

A Day in the Life ...

The phone rang. Prophet balanced the laptop with which he was decompiling things on his knees as he reached into his Gi for the phone.

"Yeah?"

"LostProphet, this is Tyndall. I know I haven't contacted you in a while but your bravery and courage is needed now."

Prophet smiled, Tyndall was always one for the over-the-top melodrama. She thought it made her operatives feel special and valued. I guess to some it did.

"Sure, what do you need me to do?"

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Prophet landed with a heavy thud and wiped his bloodstained hands off on his trousers again.

Tyndall really meant business today. So far he had talked to various people about Morpheus - a task that didn't sit well with him, but he had to do it to continue gaining the trust of Tyndall and Lock - and was then tasked with investigating the recent spate of hardline issues.

Red-eyed Agents had been disabling some of the hardlines, and he was on the track of finding out who.

He had killed ... he'd lost count of how many of the damn things, but there were always more in another building, holding covert meetings, plotting things, receiving orders from ... where? He still didn't know.

He called Tyndall again. A few moments later he felt the information seep into his mind and he was off again. Meeting with a so-called 'hardline specialist'.

Arriving at the building, he took the elevator and was shocked to walk in on a blood drinker.

"Don't worry, I pose no threat. Do you have a black box to show me?"

"Err ... hold on." Prophet called Tyndall. The box he had just uploaded was under security lockdown whilst the engineers at Zion worked on cracking the code. He put the phone down and smirked sheepishly, "I'll have one for you shortly."

Outside the building, he knew where to go. A small group of Agents in a nearby building.

Three broken necks later, and still no black box. Tyndall was calling again, apologising for her lapse in directions. Now he was off again, this time to a bigger group.

\*Ping!\* the elevator doors snapped open. Prophet jogged around the corner. He flung himself into the first room - nobody there. The second room had a full-length pane of glass next to the door. Nobody there either.

"Third time's the charm," he muttered, kicking the next door down.

The Agent fired. Prophet flipped sideways, his toes lightly running along the wall as he dodged the salvo and then launched at the agent. They both hit the floor with a thud.

Leaping up, Prophet dealt a punishing blow with his fists, following up with a heavy punch. The agent's glasses cracked, blood flowed from his nose.

Prophet continued, kicking and punching wildly until the agent was down, dead on the floor.

"You humans do not belong in this digital world!" a voice cried from behind. Prophet swung round and caught a bullet in the shoulder. He shrugged it off and hurled himself at the agent.

As they fought, another one appeared at the door. A thin smile appeared as it drew a weapon and fired. Prophet concentrated on the code around him. The bullets were missing ... mostly.

He grabbed the currently dying agent by the throat and spun him through the air, smashing him onto the ground with a sickening crunch. As he turned again, two agents were now at the door. No, wait ... three?!

His phone was ringing. He knew what it would be saying - Get out of there! - but he couldn't. He grabbed the nearest agent by his gun and pulled him into the room, kicking the broken door back on the others. It would buy him ... a few seconds.

\*Crack\*, \*Crunch\*, \*Thud\*

Prophet dealt more devastating blows. But his energy was weakening, he couldn't dodge the bullets for much longer.

As his mind slipped to this, the agent hurled a powerful punch at his midriff. As he went down, a polished shoe caught him in the jaw.

"Uuggnnnhh .." spitting blood and broken teeth, Prophet got back up, lashing out and catching the agent's chin with his fist. It somersaulted back into the wall with a sickening thud.

"Come on you bastards!" he howled. Just enough energy for another misdirected punch ... \*SLAM\*. The agent was staggered. Drawing on his reserves, a quick dim mak strike brought it down to its knees.

Bullets ripped across Prophet's torso. He looked down, his Gi covered in blood - most of it now his.

The agent stood up. Prophet ran at it, flipping over backwards at just the right point ... his feet double-kicked its head backwards sharply. It slumped to the floor.

"I'm going to enjoy this .." the one remaining agent intoned, walking into the room.

Wearily, Prophet managed to dodge the first few blows. Building up just enough energy ... he launched a fast and furious attack, the agent was sent reeling back across the room, crashing into the desk.

Throw it. THROW IT. a voice said in the back of his head.

He did, again and again, using the agent's energy and motion against it. Finally, a succession of blows and the last agent slumped to the ground.

Prophet fell to his knees, scrabbling amongst the bloody and torn clothing. The black box!

He pocketed it, then sat for a minute, his code slowly reassembling itself. The blood flow lessened.

He had to move. Otherwise REAL agents would be coming to his position, and he wouldn't stand a chance.

Hobbling to the nearest hardline, he pushed his way inside and dialed the special code. Holding the handset to his ear, he felt his pockets get lighter as the code was absorbed.

His phone rang again, it was Cel.

"You need a break. I watched what happened in there. You were damn good ... but you've been in there for almost 6 hours solid."

She was right, of course. Time to jack out, have something to eat, have a lie down, then get back to it. An operative's life was sometimes tough.

The payphone rang again. He held it to his ear ... and was gone.

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The elevator doors slid open. Prophet stood silently, his back to the control panel. A gun appeared through the opening.

Thwack

Prophet grabbed the gun and pulled forward hard, catching its owner unaware, then rotating it rapidly, the butt smashing into the jaw of the assailant. Doors opened in the corridor as the first enemy fell lifeless to the floor.

"Here we go again."

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Prophet left the phonebooth, his mission completed; items uploaded, and sat on a bench. He was rather disturbed, and three things were bothering him.

1. A hidden message in the latest Sentinel spoke about some sort of masked assassin who was overriding the emergency jackout protocols. So far he had fought a number of "masked" figures. One had executed a Zion team with a bullet to the forehead of each. He had also picked up an intercepted log from Morpheus, apparently he was being followed - he hypothesised Merovingian men. But Prophet knew the events had to be tied together.

2. He had picked up a printout of a forum post by "The\_Kid" discussing Neo. Why would that be important? It seemed to link back to the "LED Agents" and the search for Neo's RSI fragments. That had gone quiet recently, and he didn't know what was going on. Zion was being very tight-lipped about it all.

3. 8 months ago, the infamous Cypher incident had occurred. The man killed most of the crew of the Nebuchadnezzar, handed Morpheus to the Agents and almost killed Neo too.

He had been fighting the latest type of enemy when one of them had snarled "You should've listened to Cypher! Take the blue pill and get back to where you really belong."

This made Prophet worry. A lot.

Cypher was pretty well known, a legend in the bad ways in Zion and clearly known by the machines as he made a deal with them.

But how did these new assailants know? If they WERE with the Merovingian, Prophet guessed that Cypher may have made a deal with an exile to get him a meeting with Agent Smith, but that was never even a possibility. Neb logs confirmed the protocols he had used for jacking in and out, and later on they had found some heavily encrypted transmissions.

It was disturbing, to say the least. This new "Masked" fourth party not only had control over the somewhat frightening LED Agents, but they also seemed to know

a lot about Neo, were shadowing Morpheus' every step, and even knew about some of Zion's seedier past escapades.

Prophet rubbed his chin and stood up. He was being made aware of a skirmish a few blocks north via his neural interface. A quick check for pedestrians and he disappeared into the sky.