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"The moon was God's gift to thinking men.
An initial clue to what lay beyond.
The universe's first suggestion of its own scope."

Chapter 1.1

hotel singapore

November 11, 2152.

A cramped, filing cabinet hotel thirty floors beneath the continental airport tarmac. Singapore region—Asia.

Otis leans over the tiny basin, scooping warm water to wash his face and chest.

The lease on his room expires in three hours, forty-something minutes. He'll need half that.

When Otis lays his suit jacket down on the bed he feels its pocket again for the PDA.

ominisms

The two McPherson Group executives and their communications man cross the hotel lobby with purpose, waiting for an elevator by giant glass doors.

A concierge approaches, waved off by one exec.

Standing behind the others while the big doors slide closed, their comms guy loses his call signal.

audience

In' Chon harbor, intercorporate shipping waters. Seoul region—Asia.

"We lost him," says McPherson Group's Head of Comms, registering the worried looks in the room before adding, "He'll be back."

A bureaucratic murmur, then an incoming call alert on speakers, and finally a content hush from the decision-makers aboard McPherson's second largest yacht.

A display high on the wall reads, 'Audio Only'.

"Get that port ready," says one of the board members, nameless here under operational guidelines.

A tech who mans feed stations in the corner announces, "It's prompting for hash check."

data dump

Otis lets the executives in, watching their comms guy privacy scan the small room while one of the others lays a PDA down on the bed.

As Otis retrieves his own from the coat pocket, the third man steps into the bathroom, activating the shower's tanning lights, then several of the handheld privacy devices worn on his belt.

Otis places his data assistant beside the other and taps its lightpad several times, navigating quickly through menus. Its display reads, 'Broadcasting key...'

"Sent." He tilts its projected confirmation toward the execs.

The comms guy nods as he listens to his earpiece, looking up at the execs with apparent relief. "We're good."

The second suit shows Otis a deposit receipt for €910,100.

payload

Back on McPherson's yacht, Otis's transmitted encryption key unlocks targeting hardware purchased through loopholes in the trade embargo on Sun Microsystems, bringing the tech's focal processing station to life.

"I'm logged in," he says to no one in particular, receiving a short round of optimistic murmurs from the many bosses.

"Let Wilmington know he's wrapped for the month," says another nameless higher-up.

thanks Otis

"No worries dudes." Otis leaves the room with a wave, swiping his PDA past the checkout display outside.

As the execs pack up their gear, a digital voice announces that they have forty seconds to vacate the room.

In the elevator, ascending fast to a rooftop mag-lev terminal, Otis asks himself if he wants to get drunk tonight, already sure of the answer.

For as long as it takes the doors to glide open, he wonders if he will spend the rest of his life in airports.