

Master of Time 29

Chapter 29 Media Crisis

Someone royally screws up.

How the hell did I become a love child of Henry Oxford?

I am his freaking senior! I've made him who he is today!

Oh, wait a second.

I am getting upset about the wrong damn thing. I should be way more concerned about how the fuck did someone manage to take a photograph of me and Henry having a conversation.

Shield Security should have made sure the meeting is private and confidential.

That is their job! They have one job and they screw it up!

Deep down, I didn't think Shield Security would have failed at their job with all the advance technology at their disposal. If they did, they should just dismantle themselves and leave everything to Hydra.

I do not need an incompetent organization!

No, Shield is not incompetent. There must be another plausible explanation.

My mind immediately reaches a conclusion.

"Selene, connect me to Shield!"

[Acknowledge, Operator. Please wait.]

I wait for Selene to connect to the virtual intelligence called Shield.

Shield is the head of the organization, so it will know everything going on in the organization.

It always keeps an eye on everyone, never resting.

Unlike Selene who exists inside my head due to the billions if not trillions of nanites in my bloodstream, Shield has a physical mainframe stashed securely somewhere in the world.

No one really knows where, not even me.

This is to prevent an attack.

The destruction of Shield mainframe will severely cripple the entire organization. While it will probably not destroy the organization outright, the organization will no longer be as effective as before.

[Strategic Homeworld Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics Directorate (SHIELD) is connected. How may I help you, Supreme Commander?]

"I want the details of all Shield Security members who were involved in the meeting between myself and Henry Oxford on the... 14ish January this year. It might have been the 15th."

[Affirmative. There is a total of 42 Shield Security personnel involved in the meeting between Supreme Commander and the head of Oxford Enterprise, Henry Oxford on the 15th of January 1990 at standard local time 13:16]

Huge amounts of windows appear in front of my eyes.

There are 42 windows in total.

Each contains the details and information about a specific person, such as where they were born, who their parents are, what kind of school they have attended, what kind of achievements and certificates they have obtained, whether they are married and have children or not.

What they are doing currently is also on record, updating progressively.

Most are currently working.

Some are at home with their family or girlfriend.

A few is partying in a private club – more than a few.

Shield Security is throwing a bachelor party for someone in Chicago. Some of Hydra personnel are also there, apparently joining in on the fun. They have even brought a bunch of strippers along.

These guys... well, I guess they work hard, they get to play hard.

"I believe that there is a mole in the Shield Security Division. Prove to me that I am wrong."

I speak my mind.

I do not believe anyone could have penetrated the perimeter set up by Shield Security. Therefore, the person must have already was inside.

Aside from Henry and me, there are only Shield Security members. It must have been one of them.

Oh, I forgot Antigone. It obviously can't be my daughter.

[Affirmative, Supreme Commander. Please wait.]

I wait.

It does take a while for the virtual intelligence to analyze each person, scrutinizing their entire history as well as their thought process.

The 42 windows in front of my eyes constantly moving with percentage appearing on them. It indicates how likely that person has been compromised.

However, almost all the percentage is fluctuating between 0 to 5%.

That is insignificant in the grand scheme of things.

Shield only accepts members who are utterly loyal to a fault. They would not betray the organization without a proper cause. Even then, they are willing to die to atone for their sin.

This is different to how Hydra does thing.

Hydra is more like brainwashing from a young age while Shield gives incentive.

[41 members are accounted for and verified. 1 member is deceased.]

"Deceased? How?"

[Vehicular Incident on the 17th of January 1990. Subject James Houston died upon impact at standard local time 12:56]

All the other windows collapse, leaving only the one about James Houston in front of me.

I quickly scan over his details and learns a bit about his life history. Graduated at the top of his class in the training academy. Recruited by Shield before attempting to enter law and order enforcement.

Since then, James has done an incredible job at Shield Security. He was promoted to a deputy captain just before his death.

Once I have finished reading his achievements, I review the surveillance video of the accident recorded by Shield Surveillance Network.

It shows a semitrailer crashing into his car, killing him instantly.

James was heading home from work to his wife and kid at the time. Since he is now dead, he is released from his obligations to Shield.

All his private assets in Shield have been transferred over to his living family members a couple of days ago along with a very generous compensation.

His wife and son are still in mourning. They miss him greatly.

I suppose James is a good husband, father and provider for his family. Since he is now dead, I will not dig up the past.

However, I still want to know how the fuck that information got out.

[Security Breach Detected. Emily Walter, born July 17, 1968.]

A new video appears in front of me, showing a room where James used to work when he is at home.

The video shows a young woman in her early twenties enter the office.

This person is denoted as Emily Walter, the sister to Amanda Houston, who is James' wife. That makes her his sister-in-law.

The window pertains her information appears in front me with 80% probability that she is the leak I am looking for.

This is because she is an interim reporter.

Emily goes through some files on the bookcase before checking the desk. She pulls out the drawer and pour everything onto the table.

This is when Emily notices a folder stuck to the bottom of the drawer, and after looking through it, she left the room in a hurry.

The video reverses and freezes.

It then switches angle, zooming onto the folder contains some sensitive files. There is a picture of me and Henry talking to each other within the folder.

The cleaners have missed some of James' personal effects when they went over his office. This is really a problem when all Shield members tend to hide things in their homes.

A new rule needs to be instated immediately, making sure that all members of Shield must not bring any physical documents home, copies or otherwise. All work must be done at the office and remain at the office.

"Locate Emily Walter. I really want to have a chat with her."

[Affirmative. Locating Emily Walter, born July 17, 1968. Located. New York City Mortuary.]

"The Morgue? She's dead? That was fast."

Shield and Hydra has already taken her out?

It isn't very likely since they should have informed me about this leak.

[Emily Water died on the 19th of January 1990 at approximately 16:22 local standard time. The cause of death is severe internal hemorrhage due to a prior vehicular incident. Accessing information.]

A video appears for me to see.

Emily was speeding before hitting into another speeding car. Both drivers died shortly after the head on collisions.

Shield or Hydra has nothing to do with her death. It is a complete accident.

The universe does work in mysterious way sometimes.

"Great. Fucking hell, who the fuck should I blame for this then?"

While the accident has nothing to do with me or my organizations, her death did save her from being punished. Although I could bring her back to life just to punish her, is there really a point to that?

My phone rings. I pick it up without bother to look at the caller. I already know who it is.

"I assume that you saw the news, Henry. Please do something about it. I will not have my face plasters all over the media."

"Nor do I, Mr. Maxwell. At least for something like this. However, if we do anything currently, it might confirm the allegations."

Henry replies.

I thought about what he had said for a moment before shaking my head. If I do nothing in the face of such accusations, it opens more doors for future accusations.

"I do not allow those who makes false accusations against me or my family to live in peace. That is my principle. Make sure the station understands this and have whoever running this story fired. If you do not, then I will. And there will be a lot of collateral damages if I do."

"I will see what I can do, Mr. Maxwell. Please give me until the schedule broadcast time."

Henry answers after a short pause.

"Very well, and goodnight, Henry."

I hang up after that, allowing him to do whatever he needs to do.

If he failed, I will just drop a Boeing 747 onto the station.

That will shut them up and destroy any evidence, but a lot of people are going to die in the process though.

I rather not kill a lot of people needlessly.