

The Library Encounter

It was a lovely but cold morning, the perfect day to go to the library. Along with reading, I love coding, playing tennis, swimming, and pineapples on pizza. No one has ever agreed with me on the last one. I head downstairs and ask my mother. "Can I go to the library?" "Now? Have you even had breakfast?" she says. "Umm..." I grab a banana from the counter beside me and take a bite. "There. Now I have," I say with my mouth full. My mom rolls her eyes and checks the clock on the oven. "Fine, but be back in two hours," she answers. "Okay," I say as I stuff the rest of the banana in my mouth, grab my jacket and head out the door. I stroll down the crowded London sidewalks enjoying the autumn colors before winter takes over. Big Ben chimes to indicate that it's ten o'clock, as I cross the street and go into the library. I pick out a book and choose a blue armchair near a closed door - since my usual spot near the window was already taken - to sit and read. I'm just about to get lost in the book when I hear voices coming through the door. I know it's wrong to eavesdrop, but does it count as eavesdropping if I'm not trying to listen to their conversation? I mean it's their fault they're speaking so loud, I just happened to be at the wrong place at the right time. I don't hear everything they say but I catch pieces of their conversation.

"Is everything ready?" a deep voice asks.

"Yes.....," a more high pitch voice answers.

"Oh, we lostbut....."

"..... by noon....."

"...it'll be too late for them to....."

Suddenly, the door opens and a nearly bald man comes out with a woman who has red hair cropped just above her shoulders and a pointy nose. I hide behind my book hoping they won't

see me, but they're too focused on their conversation to notice. I see that they've left the door open a crack and I'm tempted to take a peek, so I make sure that they have left the library, *then* I enter the room. It looks like a private office, which is a little weird because it's a public library, and those office spaces where you can go and work in peace and quiet are upstairs. And besides, those are open to everyone (except twelve year olds who are trying to get their homework done, apparently), but this one would have been locked if they hadn't left the door open. Lucky me, I guess. I go to the desk and sift through the papers on it until something catches my eye. It's a sketch of a USB and on the opposite side there is code. I recognize some of it from my coding classes, but it's not like any code I've ever seen, and I can't make sense of most of it. The next page seems to be some sort of email. I scan it and put it down, hoping what I read wasn't true. If it was... I shake my head and think back to the conversation that I heard. Something was happening at noon. I check my watch. It's ten twenty. So, I have one hour and forty minutes until I have to be home. And one hour and forty minutes to save the world, or at least London. I decide to go outside for some fresh air and to brainstorm what I'm going to do. On the sidewalk, I spot something glimmering in the rare sunlight. I pick it up to take a closer look, and nearly drop it in surprise! It was the USB from the sketch I found earlier. I'm so distracted by the USB that I accidentally bump into a girl with straight black medium length hair and shiny green eyes. Embarrassed, I apologize and hurry away. "Wait!" she calls after me. I turn around. "I'm Kay Leni," She holds her hand out and I shake it, confused. "You need to come with me; I'll explain everything, but not here, it's not safe."



Kay dragged me to a mostly empty coffee shop and picked a table at a far corner, then told me to tell her everything I knew. I was going to protest and say that she said *she* was going to tell *me*

everything, but I thought better of it. After I was done Kay told me that the USB belonged to an organization called TAST Logistics, which was really a cover for a criminal organization. At noon, they were going to plug the USB into an antenna that they installed on top of Big Ben. They would then use that to gain access to every device in London, and collect private information from those devices. They planned to broadcast all that information to the world unless the government paid them a huge amount of money. Most of that confirmed what I had read in the email and what I had overheard. “How do you know all this?” I ask when she’s done. “I overheard them talking about it, in this coffee shop. So, I did some research, then at night I broke into their headquarters to find more information.” Before I can reply, Kay sees something behind me through the window and gets up. “We have to go, now,” she whispers. “They found us.” I understand *almost* immediately. TAST Logistics has found us. We hurry out and try to get lost in the sea of people. After a few blocks, Kay pulls me into an alley. “How did they find us?” I ask. “I don’t know—” her eyes widen in realization. Then it hits me too. *There must be a tracker embedded in the code of the USB!* I pull the USB out of my pocket, set it on the ground, and lift my foot up to step on it. “WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!” Kay shrieks. “We need that, as proof!” Oh, right. “Then how are we going to disable the tracker?” I say. “Can you code?” she asks, “yes... oh!” I get it now. We file back into the crowd. After making sure that they weren’t following us anymore, we go back to the library. I go to one of the computers there and log in. I stare at my reflection as it loads. I have brown waist length hair and deep brown eyes that stare right back at me through smudged glasses. I take my glasses off and wipe them on my shirt. Once the computer finally loads I plug the USB in and start typing. “Done,” I say after about six minutes. “I changed the code, so that they won’t be able to fix it even if they tried. But do we give it to the police or back to them?” “What if we do both? We can give the USB back without

them knowing, then have the police track them.” So, I re-enable the tracker and set it up on her phone. We decide to split up, I will go and slip the USB back, and she will go to the police station. We will meet up at the library afterwards. I walk a few blocks, then choose a spot near a book shop and wait for them to find me. Across the street I spot the bald man. Then I see the redhead woman pass me, so I start following her. I wait for the right moment, and slip the USB in her purse. I quickly turn a sharp corner and jog to the library. When I get there, I find Kay waiting for me. “Did it work?” I ask. “Yes, you?” she replies. “Yep. It was nice working with you,” she says. “You too.” I check my watch. It’s 12:05. Uh-oh. my mom’s going to be so mad. “I’m sorry, but I really have to go now,” I say as I dash out the door. “Wait! I still don’t know your name!” Kay calls out, and the librarian gives her a look.

“My name is Iman. Iman Walid.”

Epilogue

I walk into the empty coffee shop. Huh, I guess I’m early, for once. “Why’s your cap pulled down so low?” Nevermind. I turn around and see Kay. “I like it like that,” I say. “It makes you look suspicious,” she says. “And?” I reply. She shakes her head and sighs. “So,” I begin, putting my elbows on the table. “You said there was a new case to work on....”