

THE HIDDEN CHAMBER

Written by

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Based on a Short Story

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EXT. METRO CENTRAL PARK - NIGHT

Rain slicks the asphalt of a deserted jogging path. It's 3:00 AM.

JAX (22, athletic, restless energy, wearing a tactical hoodie) holds an old-fashioned compass. The needle spins wildly.

LEO (23, glasses, an oversized vintage coat, eyes sharp and analytical) studies a tattered, hand-drawn map.

SOREN (21, pale, eyes glued to a modified tablet, wires trailing from his pockets) lags behind, typing furiously.

JAX

The signal's dead, Leo. We've been circling this fountain for twenty minutes.

LEO

The map isn't wrong, Jax. The landscape is.

Leo stops at a massive, gnarled oak tree. He runs his hand over a knot in the wood. It's perfectly circular. He presses it.

A mechanical *THRUM* vibrates the ground.

SOREN

Uh, guys? My tablet just hit a massive electromagnetic spike. Like, 'melt-your-brains' massive.

The earth beneath the oak tree slides back with a hiss of pressurized air. A staircase of polished obsidian spirals into the dark.

JAX

(Grinning)

Finally. Something worth the hike.

Jax drops into the hole. Leo follows. Soren looks at the dark, sighs, and follows.

INT. THE MERIDIAN VAULT - CONTINUOUS

The stairs lead to a massive hexagonal hall. It's an impossible marriage of the 18th and 19th centuries.

Brass clockwork gears the size of truck tires grind behind walls of reinforced glass. Blue holographic data-streams flow through copper pipes like liquid light.

LEO

The Order of the Meridian. It wasn't just a local myth.

SOREN

This is... this is pre-silicon processing. They're using light-refraction across crystals. This tech shouldn't exist.

Jax is already at a central dais where a heavy, leather-bound LEDGER sits beneath a glass dome.

JAX

Save the tech-gasm for later. Look at this.

Leo joins him. He lifts the dome—no alarm sounds. He opens the ledger. The pages are vellum, but the ink glows with a faint luminescence.

LEO

It's a ledger of corrections.

He flips pages. Dates, bank names, and politician names.

LEO (CONT'D)

"The Great Insolvency." It's scheduled for today. At dawn.

SOREN

(Plugging his tablet into a port)

I'm into their local network. Leo, this isn't just a history book. It's an execution order. Someone is manipulating the city's digital bond market. They're devaluing the currency to zero at 6:00 AM.

JAX

Who?

Soren's screen flickers. A digital signature appears: *M. STERLING.*

LEO

Marcus Sterling? The venture capitalist? He's on the board of every charity in the city.

SOREN

And according to these encrypted logs, he's the "Grand Architect" of the Order. Or he was. This states he's gone rogue. He's using the Order's predictive algorithms to bankrupt the city so he can buy the ruins for pennies and rule over... Everybody.

JAX

(Pacing)

Soren's right. I think it's time to call the cops. Like right now.

LEO

(Pointing to a hologram)

Look at the payroll, Jax. The Chief of Police. The Mayor's Chief of Staff. They aren't just in his pocket—they're in the ledger.

Suddenly, a red light pulses through the chamber. A rhythmic *CLANG* echoes.

SOREN

Motion sensors! Someone just entered the topside hatch. We've got company.

The trio retreats into the shadows of a massive server rack made of mahogany and fiber-optics.

INT. THE MERIDIAN VAULT - MINUTES LATER

Two SECURITY GUARDS in high-end tactical gear sweep the room with suppressed submachine guns.

MARCUS STERLING (50s, tailored suit, cold eyes, radiating predatory calm) walks into the center of the room.

STERLING

The Order was founded on the principle of "Quiet Stewardship." But the world has become too loud. It needs a reset.

He looks at the open ledger.

STERLING (CONT'D)

We have guests.

One guard fires a burst into a row of glass pipes. Steam hisses.

JAX (V.O.)
(Whispering)
Soren, can you stop the collapse?

SOREN (V.O.)
Not from here. I need to bypass the encryption from the main terminal, but it'll broadcast my location.

LEO (V.O.)
Do it. Jax and I will buy you time.

JAX (V.O.)
(Cracking knuckles)
My favorite part.

Jax grabs a heavy brass telescope from a display. He nods to Leo.

Leo steps out from behind the rack.

LEO
(Loudly)
It's a bit late for a site visit, Mr. Sterling!

The guards pivot.

STERLING
Leo Vance. I've read your thesis on economic cycles. A shame you won't live to see the next one. Kill him.

As the guards prepare to fire, Jax hurls the telescope. It strikes a steam valve above the guards. *SCREECH!* A cloud of blinding white vapor fills the room.

Jax charges through the mist like a shadow.

THUD. CRACK.

He disarms the first guard with a sweeping kick and drives a shoulder into the second.

Soren sprints to the main terminal, fast and unseen.

INT. MAIN TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Soren sprints through the main terminal to a massive crystal sphere pulsing with blue light. His fingers fly across his tablet.

SOREN
(To himself)
Come on, you beautiful crystalized
nightmare... break for me!

INT. THE MERIDIAN VAULT - CONTINUOUS

Sterling pulls a compact pistol from a fallen guard. He aims at Soren.

STERLING
Art cannot be rushed, boy.

Leo tackles Sterling's arm as he fires a shot: *BANG.* The shot goes wide, shattering a holographic projector.

They struggle. Sterling is surprisingly strong, fueled by a fanatic's zeal. He throws Leo against the dais.

STERLING (CONT'D)
You think you're saving the city?
You're just delaying the inevitable
entropy!

INT. MAIN TERMINAL - CONTINUOUS

Soren activates the crystal's mainframe system.

SOREN
(Screaming)
I'm in!

Soren's tablet glows white.

SOREN (CONT'D)
(Shouts to Sterling)
Hey, Sterling. I'm not just
stopping the bonds. I'm hijacking
the city's emergency broadcast
system.

INT/EXT. MONTAGE: THE MERIDIAN VAULT & CITY - NIGHT

Every screen in the chamber--and presumably every screen in the city--flickers.

The Ledger's data, the secret payrolls, the recordings of Sterling's "Grand Architect" meetings... they begin to scroll across the air in giant, golden letters.

INT. THE MERIDIAN VAULT - CONTINUOUS

Sterling drops his gun, staring at the air. His face pales. The "invincible" man looks suddenly small.

Above, the faint sound of SIRENS begins to wail. Not the local police—the heavy, rhythmic beat of federal choppers.

JAX
(Standing over the
unconscious guards)
Looks like the "Reset" just got a
new target.

EXT. METRO CENTRAL PARK - DAWN

The sun peaks over the skyline. The rain has stopped.

Federal agents swarm the park. Marcus Sterling is led away in handcuffs, his expensive suit rumpled, his face a mask of defeat.

Leo, Jax, and Soren sit on the back of an ambulance, wrapped in shock blankets.

LEO
We just ended a century-old secret
society plot.

SOREN
(Checking his tablet)
Actually, we just ended one guy's
ego trip. The data I saw...
Sterling was just a mid-level
manager compared to the founders.

JAX
You mean there's more?

Leo looks toward the oak tree. The hatch is being sealed by men in suits who don't look like the FBI. They look... different.

LEO
Let's find out.

INT. THE MERIDIAN VAULT - MOMENTS LATER

A hidden door, previously masked by a hologram of a brick wall, slowly grinds open. It leads to a much deeper, darker shaft.

At the entrance, a digital bronze plaque glows into life.

The text reads:

"THE SABOTEUR WAS THE FIRST TEST. WELCOME TO THE SECOND CIRCLE."

Below the text, a countdown timer begins.

"364 DAYS: 23 HOURS: 59 MINUTES: 59 SECONDS."

Leo, Jax, and Soren's reflections are caught in the glowing plaque. They don't look scared. They look ready.

FADE TO BLACK.

[THE END]