rent-a-cops were no problem to avoid. Physical security was a little tougher. When I got to Father Marks' office it was lit up and I could hear someone inside. They were quiet, so I knew they weren't cops. I screwed

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the suppressor onto my SOCOM .45 and engaged the slide lock. No reason to wake the kids, right? The hall was dark and the only light was coming from the open doorway to Father Marks' office.

Bear with me on this, Alphonse, okay? This is what I saw. No bull, no embellishment.

What I saw stepping out of the office was Father Marks dressed in a white suit, red tie, long coat. That threw me for a second. Father Marks is usually all sweaters and tweed, but despite the outfit it was definitely him. His arms were full of books and papers. When he saw me, he looked like he'd just been caught coming out of the ladies' room. Then he smiled with relief, called my code name and sputtered something about how the charges against him weren't true and that he was being set up.

Then, out of the corner of my eye, I saw it. The lights from Marks' office were throwing a shadow against the opposite wall of the hallway. Note that I said "a shadow." Not "Father Marks' shadow." It was something bigger than Father Marks; something crouched, with broad shoulders; something with a long canine muzzle. I think it smelled the rush of adrenaline through me, because it sniffed the air and that disarming smile fell off its face. It followed my eyes to its shadow and then it moved.

What happened next was almost too fast. It threw the books and papers right at my face just as I got off a shot. I think I put a frangible in it just above the belt-line, but the papers and books hit me in the chest and I lost sight of it for a second as it shot back through the office door. It was across the office, over the desk and out the window, face-first, and two stories down to the shrubbery before I could get into the office after it. By the time I got to the window, it was on its feet and running across the quad towards St. Charles Avenue. At that range I didn't waste a second shot. With all the noise from it going through the window I figured I

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didn't have long before the rent-a-cops turned up. I grabbed the papers and books and got out of there. Don't worry, I policed up my brass.

I know I hit it. It left a trail of blood across the office and out the window. I don't know what the cops are going to make of the blood, but it sure looked red enough to be terrestrial. Didn't smell weird either. I didn't have time to gather a proper sample, but managed to grab a sheet of paper with a few spatters on it. Maybe Dr. Emerson can make something out of it.

Once the campus police report the break in, the Father's car is going to be impounded. Probably already is. I'll get on my N.O.P.D. contacts about getting a look inside after I get a few hours of shut-eye.

I'm in the French Quarter safe-house. Get G cell in here. And get us something with more punch than I found at the Green Box on Magazine Street. A frangible .45 in the guts should have slowed it down, but that thing went out the window like Dar Robinson and sprinted off like Bruce Jenner.

And the noise it made when I shot it wasn't human. It roared like an animal.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Cauterization Recommended>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Thu, 11 Apr 2002 04:34:18 +0000

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Alphonse,

The situation here is looking worse.

First off, my contacts with the NOPD have dried up. Nobody is willing to give me any access to the Father Marks investigation. I can't get at the impounded car, or any of the police reports or any of the evidence seized from Father Marks' home or office. In fact, one of my contacts suggested that I get out of town.

I can't say as I disagree. Whether Father Marks was infested by something, or whether something was wearing his skin, it called to me by my code name. That means they, whoever they are, know me by sight and by code name, at the very least. I have to assume that they know everything about me that Father Marks knew. It isn't much, but I've been avoiding all the places I ever met Father Marks, no matter how briefly.

This may mean that whoever or whatever they are, they also know about any other Agents and friendlies the

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Father had contact with. Those include:

Agent Charlie

Agent Cyrus

Agent Grendel (MIA)

Agent Gaston (deceased)

Dr. Fulani from Berkeley

And that Mason kid from Chicago

They need to be warned.

It's a shame that FBI-USPS-Customs kiddie-porn task force isn't up and running anymore. Thanks to UBL it's getting hard to find any federal agency that hasn't tossed aside its other missions to chase terrorists. I would have liked to get someone to take a stroll through the NOPD's file on Father Marks, although I doubt they'd find anything useful to us. According to Father Mark's neighbors, the father was seen loading up his car with papers and boxes on the afternoon of the 7th, just a few hours before the cops kicked his door in. One of the neighbors said he had help from at least two other men. She described the Father as being dressed out of character; white suit, red tie. Chances are the only stuff the NOPD found was whatever his abductors left behind to frame him. I suppose we should still take another stab at the NOPD files nevertheless. You'll have to arrange for it from your end.

My compliments to Wu's Tiger Team. They really came through fast on the web cache and the contents of Father Marks' faculty computer account. Whoever our "They' du jour" is, they used the Father's account to delete

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everything that was in there. That in itself tells me that they don't know shit about computers. Unless you go after the mainframe and every other peripheral system with a flame-thrower and an industrial magnet, "delete" really just means "hide." Plenty of the recovered data is just stuff related to his teaching position at the university, so it's slow going.

As for his online research, there is a pattern to it. I don't know if Wu cc'd them to you, but here is a sample of the kind of stuff he was looking at:

http://story.news.yahoo.com/news?tmpl=story&u=/ap/20020405/ap_on_re_us/illegal_crematorium_1&cid=533

<http://sg.news.yahoo.com/020219/1/2imn5.html>

http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/world/americas/newsid_1828000/1828385.stm

<http://www.theadvocate.com/opinion/story.asp?StoryID=4060>

http://neworleans.citysearch.com/search?type=dgrid&c_id=130&cats=289&dlink=1&sorted=rank-desc&start=41

<http://nutrias.org/facts/feverdeaths.htm>

<http://lsm.crt.state.la.us/cabildo/cab8a.htm>

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/su/med/histmed/yellowfever.html>

http://www.rootsweb.com/~usgenweb/la/orleans/death_epid.htm

I did find something interesting in his email from about a month ago. Father Marks was trying to arrange a meeting with a woman named Dolores De La Cruz. He was emailing Sofia Fernandez, a curator of the Islenos Cultural Center downriver in St. Bernard Parrish, to make the arrangements. The Islenos are Canary Islanders the Spanish crown dumped here after they boosted Louisiana off the French. We're going to go down there tomorrow and pay Fernandez a visit, see if she can lead us to De La Cruz.

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The books Mark's doppelganger was trying to lift from his office are personal journals from the 19th century. I skimmed a couple and found that Father Marks marked many of the passages related to the yellow fever outbreaks in the early 1850s. One thing particularly stands out. The journals all mention some kind of scandalous book that was being circulated during the outbreaks. The title was La Fete du Monde Nouveau -- "The Celebration of the New World" is how Agent Gillian translates that. However, she also says that "fete" can also mean a "feast" or a "dinner party." The journals are in pretty bad shape, so reading them is slow going.

Among the papers are legal documents recording the chain of ownership of the various funeral homes and mortuaries in and around New Orleans. There are also survey maps of the city, from the date of its founding to the present. Not all the city, mind you. Mostly just the cemeteries, but it looks like he was also interested in some of the islands in the Mississippi where Yellow Fever victims were interred and their bodies dumped.

More news soon.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Moscow Rules>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Fri, 12 Apr 2002 00:23:53 +0000

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Alphonse,

We just got back from St. Bernard Parrish. Dolores De La Cruz is dead. She had a heart attack on the morning of April 9th, just a few weeks shy of her 112th birthday. No one seemed particularly surprised. The staff at the nursing home was not sure of the exact time of death, but they are sure that it wasn't long after she had a visit from a pair of NOPD plainclothes detectives. We got names and descriptions. They sound like the same two men that helped "Father Marks" move out of his shotgun. The names they were using were Det. Sgt. John Hagan and Det. Sgt. Charles Eishold. Middle aged white guys in suits with badges.

Whoever these assholes are, they are systematically trying to erase all of Father Marks' leads. Their thoroughness and accuracy is making me think that they still have him hidden away someplace and are working him over with a rubber hose. Or something.

As for the NOPD's files, word from the Agent Ulysses is that the local cops have nothing that even hints at

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what Father Marks was working on. The Father's personal computer hard-drive was deleted, but the locals are dragging their feet on the data recovery. There was plenty of child porn, but Ulysses seemed to think it looked a little too pristine. He also noted that the NOPD was extremely hostile to his presence. They actually had an officer stay with him the whole time he read the case file and wouldn't let him make copies. "For security reasons," they said. If the NOPD had anything useful, it's my opinion that they handed it off to the opposition. The New Orleans cops don't have their reputation for nothing. How many police forces have had to disband their Internal Affairs Unit because of epidemic levels of corruption?

From here on out we are playing by Moscow Rules.

New Orleans should be considered enemy held territory and the authorities a hostile force.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Bayou Bogeymen>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Sat, 13 Apr 2002 21:45:41+0000

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Alphonse,

After a day of digging through useless emails and term papers from Father Marks' university account, I re-interviewed Dr. Sophia Fernandez.

When we first spoke, all I asked Dr. Fernandez was whether she had put Father Marks together with Dolores de la Cruz and whether she knew what the two of them talked about. She didn't know the substance of their conversation, as the Father had insisted upon privacy. She also couldn't venture a guess as to why Father Marks had been interested in talking with De La Cruz. I had left it at that, but then it struck me that while Dr. Fernandez couldn't tell me why De La Cruz was of interest to Father Marks, she could tell me why the old woman was important to the Islenos Cultural Center.

Seems Dr. Fernandez is an ethnographer and linguist and one of her projects is tape-recording native speakers of the Islenos' Spanish dialect. It's a dying language, with fewer and fewer speakers every year

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as the older generations die off. Dolores De La Cruz was one of Dr. Fernandez's favorite subjects for making these recordings.

There are hundreds of hours of tapes of De La Cruz telling stories and singing songs in the Islenos dialect. Luckily for us, Dr. Fernandez did an amazing job cataloging them by content and subject matter. Even better, Dr. Fernandez created transcripts of the conversations with English translations. It didn't take long to find that there are several hours of tape where De La Cruz describes the 1905 Yellow Fever outbreak.

And here's where we hit paydirt.

De Le Cruz was a young girl at the time of the outbreak, fifteen years old. Living out in Saint Bernard Parish kept her and her family out of the way of the brunt of the outbreak, but the plague did spill out of New Orleans. She had an older brother named Fidel who worked the fishing boats, but also trapped when he couldn't get other work. She thinks it was in August of 1905 that she and her brother went out on his pirogue into the bayous to lay his traps. The two of them came across a huge, rusty old barge that was anchored on Lake Lery. They smelled it long before they saw the quarantine flags hanging from it. De La Cruz said that her father had warned her about approaching such barges during the plague season. During the outbreaks of the 19th century, those not wealthy enough to be buried immediately were tossed onto barges and floated down river where they would later be dumped into mass graves. Her father had told her and her siblings stories that such barges were to be avoided as the 'miasma' of the fever hung over them.

Dolores' brother Fidel was sure that the stench of death would attract every alligator, nutria and raccoon for miles around and wanted to put out his traps nearby. They did so, and Fidel went back alone over the next

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couple of days to recover plenty of animals. One night however, Fidel didn't come home until just before dawn, and when he did, he was pale as a ghost and shaking like he had the fever. Her brother could hardly speak and at first they feared that he did indeed have 'Yellow Jack.' They called for a doctor who told them that Fidel was suffering from some kind of nervous exhaustion, not the fever. It took days before he was able to speak clearly and calmly, and when he could speak he flatly refused to tell what happened to him on Lake Lery. Fidel did, however, warn Dolores never to go out to that barge ever again: "lest she imperil her very soul."

Dolores tried to get Fidel to speak of what he saw, but he kept silent for decades. Whatever he saw deeply affected him. He lost all interest in people and the community around him and became a bit of a hermit. In 1943, Fidel was dying of lung cancer, having smoked himself into an early grave. He had few besides his family to attend to him at the end, and when he had received the last rights he asked that Dolores be sure that he would be buried at sea.

This next part was not transcribed by Dr. Fernandez. She left this story out of the transcripts because she found it too lurid, embarrassing and probably the result of Fidel's mental illness, which the good doctor believes was an undiagnosed paranoid schizophrenia. I had to get her to translate the tape as it played.

Fidel wanted to be buried at sea because he wanted to be sure that 'they' did not defile his body after his death. When Dolores asked him who he was talking about, he told her the story of what he had seen that night in 1905 when he had come to check on his traps. He said he was returning home late, after dark. It was then that he heard the sounds of music on the lake. A yacht of some kind was coming down the river from New Orleans. It was brightly lit and there was a band on board playing some kind of classical string quartet music. Watching from the cypress trees, Fidel saw the yacht moor itself next to the plague barge and the twenty or so people

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on board transfer over. Fidel described them as beautiful young men and women. They laughed and shouted as they stumbled over to the barge, carrying wine bottles, singing and lasciviously pawing each other. Fidel could not imagine that anyone could ever be so drunk as to board a plague barge, but one other detail struck him as even more bizarre. All the people were extremely well dressed, but their clothes were out of date. The quote from the tape was "like something from plantation times."

Once aboard the plague barge the party continued in earnest. The sounds that emerged were like those of a raucous, drunken Mardi Gras ball. Despite his horror, Fidel watched, mesmerized by such an un-Christian display. Finally, for reasons he could not explain, he chose to venture closer, silently rowing his pirogue up to the side of the barge opposite the yacht. He could hear splashing noises as he approached. Fairly regularly small objects were being tossed over the side of the barge. The new moon provided little illumination, so he was unable to get a good look at what he these things were that were splashing lightly into the black river water until one landed in his boat. It was a human femur. It still had scraps of fetid meat attached and showed signs of having been gnawed on by some terrible beast.

Fidel ascribed his deliverance to the intervention of the blessed Virgin who stilled the scream in his throat and allowed him to quietly steal away.

Lucky bastard.

And there's one more point for our team. Father Marks didn't know about these tapes. He only knew that De La Cruz was a resource of the Isleno Cultural Center and that she had been interview by local historians on several occasions because of her excellent recollections and eloquence. So if he didn't know, perhaps 'They'

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don't know either.

Nevertheless, I did my best to warn Dr. Fernandez that she might be in some danger. I also gave her the whole "I was never here and we never had this conversation" shtick. I have to admit, ever since 911 people take that James Bond shit a lot more seriously. She seemed dubious, but assured me she would be careful and call me if Father Marks, those two NOPD cops, or anyone else comes asking after those tapes.

So, who do we have that knows anything about necrophagia?

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Not Helping>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Tue, 16 Apr 2002 13:54:04 +0000

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Alphonse,

N Cell turned up two days ago and I can't say I'm happy to see them. Nick and Nolan have all the animation of a set of bookends. You told me Nancy was your subject matter expert and that I should follow her advice, but she's about as communicative as a stone gargoyle. Her only advice has been to tell me to stay out of her team's way. You know, sending me an expert isn't doing me any goddamn good if she won't tell me what the hell is going on.

Don't bother shining me on, I know she's filing separate reports with you. Nancy and her bookends went out on the town last night and wouldn't tell us where they went or what they did. They won't even let anyone into the rooms they're using at the safe house.

And what's with the packages that keep getting FedExed in from Maryland; one a day for the last three days. Nolan just about slapped the last one out of Gillian's hands when she picked it up this morning.

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I understand compartmentalized security, but if you've got these three in here executing a different agenda it could compromise my investigation and endanger my team. I want this bullshit to stop immediately. If they are under orders not to cooperate then get them out of my safe house. They're not helping and whatever they are up to is just going to end up all over my people.

You understand that if something you hold back gets any of my people hurt, you will be a very unhappy old man. Do I make myself clear?

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

P.S. Just to show you I can do more than bitch, we have determined that "Det. Sgt. John Hagan" and "Det. Sgt. Charles Eishold" aren't NOPD officers. Despite them flashing a pair of shiny NOPD badges, there are no officers on the NOPD rolls with those names. So, if you're looking for a silver lining, maybe it's that we won't have to kill any cops this time.

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Better Than Nothing>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Thu, 08 Apr 2002 17:29:18 +0000

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Alphonse,

Your glasnost hasn't been what I'd hoped it would be. Agent Nancy's newfound candor isn't exactly thrilling me either. You'll pardon me if I make my own enquiries. If you're happy with us wasting our time looking for info you've already got but won't share, then that's the way it's going to be.

I ran Theodore Morse through the computers at Quantico, Langley and Ft. Meade. He's a un-person from 1989 onward, presumed dead by the NOPD and declared legally dead in 1999 by his family. While I'm surprised that more reporters in this town don't end up as gator bait, this is the first time I've heard of the society columnist getting Cratered.

I looked through his old columns at the Times-Picayune. He wasn't exactly the hard-hitting expose type, but he knew a lot of people and he got a lot of invitations. He could have stumbled into this necrophage business anywhere.

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Nancy hasn't explained anything more than to say that when Morse disappeared, he left behind a manuscript that described inhuman creatures that fed on human corpses and could steal the memories and appearance of anyone they consumed. She claims to have seen creatures like this in New Orleans and elsewhere, but won't say much more.

What she did say jibes with what I saw in Father Marks's office. Put out an all-Cell alert. Anyone who sees Father Marks should use the first opportunity they have to take him out. And make sure to mention that a single .45 caliber frangible won't do the trick. But what does Nancy mean about certain books being toxic? I know some of these texts can be like unexploded munitions, but again, without more information we have no idea what we should be avoiding.

I think that what Father Marks was doing with this research on the funeral home business was trying to define the feeding patterns of these necrophages. Their tactics would have had to evolve during the last century because, even discounting the epidemics, the mortality rate in urban areas has dropped precipitously since then. We have to figure that to support a large population of these things, there would have to be excellent coordination of the supply of cadavers. That means the necrophages would have to control the funeral homes in their area.

Furthermore the funeral home business in America is changing radically. Someone somewhere figured out that 300 million Americans equals 300 million customers. And that number is always growing. The funeral home industry always pushes for laws ensuring that you can't get planted unless they can make a buck on the deal. Burial is rated the third largest lifetime expense, right behind house and car. With all those customers forced to buy this service, big, well-financed corporations are moving in and buying up all those family run

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funeral homes, trying to squeeze more money out with that economy of scale stuff.

There's a big outfit in Texas called Service Corporation International. They're the ones wrapped up with our commander-in-chief over what's being called 'funeral-gate.' There's another one here in Louisiana called Tsuart Enterprises. They've been trying to buy out the funeral homes in New Orleans for years, but they've been held at bay by another LA outfit called Mortuary Small Business Association, which is an association of independent, family-run funeral homes.

As to how do we figure out which ones are run by these necrophages, my money's on the smaller family-run places. Less chance of an outsider opening the wrong door at an inopportune moment. That puts the Mortuary Small Business Association at the top of our list. Also any place that does a high volume of cremations will need our special attention. After all, there'd be no nasty embalming fluids and nobody is ever going to question where the body went.

Of course, that makes me wonder what the hell was going on up in Georgia with that bent crematorium. I bet these things have cable TV and they're kicking themselves for having missed out on that. It also makes me wonder if they might have arrangements with other crematoriums around the country. Who says all the bodies have to come from New Orleans?

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Doesn't Fit the Frame>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Sat, 20 Apr 2002 16:17:26 +0000

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Alphonse,

Per your instructions, Agent Nancy passed around typed excerpts from the manuscript Morse left behind. As for my impressions, it reads more like Tolkien than Von Junzt. Are you sure this manuscript is related to the things we're up against?

Some of the material fits what we've seen so far -- the description of their dietary needs, their physical attributes, and especially their ability to steal the memories and appearance of those they eat. The part about their shadows betraying their true form is dead on with what I saw, but the manuscript also says that those abilities are sorcery, not attributes of the species.

If it's sorcery rather than natural ability, then we're no closer to identifying our target. After all, this isn't the first time we've run across cannibals. Or sorcerers.

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But what really gives me pause is that the manuscript's description of their habitat, culture, and method of gathering food doesn't fit with the conditions we have here in New Orleans.

First of all, these things can't be tunneling under the city, not unless they have scuba gear. This city is built on a mud flat. The water table is less than a yard down. Even if the tunnels didn't collapse, they'd flood. That's why all the crypts in the city are above ground. So they can't be subterranean.

Second, since the crypts here are above ground, they can't be gathering their food the usual ways. With no tunneling they'd have to be robbing the crypts in plain sight. Either that or they'd have to make sure the cadavers never get into the crypts. Again, lifting the cadavers on the way to the crematorium seems like the best option. We're already compiling a list of those facilities here in southern LA and MS.

Third, the manuscript describes a culture that has strong taboos about mixing with humans. They're supposed to shun the human world, only emerge from their tunnels at night, and only have the most minimal contact with the "un-ripened fruit," as they call us. But the only way I can imagine them feeding unmolested in this town is by having deep connections with the human community.

I can't imagine where these things, whatever they are, would get the money necessary to bribe the funeral home owners, especially considering what funeral homes rake in on their own. My feeling is that they are more likely to be the owners and staff of one or two local funeral home chains. Better not be all of them or we're talking about hundreds of these things.

And fourth, the society described in the manuscript is practically anarchistic. These things speak much of

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their freedom and liberty. The manuscript characterizes duty, loyalty, and obedience as characteristics of the "shackled inhabitants of the surface world." I find it inconceivable that a group of scavengers could keep themselves hidden here in this century without the strictest discipline and coordination of their activities. Again, that's nothing like the culture described in the manuscript.

So besides their diet, the face dancing and memory theft, and the fact that the manuscript was found in New Orleans, what else is there to link the creatures described in the manuscript with the creatures here? Nancy seems sure. Since I'm not sure, I have to assume she knows something more that she's not telling.

Neither Charlie, Cyrus, or Dr. Fulani have gotten back to me yet, but I expect to hear from them later today. Wouldn't this be simpler if you just told me what they know instead of making me do this stupid dance?

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Still Have Doubts>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Sun, 21 Apr 2002 02:21:11 +0000

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Alphonse,

I'm almost convinced.

The things Cyrus and Charlie ran into under Manhattan do sound a lot like the things described in the manuscript, but not much like the things here. This "Subway Butcher" they blew away is interesting nonetheless. Cyrus' theory is that the colony under Manhattan is running out of graveyards to scavenge in and that some of the hungrier ones are coming up into the subways looking for food. Makes me wonder what's happening under the WTC rubble. They're finding so few bodies.

Nevertheless, the ones under Manhattan couldn't change their appearances, or at least not at will. Cyrus seemed to think that some of them, the Subway Butcher in particular, may have started out as human and devolved somehow into the near bestial thing they blew apart with shotguns.

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Fulani chimed in as well. What she had seems more relevant. She's done a great deal of research about a book titled *Cultes des Goules*, or "The Cults of the Ghouls." She's never seen the book and her research indicates that the last documented copy was stolen from the Biliotheque Nationale 1906. Second hand accounts describe the contents of the book as documenting the activities of a secret society of cannibals and sorcerers in Paris during the early 18th Century. While the book's contents are reportedly spectacularly repulsive, it's just as well that we don't have access to a copy. The ramblings of a self-proclaimed cannibalistic necrophiliac are unlikely to rise to the level of actionable intelligence. The documentable history surrounding the book is far more significant.

Fulani says sources conflict about the exact date of publication for this *Cultes des Goules*, somewhere between 1703 and 1737. The confusion could be because there were multiple editions published during that period. The authorship is equally muddy, with three possible authors for *Cultes des Goules*. The front-runner is the Comte d'Erlette Francois-Honore' Balfour. In 1724, the Comte vanished. Four days later he was found "torn apart by animals" on the grounds of his estate. Add to that his burial instructions included being sealed in a solid brass casket and placed in a newly constructed concrete vault. The clincher is that his death followed a crackdown by the Paris magistrates on some kind of grave-robbing cult centered in the catacombs beneath the city.

The Paris crackdown resulted in dozens of executions for the crimes of witchcraft, necromancy, cannibalism and necrophilia. Not a few noblemen narrowly dodged the executioner by getting banged up in nut houses instead. Whether they stayed there is another matter. Records, according to Fulani, are sketchy.

What interests me is that the 1724 crackdown follows the founding of Nouvelle-Orleans by only six years. Most

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of the first French colonists in New Orleans were convicts. I know it is just speculation, but it's possible that some of the people arrested in that crack down could have been sent to New Orleans. Other could have fled there to avoid arrest and execution. There were plenty of Caribbean colonies, like Martinique and Haiti, where they could have laid low before continuing on to New Orleans. Those sugar plantations in the Caribbean were corpse factories too, especially Haiti. And nobody was going to miss the corpses of some African slaves.

This "French Connection" seems pertinent to me. I think that if we dig deep enough, we may find some family names that have been skulking around this city for close to three hundred years. French names.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Targets Acquired>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Thu, 25 Apr 2002 11:43:55+0000

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Alphonse,

Surveillance hit pay dirt last night. Fort Funeral Services handed over a pair of cadavers scheduled for cremation to five guys dressed up for Halloween.

The attached file is an MP3 of what we picked up. We were only able to plant the bugs in the public areas of the funeral home, so we lost most of the transaction. Somewhere in that funeral home, behind a false wall or some hinged display cabinet is a humfor, that or some other kind of hidden room for rituals. We're going to review the architectural plans again to see what we may have missed on the first intrusion.

I'm only guessing about it being a humfor since the transfer was conducted with some of the trappings of voodoo. What is audible is in some kind of Creole dialect of French, maybe Haitian, but the one bit I did get was that Mr. Fort called the men who came for the bodies the "angels du Baron Samedi." I don't know how up to date you are on your voodoo, but Baron Samedi is one of the big-time voodoo Loa. This guy is their Grim

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Reaper, their Angel of Death. Baron Samedi receives offerings anytime death is invoked, whether the Bokor is working some death magic, creating a zombie or communicating with the dead. We caught a glimpse of one of the angels when they arrived, but they pulled their van inside a garage and closed the door before anyone got out. The one Agent Garret spotted was shirtless African American with a black top hat and tails, his face was painted like a skull. That's pretty much how Baron Samedi is portrayed in the literature.

The angels loaded the bodies in a van and drove them over to a warehouse on Tchoupitoulas. Before you hurt yourself that's pronounced "Chapi-toolus." They parked the van inside and left in four separate vehicles. We'd already taken a pretty big chance tailing them that late at night, even with three revolving teams, so we broke off the surveillance after we found the warehouse. We're running checks on the warehouse the cars and the van. A B&E on the warehouse isn't possible just yet since its guarded 24-7.

And here's the kicker. We scoped the warehouse with a thermal imager, so we never lost our visual even while they were inside. They drove into that warehouse as five black men, but strolled out to their cars as five white men. We got snaps of all five of them. Odds are we just got a look at their face dancing skills again, but its more than just changing their faces. They got shorter too.

Those "Angels" were tall. The shortest was a head again taller than Mr. Fort. That puts him at about 6'6". The white guys who left were just average sized. This is going to suck big-time. If these guys can change their appearance in the space of a few seconds, tailing them once they're out of their vehicle is going to be next to impossible.

I think the Fort family is human and they are practicing some factional spin-off of voodoo. My impression

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is that they don't know what happens to the bodies. Whatever collected the bodies is using the voodoo as a front, perhaps compelling obedience with a combination fear and religious awe.

We'll keep watching the warehouse and see who else shows up.

I'll get back to you when we have something more.

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Everything Leaves a Trail>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Fri, 26 Apr 2002 15:12:28+0000

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Alphonse,

These guys just screwed the pooch big time.

We ran the plates on the cars and the van, and the property records for the warehouse. The cars are owned by four different corporations, I've already got Wu's people at FinCen running that down, but I know where it's going to end up: some shell corporation in the Grand Caymans with nothing more than a brass plate on the door, a secretary and a telex number. There are so many shell corporations down there they have more telex numbers than residents.

We found the corporation that holds the title on the warehouse, but just in case we checked back through the previous titleholders. After all, if these things have been hanging around since the early 1700s, they probably held the deeds themselves for a while before deciding to hide behind walls of incorporation. Land records just aren't something you can easily alter. All kinds of realty companies keep their own records, especially

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the petroleum companies. Land isn't just land in Louisiana, it's oil.

And here's where we struck oil.

Agent Garret traced the chain of ownership back to the King of France. Along the way he ran into a few names that didn't mean a thing to us, but he noted them all, just the same. Here's one that sticks out.

Nancy King.

Didn't mean a thing to me either, but that intel program Wu got us from Langley thought it looked familiar. I've been dumping stuff into it ever since this thing got started, trying to see if the same names, addresses and whatnot turned up in two different databases. Like cross-referencing the De La Cruz transcripts with Father Marks' files with what we've picked up. When we fed Nancy King into it, it started throwing out matches.

Check that genealogy website that Father Marks had visited.

http://www.rootsweb.com/~usgenweb/la/orleans/death_epid.htm

specifically this page-

<http://ftp.rootsweb.com/pub/usgenweb/la/orleans/deaths/yellow/1878ijkl.txt>

Nancy King died at the age of three months on October 28, 1878. She then went on to buy that warehouse on

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Tchapitoulas in February of 1927.

I've sent Agent Gillian to chase down the rest of the names through the birth, death and probate court records, but I bet I know what we'll find. Soviet illegals have used the birth certificates and social security numbers of dead infants ever since the 1940s. That sorcerer in San Antonio was using the same technique to cover his immortality, passing his inheritance to himself by impersonating a string of dead kids for something like four hundred years.

And that's not all

Remember those fake cops who paid Dolores De La Cruz a visit just before her heart attack? Det. Sgt. John Hagan and Det. Sgt. Charles Eishold? Just for shits and grins we ran them too.

John Hagan died August 14, 1853 of yellow fever at the age of 32 and his bones would be in St. Patrick's cemetery if these things hadn't eaten his corpse. Eishold. died August 24, 1853 from yellow fever at the age of 38, buried in Lafayette cemetery.

Using the names and the faces of their dinners was a mistake. Who knows? Maybe they'll make some more.

I'm going to need a couple hundred K more worth of surveillance gear or we're going to get spotted. We particularly need more remote tracers. There's too many of these things to keep track of and there's too few of us. I don't want any more agents in here. It's already getting crowded.

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We're zeroing in on them, Alphonse. Just a couple more weeks of surveillance and we'll have enough intel so that the strike teams can exterminate these things.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

P.S. No, they didn't show up as monsters on the thermal or the film we shot of them. So that won't help to identify them. On the plus side, at least they have body heat. I hate freaking zombies. With this voodoo shit floating around I suppose it's just a matter of time.

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: < none >

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Sat, 27 Apr 2002 06:24:40 +0000

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team made safe house burnt 1 MIA evac & sanitize priority 1 debrief when clear & F U @ Agent Nancy

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <SitRep>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Sat, 27 Apr 2002 18:57:51+0000

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Alphonse,

SitRep: FUBAR

We were made. It had to be the warehouse. They must have been watching it, looking for morons like us snooping in their business. They knew we were in town. I shot one of them, after all.

At 23:57 on the night of the 26th Nancy and I were in the surveillance van a couple blocks away from the warehouse. We never maintained line of sight with the warehouse, just monitored it using remote cameras and bugs, and parked in a different spot every night. So they didn't catch us being stupid.

Nancy was the first to tumble to what was coming down, I didn't get how at the time, but I guess her sense of smell is right up there with bloodhounds. I was keeping an eye on a homeless guy who was walking towards the van- just in case. She was checking the monitors when she suddenly started yelling for me to start the van.

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I've learned not to ask 'why' when a team-member yells 'run.'

As soon as I hit the ignition, the homeless guy ran at the driver's side door and pulled a silenced 9mm. He started dumping on me but the Kevlar plates in the door and the bulletproof glass stopped them cold. As I pulled away he charged the van, grabbing the side-view mirror. He used his empty pistol to hammer at the window. Between driving and trying to get my own weapon out, I managed to do neither and he managed to push the glass in. When he got his hand around my throat even I managed to smell how dead he was. I told you there would be zombies.

I ended up scraping him off on the side of a delivery van on Louisiana Street. Kept the arm. It kept twitching even after I chucked it out into the street.

Nancy says there were at least two other shooters tagging the van as we pulled out. I could hear the rounds bouncing off the sides. Nancy was on the phone almost immediately and punched the fast signal for the rest of the team to bail out of the Vieux Carre safe house.

Nick rang back. Said her call bought them about sixty seconds grace, just enough time to throw on some body armor and get seriously strapped. He said the opposition had already blocked the safe house's garage with a delivery truck before the call came. They tried to shoot their way out, but the courtyard and stairs were clogged with walking dead. Those corpses soak up a lot of damage before they lose enough structural integrity to stop being a threat. While they weren't great shots, they forced our team back upstairs. Nolan knee-capped as many as he could with the SAW and while it slowed them up on the stairs, it didn't stop them. Nick noticed they were wearing ear jacks. Someone was giving them orders over the radio. The team was cut off

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and surrounded.

I know what the procedure for that scenario is. You can court marshal me later. I cut to the river and picked up the rail line. Made great time and managed not to blow a tire. Missed a westbound freight train by a good yard and a half. Piece of cake.

I was bouncing past the Spanish Plaza when Nick started screaming that the zombies were pouring gasoline under the barricaded door. Nancy told them to get to the roof and prepare for pickup on the Esplanade side of the block. Fortunately I'd taken some nylon cord from the Green Box along with that SAW. We had seconds to coordinate their fast line off the roof with my approach.

The safe house was a four-alarm fire by the time we arrived. I hit three of them on the way in. Those that didn't end up mangled lost their weapon when they kissed my bumper.

There was no time. They closed in on us fast. Nolan was the first down, he used the SAW to cover Nick, Garret and Gillian as they fast lined. Gillian caught a round on the way down. Right in the ass. She dropped to the pavement and went out like a light. While Nick and Garret hauled her to the van Nolan took one through calf and went down. The sound of the rounds were hitting the van was like popcorn in a microwave. I had to go then or not at all.

We were flying up Esplanade toward I-10 when Nancy started screaming that we had to go back for Nolan. I was screaming for her to shut up and she was shaking me and making me swerve and that's when Garret decided to hit her with the tazer to shut her up. That's when her guise dropped.

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You must have goddamn Alzheimer's not to tell me about Agent Nancy. You should have known we'd find out. What the hell were we supposed to think when we did? Under the gun, drenched in combat adrenaline the only thing that made sense was that this thing had eaten the real Agent Nancy and had set us up.

The tazer didn't put Nancy down. She punched Garret once in the nose and it laid him out. I slammed on the breaks and she was tossed into the front with me. I had enough time to draw on her before Nick shoved a gun in my ear. I would have pulled the trigger anyways but he said you knew, Alphonse. He said you knew she was a goddamn monster. Then she got her guise up again and that long maw full of teeth and those curved talons vanished and she was the same Nordic ice queen again.

I drove. While I drove Nancy got on the phone. She called Mr. Fort at his funeral home. She told him to tell the Angels of Baron Samedi that if they wanted to get back the book Teddy Morse lost then she wanted Nolan back alive. She warned him that if he didn't tell the Angels right away, then the next corpse they'd coming for would be his.

I don't know yet whether the message got through, or if they give a shit.

We've lighted at a safe house only I know about. It's Grendel's old place outside Milton Florida.

Garret got the 9mm slug out of Gillian's hip. It didn't fragment. She's out for the count. You need to get her back to her agency and start cooking a cover story. Garret's cheek may be broken.

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Everything connected with Agent Nolan will have to be sanitized. Chances are they've already eaten him and if they agree to a swap it'll just be another ambush.

Not that I don't plan to show up. I've got something best served cold I want to cook up. See the attached file for the ingredients.

If they call, I'll call.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Contact>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Sun, 28 Apr 2002 19:45:04 +0000

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Alphonse,

They called back. They say they've got Nolan, he's alive and they're willing to discuss a trade. They wouldn't let us talk to him. I've attached an MP3 of the call.

We'll need the book and we'll need it tomorrow.

I'll also need that wish list filled pronto.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Send the Book>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Sun, 28 Apr 2002 13:24:17 +0000

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Alphonse,

There is no reason why we can't risk losing the book. We've copied it dozens of times and analyzed it for almost a decade. We'll never figure out how the book works its transformation without exposing someone else to it, and that's never going to happen. One Agent Nancy is enough. So losing it isn't some big freaking blow to our operations.

It's too big a leap to assume that this book is the 'key' to their transforming people into more of their own kind. You don't know how Teddy Morse became one of these things. Maybe they slipped him the book and let him read it, like he did to Nancy. Maybe they have some other way of transforming people? The report from Dr. Emerson you sent seemed to indicate the presence of a prion in the leather of the book cover that might be the vector that initiates the change. Since it was also in the blood of the Subway Butcher, chances are that they all have it. So the book isn't likely to be the only method of them turning humans into "ghuls".

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On the other hand, if they eat Nolan we are in serious shit. According to Nancy, Nolan knows who you are Alphonse- your day job and everything. You want these things to pay you a visit? How long would it take them to eat their way through the organization? She says Nolan knows about our real status, even who our enemies are. You want Alzis getting together with these things?

Look, if you don't want them getting the book back, that's fine, but they need to know we have it or they will never let us get close to Nolan to spring him. Even if all we get back is his corpse, that's enough. We just can't let them have his brain.

So FedEx it or get a courier on a plane or whatever. We need the book and we need it yesterday.

I'd like Charlie and Cyrus on this. They've taken on ghouls before in Manhattan. I'd like Darren for the extra firepower. But the guy we can't do without is that spooky bastard Matthew. Get him. If we're up against zombies, there's nobody else.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

P.S. We shipped Gillian out of here this morning. Take good care of her. I want her back.

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Got the Book>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Mon, 29 Apr 2002 16:31:07 +0000

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Alphonse,

Thanks for seeing it my way. We won't let you down.

B Cell arrived this morning with the manuscript. They explained the quarantine procedures to us. I'm not happy about it, and Nancy's even less happy about it, but I agree that there's no other option if we get Nolan back alive.

What exactly does "unavailable" mean? Charlie, Cyrus and Darren have exactly the skill set we need. I don't want to have to do this without them. What the hell could they be doing that's more important than this?

I've never worked with Agent Richard or Agent Edward, so they're merely unknown quantities, but goddamn it, can't we do any better than Jack Maddux? Sure, he's top-shelf deniable and he's killed more people than smallpox, but he didn't get that nickname "Mad Jack" for nothing. He's a stone cold psycho. He should be in one

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of the 'Stans collecting Al Queda scalps for the CIA, except from what I hear even the spooks at Langley won't touch him. Is this the scrapings we're reduced to?

These ghouls are cheeky bastards. Nancy warned them that we knew what they were capable of so they better not try anything stupid like sending one of their own back in Nolan's skin. So the one on the phone starts joking that maybe they could just eat the parts of Nolan we don't need back, like his arms and legs.

We got to speak to Nolan for about five seconds. Nick and Nancy say it sounded like him and that he used some kind of code phrase to identify himself, but they also admitted there was no way to tell whether it wasn't just a ghul wearing his meat and memories. Have Wu run the attached MP3 to check Nolan's voice. I don't know if we'll be able to tell the difference, but we might as well check.

Matthew better be there. If he's not then this isn't going to come off unless the ghouls decide to play straight with us, and I just don't see that happening.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <It's On>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Tue, 30 Apr 2002 00:12:37+0000

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Alphonse,

The ghouls called. They got the page from the manuscript we FedExed them. They want to do the exchange on the Pontchetrain Causeway-bridge at the mid-span emergency turn-around station, 3AM tonight. It's perfect.

Our man at Pensacola NAS just confirmed he's on board. We'll have it for 3 hours. It's all the training schedule allows. We better not bring it back ventilated. That's the one thing they won't be able to explain away.

Matthew checked in. We're picking him up in Mandeville on the way, but he says we need to make a stop at the Tyson chicken farm plant in Mandeville.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Clear & Clean>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Tue, 30 Apr 2002 09:34:48 +0000

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-A got N got book got payback team clear going 2 get drunk -G

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Postmortem>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Tue, 030 Apr 2002 21:29:49 +0000

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Alphonse,

Sorry to keep you in suspense, we laid it on a little thick after the op.

We dropped Richard and Edward at Pensacola NAS at 20:56. At 23:32 they radioed to confirm their dustoff and estimated they'd be on station by 00:45.

Nick and Nancy were in position on the north end of the causeway by 00:19. They had a pretty boring night all things considered.

First thing we noticed was that the north end of the bridge was closed for "maintenance." Causeway Bridge Police units were parked bumper to bumper across both spans, flashers running, orange cones everywhere. The cops read warm on the thermal. May have just been paid off to close the bridge so our meeting would have a little privacy. They don't call New Orleans the big easy for nothing.

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I was in the point car. Garret, Matthew and Mad Jack were in the van: Jack driving, Garret on ECM and Matthew on the other counter-measures. We came around the lake on I-10 and stopped off at the Lakefront Airport at 01:11 and badged our way onto the runway to get a look at what was going on under the Causeway.

There was a large yacht, a 60-footer, moored at the boat dock beneath the causeway, right under the emergency turn around at the mid span. We could count at least seven vehicles on the bridge, including four parked at the 12-mile turn around. There was plenty of movement, at least forty targets over the whole bridge, but only four of them were radiating any heat.

We cruised around Fat City for a bit, looking for their back-up. Didn't find anything, but I'm sure it was there. I would have liked to take a look at the causeway bridge from atop some of the shoreline office buildings, but there was too much chance we might run into their people doing the same thing and start a firefight.

I got to the south end of the causeway bridge at 02:44. I gave the cops the code phrase and they let me pass. I counted at least two vehicles at each of the three turn-arounds on my way in. I got to the mid span and pulled in.

There were a dozen suits with assault rifles standing around like statues. All of them were wearing radio ear-jacks and not a one of them was warmer than the night air around them. The guy in charge was the same one I gut-shot three weeks ago. He was smiling like a fool, wearing Father Luther Marks' face and a flak jacket. He recognized me right off. We exchanged some witty banter.

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Cut to the chase: he wants to see the book and I want to see Nolan. He insists I go first so I tell him the book is in the trunk. He wants to see so I pop it open and let him have a gander at the bricks of C-4 that are filling the trunk. He didn't want to believe it was what it looked like. I assured him it was, 150 kilos of the stuff.

New plan, I tell him. You show me Nolan and I make sure he's the genuine article, and then I'll call the book in. When everyone's happy, Mr. Ghoul gets to come with us to the north end of the bridge as our shield. No negotiations. Otherwise there's a big explosion and then the city fills up with ATF and FBI agents looking for the Al Queda cell that bombed the Causeway. Not the kind of microscope his bosses want to be under.

He tried being reasonable. I convinced him I wasn't. Finally he had a couple of stiffs bring Nolan up from the yacht moored beneath us. Nolan didn't look good. He was pale, weak. He looked like he'd been roughed up. The two stiffs walking Nolan towards me kept pistols shoved in his back. Nolan was handcuffed and limping badly on the leg that took the round. We spoke briefly. I examined the bullet wound in his calf. Someone did a decent job stitching him up. Then I kicked him in the gunshot wound as hard as I could. He screamed and nearly collapsed, but we'd finally confirmed he was one of us.

I told the thing wearing Father Marks' face I was satisfied. I got on my cell phone and made a show of calling Garret and the others in the van. No reason to let that thing know I was wired with a body bug too. I spend ten very long minutes killing time, waiting for them to cover the twelve miles. The ghoul kept trying to draw me out, engage me in conversation, but I kept my mouth shut in case their people were wired for sound as well.

As soon as the van stopped, Garrett tripped the ECM and filled every frequency with white noise. Matthew chanted a few quick words in Tutsi and then snapped the necks of the first two chickens he'd painted with his

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blood. The two zombies holding guns on Nolan dropped like someone cut their strings. Nolan took the hint and joined them on the deck.

When it saw the first two go down, the thing dropped its guise and went for me. I double tapped him in both legs with glazers and that put it down, screaming. Its true shape revealed, the thing looked female, although it's hard to say for sure. Their faces are so canine.

Maddux was out of the van and erasing zombies with the MM-1 before I had a chance to back away from the flailing ghoul. It's astounding what a 40mm grenade loaded with buckshot can do to a cadaver. Between Maddux and Matthew it didn't take more than a few seconds to clear the turn-around of walking dead. Wasn't much of a contest. With the white noise drowning out those radio-delivered orders, a lot of the stiffs just stood there like mannequins. Maddux vaporized a half-dozen more motivated zombies coming up the ramp from the yacht. Thermals still read two warm bodies on board, but after peppering the yacht with a few canisters of buckshot, they preferred to keep their heads down.

As I touched off the flare pistol to signal Richard, the legless ghoul started barking some shit about how we'd never make it off the bridge; that her people were closing in from both sides; that they would scoop out our brains and suck the flesh off our bones-

Yadda, yadda, yadda. I shot her elbows off so Maddux could get to work on her neck with the machete.

Richard brought the Super Stallion in so fast that, for a second, I thought he was going to crash the chopper right there among us. Instead he pulled up hard and brought that huge machine down soft as a snowflake.

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Edward had the rear ramp down before the wheels touched the causeway. Edward and Garret stripped the antennas out of the van and folded up the ECM set while Matthew helped Nolan up the ramp. Maddux was the last aboard the chopper, grenade launcher in one hand, ghoul head in the other. No point in bringing along anything more than Nancy needs to perform a 'debriefing.'

The firefight and evac took less than four minutes. We left nothing behind except two rental vehicles, paid for with credit cards that belong to people who never existed, a trunk full of modeling clay made up to look like C-4, a few shell casings, a lot of buckshot and a half dozen chickens with their necks rung.

B Cell was waiting when we arrived. They sedated Nolan and put him on a flight out of Pensacola NAS before Nancy and Nick got back. Nancy and Nick were pissed they never got to see him. Just as well they didn't see him. We left Nolan cuffed on the flight back. I doubt that would have gone down very well.

Quarantine procedures being what they are, I still think you should have left him with us for the debriefing. If we're going to go back into New Orleans any time soon we're going to need to know everything that he does.

Or are we just going to bug out and call it even?

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Problem with N>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Wed, 01 May 2002 14:52:27+0000

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Alphonse,

Nancy is going to debrief the head today. Took us a little while to get all the supplies together for her. She's explained to me how unpleasant it is for her, but she's insisting that she go through with the process. I'll let you know what we get.

I appreciate you forwarding the file on Nolan from B-Cell. I think their analysis of the bite and claw marks are correct. If that's the case, there's a chance the ghouls passed on the prion to him, like lycanthropy. Considering what these things look like, there may be a connection between the ghouls and the Cajun legend of the loup garou. What's most important, however, is that their forensic analysis of the wounds doesn't jibe with his description of his captivity. He's definitely concealing something.

If Nolan turns, we'll need Nancy there to help him through the transition. He'll need that emotional stabilizer if he's going to hold on to any shred of sanity. If he doesn't, we better be ready for the consequences.

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What I mean is Nancy may lose her shit too. I'm getting the message that there may be something going on between Nancy and Nolan. I shudder to think it's anything but platonic, but there's something between them and it's intense. If we have to put Nolan down I think she may do something drastic. How long can B-Cell keep Nolan without raising any questions? And can they hold him? How secure is the facility?

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

P.S. I have to amend my earlier report. We did lose one piece of hardware on the op. Maddux refused to return the MM-1. Said it gave him 'too much wood' to give it back. I think he gave it a girl's name. I sanitized it myself so it shouldn't be an issue if it turns up at the scene of a mass murder.

And if you can, tell Matthew thanks. He snuck off before I had a chance to say anything.

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Debriefing>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Fri, 03 May 2002 00:25:06+0000

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Alphonse,

Nancy 'debriefed' the head yesterday. That's some scary shit. It took her about twenty minutes to perform the ritual, and then considerably less time to crack the skull and gulp down its contents. Nick and I cuffed and manacled her to the steel chair she asked for and just let her rage for the next 24 hours. There were a couple of times that she completely lost herself and just started ranting in someone else's voice. I'm forwarding the MP3 files, broken into 24 one-hour sections. Enjoy.

One problem you'll notice on the MP3s is that Nancy had a hard time sorting out all the memories the Hall ghoul had consumed from the ghoul's actual memories. Sifting all those screaming voices just about made Nancy go bug-shit crazy. It's just as well that she forgets it all after 24 hours. If she kept that shit bottled up between her ears she'd have gone stark raving mad long ago.

A few things are clear now despite the fact that the ghoul we got was just a grunt. She had only been a ghoul

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for a decade or so. She was born Lucinda Hall, to a human family in Illinois -Yes, I'm running a birth and death certificate search. The young ones aren't told much about the colony's origins, but they do all the foot-work, so they know the day-to-day operations.

This colony is strictly organized along a tight pyramidal structure. At the top are the DeMontes, the original clan of ghouls who emigrated from France to the New World in the early 1700s. According to the colony's lore, propagated by the DeMontes, they are aristocratic blue bloods whose line goes back to the most-noble families of Burgundy.

Whether it's true or not, clan lore is that the DeMonte matriarch had the vision and ambition to take her family to the rich charnal fields of the new world. More likely they were fleeing political enemies, financial failure or criminal charges, like every other immigrant to America. But the clan lore is that New Orleans was founded as the DeMonte clan's private larder. The matriach, Marquesa Antoinette DeMonte, still leads the colony and is surrounded by a sort of court made up of family members and ghouls who have served her family well.

To protect their access to the food supply they have insinuated themselves into various human-created power structures. We only encountered two of the hydra's heads: voodoo and the funeral home industry. They've burrowed deeply into those two institutions. Marquesa DeMonte ate Marie Laveau's body back in 1881 and is responsible for the rumors concerning the continued survival of the Voodoo Queen of New Orleans. Apparently they've got a large portion of the New Orleans voodooist working for them, all the while thinking they are serving the will of Marie Laveau.

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The memories the ghouls have looted from the dead open a lot of doors too. These things know where all the bodies are buried. Literally. They can squeeze almost anyone worth squeezing in New Orleans. Anyone who've had friends, family or business partners buried in the parish could be put under the gun. They've cut deals with mobsters, intimidated the oldest and richest families, and bribed or blackmailed just about every politician in the delta. These things have had a hand in city politics since forever. They even spend some of their influence in the state capital, making sure laws get passed preventing people from being able to dispose of their deceased loved ones any other way besides through a funeral home.

We asked all the questions you requested. Oddly enough, the words Mordiggian, Shub-Niggurath, Nyarlathotep, Hastur and Nygotha meant nothing to the Hall ghoul. As far as she was concerned, the clan wasn't religious at all. Perhaps the freshly minted ones aren't privy to the clans' inner secrets?

From what I've heard from B Cell, Nolan seems fine. The ghouls had him for 72 hours, but even the OUTLOOK Group needs more time than that to reprogram someone's personality. Nancy said that the Hall ghoul didn't know what went on with Nolan, but I suspect that she's holding something back. Nancy is anxious to get out to B Cell and check in on Nolan herself. She wanted me to lobby for her on this, but I'm not sure that's the best idea. Like I said, she's holding something back. Maybe you should try and get her to come clean.

Who have we got to do European research? I'd like to know something about the DeMonte family and if there's anything on the Marquessa before she went underground. We're going to need to know everything we can about her if we're going to untangle Nolan.

Nancy wants to see Nolan too. I'm sure she already contacted you about it. If you do decide to let her you

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better send an escort. I'm not sure she can be trusted where Nolan is involved.

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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From: "<GRAHAM>"

To: "<ALPHONSE>"

Subject: <Nolan is Done. Are We?>

Thread-Topic: <G>

Thread-Index: Ac6vahe3yR6xNrDk3Xy+jy11pA==

Date: Sat, 11 May 2002 03:12:30 +0000

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Alphonse,

I've seen guys go bugshit a dozen different ways on this job, but I have never seen anything like what those ghouls did to Nolan.

Nancy and I got to Boulder yesterday evening and checked in with B Cell. Agent Brown provided us with NIMH credentials for the VA hospital. Nice place. I can't wait for you to put me out to pasture there when I'm an incoherent burnout, mumbling and pissing myself. Speaking of which, it was nice to see Agent Waxman again.

B Cell brought us up to speed on Nolan's disintegration. He held his shit together for almost three days before his sleep patterns started to unravel. He stopped sleeping completely after five days. They tried sedatives, with some success. Nightmares are what I would have expected from someone who'd been held captive by a tribe of inhuman cannibal monsters for three days. But even after that revelation there was still something he was holding back. Then we turned up.

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Nolan perked up almost as soon as Nancy was through the door. He was curled up in the corner, then he was leaping to his feet and rushing at her. He smiled like a loon, babbling how glad he was to see her. Desperately happy. The only people I know who look that happy are crackheads when they see someone who owes them money. He wouldn't talk with Agent Brown or me in the room. We left Nancy in there and watched them on the monitors.

It all started off as fairly embarrassing. True love revealed. Nolan started rambling about how much he loved Nancy and how important she was to him. And she admitted her feelings for him, although she had to know we were listening. As soon as she said it, he went off the deep end. He told her that since, as a ghoul, she was immortal and he, a human, wasn't, the only way to for them to truly be together forever was for her to eat him.

Alphonse, Nolan begged Nancy to eat him. Begged. Like a junkie begging for smack. It all just came spilling out of him, all this crazy shit about him needing her to know his flesh, make him part of her forever. Nancy totally freaked and nearly knocked the door to the padded cell off its hinges on the way out. Took ten minutes to wrestle Nolan down and sedate him back into oblivion again. Nancy begged off the pills, but I think that was a mistake.

We shot him full of scopolamine to get him talking. During his captivity, the Marquesa raped him repeatedly, but it's worse than that. That thing contaminated his mind with some kind of self-destructive, fetishistic, sexualized cannibalism fixation on her. By the third or fourth time he was a willing participant, and now he's psychotically and sexually obsessed with the Marquesa eating him. Maybe some kernel of loyalty to us twisted that obsession from the Marquesa to Nancy, but I wouldn't want to test that loyalty if the Marquesa turned up.

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Right now our options are either we keep him locked up forever or we put him down. The way he is now, Nolan can never be allowed out of that cell. He'd either make straight for New Orleans, or straight for Agent Nancy.

I agree with Agent Brown that if this "Ghoul prion" is responsible for the mutation from human to ghoul, it may be sexually transmittable. Has Dr. Emerson ever addressed that possibility? But I don't think the prion is responsible for Nolan's psychosis. There's no sign of the prion anywhere in any of the hundreds of samples they drew from Nolan, but from what I've read on prion diseases, they're hard as hell to detect. A protein molecule tipped by a chain of 15 amino acids? It could take years of replication before there'd be enough prions to detect. Hell, if it's like Creutzfeldt-Jakob it won't show unless we do a brain biopsy.

Nancy confirms there's nothing like this mentioned in the Ghoul Manuscript, but that doesn't eliminate the metaphysical or biological options. And there's still the pharmacological option. The Marquesa ate Marie Laveau after all. Who knows what occult secrets came with that meal? This could be something like the Haitian zombie powder. Still, the way he reacted to Nancy's presence makes me think there's something here that was triggered by her physiology. A scent, perhaps? Maybe we should be looking for a pheromone?

I'm not happy about getting within arm's length of these things again if they can just hose us down with some mojo that makes us want to be eaten. Any chance we could just nuke New Orleans and call it a day?

Be Seeing You,

Agent Graham

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DOWN IN THE DELTA

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