

Crosswired - Episode 20

Written by
Steven Cardinal

Copyright (c) 2017

First Draft

steven.cardinal@straighttalkwithsteve.net

Crosswired - Episode 20

SCENE 1:

Abrahms, Marius, and Aster are driving away from Fort Meade.

MARIUS We've got to ditch this car as soon as possible. They'll have notified everyone. I'm surprised they're not onto us already.

ASTER It's the G-20. They called in forces from all over. (pause) Conway let me have a TV. Where to?

MARIUS Agent Abrahms?

ABRAHMS ...

MARIUS Agent Abrahms?

ABRAHMS I don't know, alright?

MARIUS Where can we switch cars?

ASTER I have a sister-in-law lives nearby. I'm sure you can borrow her car.

MARIUS What about you?

ASTER I'm no field agent. I work best behind a desk. Don't worry, I won't be doing nothing. Clearly we need to mobilize. Figure out who's who. Where Conway's cronies are.

ABRAHMS (under her breath)
They're fucking aliens.

ASTER What was that?

ABRAHMS (angry)
They're motherfucking aliens!

ASTER What are you talking about.

MARIUS Conway. Kazin. They're not human.

ASTER The Chinese...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARIUS Did more than trade for technology.

ASTER What do they want, Marius?

ABRAHMS They want to kill us all! Don't you
 fucking get it?

MARIUS Agent Abrahms... Mirriam.

ABRAHMS They're just... They... Oh God! They
 killed him! I... I killed him.

MARIUS You didn't know.

ABRAHMS I was supposed to know! That's my
 goddamn job. To know. To watch while
 he put himself on the line. So
 that... he just...

ASTER Agent Abrahms...

ABRAHMS (punches dashboard)

 God!

ASTER Mirriam. Listen to me.

ABRAHMS Oh God!

ASTER We need you. Right now. Listen to me.

MARIUS Mirriam! Abby!

ASTER We need to make this count. To take
 down Conway. To make him pay. We need
 you to help us do that.

MARIUS Abby. The codes Simon sent you. Do
 you still have them?

ASTER What codes?

MARIUS Conway had someone working on a
 secret satellite designed to transmit
 some codes. Simon got a copy and gave
 them to Abby... Agent Abrahms here,
 to crack. Can you crack them?

ABRAHMS I have to. I promised him I would.

ASTER Good. Agent Abrahms, as soon as we
 can switch vehicles I need you to

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)
ASTER (cont'd)

start cracking those codes. Can you do that for me?

ABRAHMS

Yeah. Yeah, I can do that. I have to. I promised...

ASTER

Good. Take this next left.

ABRAHMS

Then I'm going to figure out who the fuck set us up.

SCENE 2:

Simon and Dr Hadoop sit in Hadoop's car.

HADOOP

It makes no sense.

SIMON

It's a simple matter of breaking into the credentialing system, adding us as members of the press, and picking up our badges.

HADOOP

But what do we do once we're inside? You can't exactly go up to the summit leader, point at him and say, "Hey everyone! He's an alien!"

SIMON

What if I tear his head off in front of the cameras?

HADOOP

If this is some kind of suicide mission you can count me out.

SIMON

Look, I just want to get close to them. I think I'll be able to tell which ones are aliens and which aren't. I have this... sense.

HADOOP

The neural network Ms Williams mentioned.

SIMON

Yeah. Kazin felt different. At least, once I knew what to look for. I'm assuming they're all like that.

HADOOP

Assuming? What if you're wrong? What if Kazin was unique. You said Ms Williams could block her mind by meditating. What if Kazin was specially trained?

SIMON

Then we try plan B.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HADOOP Which is?

SIMON I haven't made it up, yet.

SIGNAL RING

SIMON (cont'd) Yeah?

ABRAHMS Simon? Agent Abrahms.

SIMON You figure them out?

ABRAHMS Yeah. You gotta stop that satellite from launching.

SIMON What? Why? What does it say?

ABRAHMS So, I did a frequency analysis on the codes and realized they were a complex substitution algorithm rather than actual ciphertext. The substitution was based on a Mandarin codeset I read about once on a darkweb site. Anyway, I was able to find a set of rainbow tables based on that codeset and did a comparison.

SIMON Clever. You're good. Now what did it say?

ABRAHMS Thing is, even after that, the message wasn't in English, not that I expected it to be. It was math. I compared it to some equations that Planck and Einstein had constructed, but it didn't match up. Then I had an idea. Mozart.

SIMON The composer?

ABRAHMS It was music. So I converted it to a digital audio stream and it turned out to be a spoken message in English.

SIMON So what did it say?

ABRAHMS It was an SOS. They're stranded here and they're trying to get back home.

SIMON What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ABRAHMS I know, right? But I knew that was bullshit. That's when I realized it was double encoded. The actual language was code, you know, like how in spy movies someone says "The rooster crows at midnight" and the other guy says "the tennis match finished at 8."

HADOOP That's just in the movies.

ABRAHMS Right?

SIMON So what did it say?

ABRAHMS Terraforming complete. Initiate invasion.

SIMON Terraforming?

ABRAHMS It's not exactly the word they used, since that specifically means making a planet to be more Earth-like. But, yeah, they've spent the past 20 years or so ratcheting up the climate. Acidifying the oceans, changing the chemical balance of the atmosphere.

HADOOP Making it more conducive to their own kind?

ABRAHMS You need to stop that satellite from launching. If that message goes out, this place will be swimming in aliens.

SIMON Shit. Let me talk to Boyle.

ABRAHMS ...

SIMON What.

ABRAHMS He... he's dead.

SIMON What? What happened? Did you get Aster out?

ABRAHMS It was a setup. They knew we were coming. Marius got Aster out, but Mr Boyle... Was killed in the line of duty.

SIMON They knew?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ABRAHMS Someone told him. Conway. He was waiting.

SIMON Who else knew?

ABRAHMS You, Gretchen... Jada.

SIMON Shit. We've got to warn Gretch.

ABRAHMS You need to take out that satellite before it launches.

SIMON No! I need to go after Conway. You can do it. Take Dr Hadoop with you. He knows the system, you know how to hack it.

ABRAHMS Makes sense. Should I warn this Bannister?

SIMON You mean *Doctor* Bannister?

ABRAHMS Yeah. Gretchen and them are with her. Heading toward us.

SIMON You have her contact?

ABRAHMS I may have hacked her system not that long ago.

SIMON Make it clear that Jada isn't to know about it. However you can do it.

ABRAHMS Right.

SIMON And come get Dr Hadoop as soon as you can. Mr Conway and I have an overdue appointment.

SCENE 3:

Gretchen, Jada, Bannister and the rest of the cell are driving.

GRETCHEN Anything yet?

BANNISTER Nothing. Think we should call them?

GRETCHEN That's not how it's done. Where are we?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BANNISTER About an hour outside the city. Jackson just said something about getting gas. This van is such a piece of junk.

GRETCHEN Yeah, ok. (pause) So... How well did you know Dr Garvin?

BANNISTER Pretty well. Since med school. God, that feels like forever ago.

GRETCHEN He was an endocrinologist, wasn't he?

BANNISTER One of the best in the world.

GRETCHEN So, hormone therapy?

BANNISTER Sometimes. The diabetes treatment was a front. His specialty was reproductive health, really.

GRETCHEN So estrogen, testosterone...

BANNISTER All that stuff. You're still wondering how he treated the boy?

GRETCHEN Simon. Yeah.

BANNISTER I remember Clement saying it was something to do with his adrenal gland substitute.

GRETCHEN (getting it)

He wouldn't have adrenal glands. Everything but his brain is mechanical.

BANNISTER Exactly. But the brain expects certain chemicals, so systems have to be developed to provide and regulate them. And that's not easy. Clement... he was very frustrated. Said it was like trying to ice a cake with a fire hose.

GRETCHEN So, if he had better regulation...

BANNISTER I think they regret starting with a male.

GRETCHEN A female would have been easier?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BANNISTER Kinda hard to say now, but a failure to regulate key hormones may not have had such a violent result. Getting women into positions of power, though... I mean, that was the mission, right?

GRETCHEN So they went with a man.

BANNISTER Makes as much sense as anything.

JACKSON Anyone need to hit the head? Could be your last chance for awhile.

BANNISTER I'm good. Jada? Wake up.

JADA Where are we?

JACKSON Pulled over for gas. Stretch your legs, grab a snack.

JADA Yeah, ok.

GRETCHEN I'll go with you. You want anything, Dr Bannister?

BANNISTER I'll take some trail mix if they have any. Place looks pretty dead.

GRETCHEN Best you might get is an 8 hour hotdog.

BANNISTER I'll pass.

GRETCHEN C'mon Jada.

CELL PHONE RING

JACKSON Dr Bannister? I think that's your phone.

They exit the van and walk into the convenience store portion of the gas station.

JADA Where is everyone? Hello!

The sound of gunfire outside bursts through the air, as hidden soldiers shoot up the van.

JADA (cont'd) Holy shit! What the...

SOLDIER You're late. Come on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JADA

Sorry Gretchen.

GRETCHEN

No. I'm sorry Jada.

GUNS COCKED