

Chapter 17: The Plan Is Operational

Lionel launches the day very much like he did the day before. As he ponders the various news feeds on his Android smart pad he thinks to himself, “One more wake-up and I am on my way.”

About 9:30 AM Lionel loads up like he did yesterday and starts his bicycle trek to the La Quinta. Arriving in the lobby a little after 10:15 AM he calls room 312. Terry answers and Lionel goes up to the room. Terry greets Lionel at the door.

Terry opens today’s meeting with an Introduction, “Lionel this is Bill Dante. His wife may join us if her current assignment closes.”

“Good to meet you Lionel,” Bill responds. “Eva my wife should be joining us in about ten days. She and I along with Terry served with your cousin Fred at about the same time on air field security for B-2’s. We were a tight group.”

“Welcome to the project.”

“Bill and I have been having a mind-melt exchange of information regarding Andrew’s family routine and how best to stay a ‘muted, invisible picket group.”

“Bill fill Lionel in on how we worked today’s surveillance going to school.”

“Basically when we detected movement inside the house we began remote pursuit. Andrew’s house now has infrared, heat measuring camera on three sides of the house which detect heat and light escaping from the structure. We have a good idea what the heat and light profile is of the house in various stages or modes of activity. We have cameras which are triggered to start active streaming based in the structure’s profile. We also now have coverage at key intersections along the path to their school. The cameras repeat a similar activation scheme when school ‘let’s-out’. What we did this morning was preposition a chase car at a location near the route to school to see how the coverage worked and how a ‘code blue’ situation by typical traffic patterns might work.

“We had no problem determining when the FBI car pool arrived. Nor did it cause any issue not knowing which specific vehicle was going to be used. We briefly flew a drone attempting to identify any unwanted surveillance elements. None was detected. We assumed that since it is an FBI SUV that no unwanted tracking devices had been installed. Anyway no Bluetooth style Apple Air Tag detected.

“So this was about as passive a surveillance setup you can have under our current guidelines.”

“Sounds great,” replies Lionel.

“The update from the FBI is that I will be moving tomorrow to Vass. Feel free to move in that next day.

“The \$8,000 for additional expense has been deposited without issue.

“This will be our last face to face for a while. You have my FBI cell phone number. I also have my pre-paid phone. I will text you on that so write down your number for me.

“I plan to have a Nigerian friend of mine who started all this serve as the money dropper. He will drop the money at the mailbox on dates and times when you need additional expense money. We will set the date and time as needed.

“I don’t know how much food will be in the house when I move to the remote site. But use what you want. Toss anything that you think is going bad. Trash day is Tuesday. The barbecue has one propane tank mounted. The second tank is under the porch by the little crawspace gate.

“I am going nuts-iod in the empty house.”

“We will switch rooms to the ground floor tomorrow after 1PM. The first team from Asymmetric Services will arrive later that afternoon. The next day we will relocate to your house. If there is value that you treasure, I would inventory it with pictures and then lock it up as best you can. Leave a copy for me. Anything not locked up may be touched by many hands over the next few weeks.”

“Once you get past Sandi and me there is not much of value in the contents of the house.”

“If you would like to ride in the pursuit car this afternoon or tomorrow morning, you can join us,” offers Bill.

“That would be great.”

“Just walk to the Braes Meadows cud-sac at 2PM.”

“Okay, I will see you there at 2PM.

“I guess that is all we have for this morning,” says Lionel as he rises to leave.

“It was good to meet you, Bill. I look forward to meeting your wife.”

“Yea, she’s a pistol alright. I will be the one driving this afternoon. See you at 2PM.

Returning home Lionel completes his normal workout, showers, dresses, and goes to the workspace/office. There is just the normal ash and trash items looking for his attention. He makes another virtual tour of Crystal Lake area just to keep the neighborhood fresh in his mind.

Shortly he goes to lunch and reads a bit more of All the King’s Men. About 1:00 PM he returns to the workspace/office to wait until it is time for the short walk to Braes Meadows. At 1:50 PM he leaves the house and walks South on Belle Crest Drive until turning left along Valley Estates Drive then left again on Braes Meadows. Walking up Braes Meadows he hears a horn lightly tapped behind him. It is Bill Dante in a white Acura SUV RDX.

“Hi Bill,” greets Lionel.

“We’re going to park at the Prairie Ridge Ecostation. It is a good spot for relaxing as well as flying drones. When I get there I will trigger the cameras viewing the schools. I will launch the drone if there is something that needs an extra look. Once it is launched I need to alert Terry so he can provide a mobile picket while I wait for recovery of the drone. Once we have the interns we will have them handle recovery while I or Terry ride to the point of interest or give pursuit.

“Sit back and watch the playground and car pool pickup cameras. The school surveillance has channeled nicely if everything and everybody follows protocols. If you have any suggestions let us know. It would help if we knew which class room buildings Will and Zak use. But you should be able to find them on the playground as the class cycle through.

They arrive at the Prairie Ridge Ecostation parking lot. Bill boots the laptop and the security camera application. Twelve camera views are displayed.

“You will notice that there is a slight jump from frame to frame on each camera. When something interesting occurs we can push as many as four of the cameras to near real time display of

the action. Right now we are just sampling. Based on what I saw yesterday and this morning I should be able to acquire the FBI SUV as well as Will and Zack. I have the system set to alert on facial recognition.

Shortly cameras two and five alert on Will.

“There’s Will on camera two and camera five,” alerts Bill. “We will keep the same frame speeds since we have acquired one of the two grandsons.”

A moment later camera three alerts on Zack.

“Camera three has Zack now,” points-out Bill. “And there is the FBI SUV. The drive must be a female agent. I assume Andrew or Elizabeth pre-cleared her to pickup the boys. She is the same one who dropped them off this morning.”

“There we go Zack and Will are assembling at the car pool ‘pin’. And its homeward bound now. Both boys are now in the FBI SUV. I am going to alert Terry to start moving toward the school while I launch and practice pursuit with the drone. If something happens and I have to leave please stay here and await the return of the drone. It will land where this beacon unit is located. Just carry it to that field and stand with your back to the wind and watch it approach you.”

Bill launches the drone.

“We already have the path to and from the school in the bird’s guidance,” explains Bill. “Once it arrives on station I will paint the FBI SUV and then the drone will track it until I break or it breaks. Either way it will recover to this beacon station.”

“Cool,” exclaims Lionel. He follows the flight from the forward looking camera of the drone. The drone is quickly over the top of the schools exit.

“Oops. It looks like I missed the FBI SUV at the school exit. But we have an infrared signature profile of the SUV so we should find in quickly because if should be following the same path homeward bound. And there it is. Now we just re-paint it and the drone will follow. No-Fly regions are programmed already so all we need to thing about is birds, ufo-s, kites, and when we want to break it off.

“Based on our recon of Ebenezer Church Road once we pass the impromptu parking area of the Ulmstead Park on Ebenezer near the bridge over Richland Creek Bridge there is no really good place for an ambush vehicle to hide. So unless the ambush vehicle is already behind the SUV, the boys are home free again.”

“Very impressive,” declares Lionel. So we know the FBI’s engagement is limited and that there does not seem to be any concerted effort to track Will and Zack. It looks like the name ‘Jones’ has once again been a good source of camouflage.”

“Watch this. Here comes Terry along Edwards Mill. He has his surveillance computer running and is monitoring the drone camera feed. Then the SUV passes Terry, he should do a U-ie and pick-up visual pursuit. See there he goes. He should stay back about ½ a mile of more with the drone doing the tailing work. Once the drone breaks contact he will move-up a bit.”

“Hot dog,” continues Lionel. “This is very passive. Great. Can we see Terry’s dashboard camera.”

“We can see his and the drone’s side by side. Watch”

“If anyone is watching the SUV and senses our extra layer they will not necessarily know whether it is the FBI or something else. Good, I like that.”

Shortly the SUV makes a left on Duraliegh Road and another left on Ebenezer Road. A couple of minutes up Ebenezer and the Bill has the drone break contact and return to the beacon station. The drone lands peacefully and awaits recovery. Bill walks over the drone and recovers it. Bill places the recovered drone in his Acura.

“Time to go. I will drop you at the Braes Meadows cud-sac. Let’s go, the shows over.”

Fifteen minutes later Bill’s SUB emerges from the beginning of Raleigh evening rush hour traffic. A mile down Valley Estates Drive Bill turns into the Braes Meadows cud-sac.

“Do you want to go with us in the AM?” Bill asks.

“No, it is probably better for everyone if we begin to detach from each other. The FBI will be moving me tomorrow afternoon.”

Lionel walks home enjoying the nice weather. Reaching home he calls Aminu.

“Prince Lionel, what can I do for you?”

“Aminu do you have time for a coffee to night? Wahala dey o. Okay? <<There is a problem. Okay?>>”

“Not really but Turandot is good at 7:30PM,” response Aminu.

“Be good till then,” closes Lionel.

Supper is silent accompanied only by a bit of All the King’s Men.

Shortly after 7PM Sandi texts ‘boots, love’. To which Lionel response “shine, shine, love”.

Lionel meets Aminu promptly at 7:30 PM at Caffetteria Turandot. Greetings are exchanged as they order and pay for coffee. They move to an outdoor table on the remote side of the patio that has a brick wall blocking the cold wind. As Lionel sets his coffee down he turns on a Internet Milan radio talk station 24 Ore. He increases the volume a bit to provide background noise. Leaning in towards Aminu he opens a discussion.

“Aminu, my good deed for Stacy’s family has turned into real punishment.”

“How so?”

“You do not want or need to know. But I need your help to fix things.”

“What can I do?”

In my Bug I have four Starlite containers with money in them. I need for you to place them in your safe at the warehouse. Then over the next few weeks I need for you to deliver the cases one at a time to my house where you will meet a man named Terry. He will know you are coming and be seated on the front steps. Just pull up next to the mailbox and drop it on the grass and go. It does not matter which StarLite container you drop. All four will have the same amount of cash. I will give you the drop date and time for each delivery. It should be about three weeks apart but I do not know for sure.”

“Prince Lionel, what did you get yourself into?”

“It is what Frank and Stacy got us into,” retorts Lionel as he rises to leave.

Aminu and Lionel go to the parking slots. Aminu backs his car to the slot where Lionel is standing with two StarLite containers. Aminu pops the trunk and Lionel loads the two containers. He picks-up the last two containers from the Bug and loads them in the trunk. Slamming the trunk lid he walks around to the driver’s window.

“Let’s not do this again,” Lionel says and taps the car’s top as Aminu starts for the exit.

With that accomplished Lionel returns to the quiet house to relax for the evening.