

EYE IN THE SKY

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Eye in the Sky

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ABOUT THIS PIECE

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CHAPTER ONE

EYE IN THE SKY

“We should have gone there instead,” Simon Derwall complained. The objection surprised his wife. She had explained this to him several times already. “The king’s visit brings eyes with it, why are we compromising our opsec like this?” Simon continued theatrically. Elena Negrón sighed and replied, “Father cannot travel, remember.” He opened the oven door and meat



Figure 1.1: Eye in the Sky

smell filled the kitchen. "Oh, right," he said distractedly. "This is done."

Elena spent both the morning and the afternoon in the kitchen, one of her happy places. Despite this, and for no apparent reason, she was nervous. Of course, Eleazar and Nicolás, her two brothers whom she hadn't seen in 11 months, were on their way. That wasn't it. That excited her. The terror's origin was deeper. Elena stopped short, surprised that her inner voice admitted "terror."

From the garden, Simon shouted in surprise, "Why is the grill on... There's a whole barbecue here!" Elena wondered if her husband was losing his memory or if he just wasn't listening to her anymore. "That's the B meal," she said. Simon couldn't make heads or tails of what she was saying, "the B meal?". Elena gave up, "for the driver and bodyguards."

A shiver went up Simon's spine. They were taking unnecessary risks. He restrained himself and calmly asked, "how many...people are coming?" "I don't know yet," Elena replied, "how does that look out there? is it ready?" Simon opened the grill, "what do you mean you don't know?" he asked almost shouting. "You know how Eleazar is, always a mystery," she replied.

1.0.1 The Jungle

A stabbing pain hit patriarch Tomás Negrón's knees, but he had to be there. He had not seen Eleazar since his last visit to The Citadel, some three years ago. Simon and his daughter used to go every six months to see their children and buy supplies. In the past, Tomás

made a point of accompanying them. He began to stay behind because he was tired. Also, the solitude the house was left in was perfect for writing, and writing was the priority.

"They're two or three minutes away according to DeGoogled Maps," Simon informed him while keeping his eyes on the screen. From the sky, a series of lenses captured an overhead shot centered on two gray-headed humans in front of a 4x4 truck. They appeared to be in the middle of the jungle. Had they been younger, they might have detected the sound of the propellers up there. Distracted, Simon finally asked, "Did Eleazar told you how many people he's coming with?"

The patriarch was puzzled. "I assumed he was only coming with Nicolás," he said, realizing he hadn't thought about the middle child until that moment. "Sure, but I'm talking about bodyguards and his personal entourage." Tomás had not considered that possibility. In doing so, he understood the veiled insult that came with his moronic son-in-law's question. He raised his guard and said, "However many they are, those are trained people. Serious people."

His own lie surprised him. "Eleazar knows what he's doing. He wouldn't put us in danger," Tomás said doubling down. With superhuman effort, Simon managed to restrain himself and didn't utter any disapproving sound. "What happened to the two or three minutes?" Tomás asked trying to change the subject. His interlocutor didn't answer.

1.0.2 The Surprise

Elena identified the sound of her truck's engine and got excited. Only one vehicle arrived, which was a good sign. She calculated that the passengers would have time to park and stretch their legs, before opening the doors wide. Elena saw only four silhouettes approaching and ran out toward them, "I can't believe it! Is it only the two of you? How is this possible?"

Eleazar ran to Elena and when he reached and hugged her, said, "I drove all night just to see you, dear sister." Nicolás couldn't believe his ears. He drove, not Eleazar. And they made the whole trip during the day. There was no point in complaining, he shifted his focus to Simon and asked him the question that was stuck in his throat. "Can we quickly visit the new facilities?" Grumpily, the brother-in-law replied, "No, it's time to eat."

"Show me the miners and the flowers quickly and then we'll go upstairs, what's the rush? Are you that hungry?," Nicolás insisted. He sounded like a child, Simon thought. The middle brother had untapped potential but didn't know how to hold back. "Your sister slaved away all day cooking for us," he finally replied. "Act like you appreciate it, little shit."

The Dinner

Food and wine flowed vertiginously. "Somebody pass me that little smokey sauce over there," Tomás requested. "Enough with the chit-chat, Negrón family," Simon exclaimed, cutting off conversations. "Let's give the floor to our CEO Eleazar Negrón to present the quarterly report." Eleazar caught and ignored the mocking tone. He immediately took control of the situation and the conversation.

“Dear shareholders and board members, I am proud to announce that I met with the country’s President. After talking to such a nice gentleman, I can assure you that The Citadel is in the right place. The government approves of our existence and understands what the project brings to the table. The Citadel is a business catalyst, the link to bitcoin-related companies. They don’t plan to adopt it as a legal currency, so they need an autonomous zone for bitcoin companies to conduct business.”

The information wasn’t new to the people around the table, but the power of Eleazar’s oratory captivated them. “Basically, as long as we pay the tributes we promised in the original negotiation, the President guarantees our independence,” he said expecting applause that did not come. In Eleazar’s mind, he saved all of these people’s life project and they paid him with indifference.

Less than a year ago, a violent change of government in the country they resided in left The Citadel vulnerable. What once was a project supported at the highest levels, suddenly felt at risk. Negotiations with the newly installed government of El Generalísimo were Eleazar’s mandate’s first test. And as The Citadel’s current regent, he felt that he had risen to the occasion and deserved applause from his inner circle.

The patriarch spoke first, “Phenomenal work, my son.” Relieved, Elena exclaimed, “So The Citadel lives, who would have thought?” Nicolás tried to hold back his laughter because he knew what was coming. Simon sensed the perfect moment to strike and did not hesitate, “Good work Eleazar, but tell us, what did they say about the closeness between The Citadel and the capital?”

This was a sensitive issue for all parties involved. Eleazar picked the place, it was one of the few instances in which he disagreed with his father. Tomás, Simon, and Elena exhausted all resources trying to convince him to change the location, without success.

And now, the new government wasn't comfortable with the proximity between The Citadel and their capital. They wanted all the benefits of having an independent zone under the bitcoin standard within their borders, but without the risk of the population getting ideas. "Excellent question, Simon," Eleazar replied snapping them all out of their reverie. "Pay attention, this proposal will surely interest you all. And the Presidential House approved it."

1.0.3 The Laugh

"Family, you were right. The location I chose for The Citadel was the wrong one." Simon and Elena looked at each other and exchanged telepathic messages - what was going on? Eleazar never directly admitted his faults. Could the wonderboy have finally grown up? Or, on the contrary, was he setting us up?

More information interrupted their non-verbal communication. "The President himself proposed a deal on a large and privileged piece of land for us to build another citadel, this time away from the country's normal functioning. We will have full support from the government and we just have to continue operating as we have been, but far away." Beat. "And perform certain services for them. I will take care of that, don't worry."

"Wait a minute, what kind of services?" Elena said. "What's the catch, son?" Tomás asked simultaneously. Amazed, the middle

brother watched the situation unfold. This was going exactly as he imagined. Eleazar replied, “no catch, father. We just have to advise them and maybe help them buy and hold bitcoin for the nation’s reserve. And I have a specialist who will handle it.”

Elena was excited, although the whole thing sounded too convenient. Her instincts flickered and she accused without hesitation, “there’s something you’re not telling us.” Nicolás let out a dry laugh. “Oh yes,” he said right after. Simon sensed a shift in the energy of the room and braced for impact.

From a sad black leather bag that barely kept its shape, Eleazar pulled out a small cardboard tube. “Let your guard down, this plan suits us all,” he assured. “Famous last words,” Simon said instinctively. “Are there any more of these potatoes anywhere?,” the father asked. Elena awoke from the spell Eleazar had her under, “Sure. Let me get them for you,” she answered.

With a “Don’t go, sister. Look at this,” Eleazar caught her again. He pushed plates aside and unfolded a map. “The land where The New Citadel will be is marked in orange,” he said proudly. Elena exploded, “all of this is phenomenal, brother. You put in the effort and figured it all out beforehand. Being in charge suites you.”

Her husband’s heavy gaze called out to her. It had a very clear message attached to it: something was wrong. She and Simon locked eyes and downloaded information back and forth. Immediately, Elena knew she had to focus on the map and stop praising Eleazar. She also realized that Nicolás was trying his best not to laugh. Elena looked down and the pieces fell into place.

1.0.4 The Bigger Picture

In this particular situation, she was the eye in the sky. What did she see? Her house, also marked in orange. It was about ten kilometers from The New Citadel. “Is this some kind of sick joke, Eleazar?” she asked calmly. To add insult to injury, she sensed she was the last to notice. “This location may work, actually,” Tomás stated.

“Let’s use this house as home base and build that shit. A new and improved citadel. The citadel you guys always wanted,” Eleazar replied trying to jumpstart the excitement. Elena cut him off. “This isn’t going to happen, brother. Do you remember the struggle it was to find an isolated area where one can live sovereignly in a country we don’t know?”

“That is precisely why the New Citadel should be here; an area approved by you, the experts,” Eleazar argued. She swallowed thickly. “This location’s whole point is to keep us away from prying eyes. We need privacy to keep the operation running. You know that, Eleazar. What the fuck is this incoherent proposal?”

Eleazar smiled, “we need land with those exact characteristics, how hard is that to understand? Stop being so selfish. Look at the bigger picture.” The temperature was rising. Elena lost control. “This is ridiculous. Unbelievable. This is your worst plan ever, brother. Are you going to leave your dad in the streets?”

Eleazar assured them that they could continue to live there. “Next to an entire citadel?! Are you stupid or what? We have a three-basement operation down here!” she replied. Amused, Tomás and Nicolás watched the show. “The Citadel is more important, sister. You know that,” Eleazar attacked. Elena’s shocked face was the answer.

“This is a perfect plan. Think about it. Sleep on it.” Dramatically, Elena replied, “How could you possibly consider relocating your own father? And all those cows, who are our family? Those crops out there, we feed them with our sweat.” Eleazar smiled. He had her.

“It’s the other way around, sister. Family and how we should stick together is all you talk about. Maybe I’d see Dad more often if I didn’t have to drive five hours to do it.” Nicolás reacted. This he could not allow. “Let the record show that I DROVE the whole way,” he said. They ignored him and continued. Elena sentenced her younger brother. “You’re willing to go that low, huh? You became a politician.”

Eleazar smiled like a politician. “If we execute this operation accurately, you won’t even have to move,” he promised not intending to deliver. Elena lost her decorum. “What the fuck are you talking about, little shit?! We can’t keep growing the flowers next to a city.” “It’s just a citadel,” he argued weakly. “And the river, Eleazar?! Where are we going to find another river of that size?” Elena was already picturing the location change. It was over. “The New Citadel needs the river,” he replied.

Nicolás dissociated, pushed Elena’s screams to the background, and congratulated himself. All along the way, he warned Eleazar that the family would hate his proposal. Stubborn, the younger brother assured that both his father and sister would understand that it was the right plan. Otherwise, he would convince them.

His father’s shouts brought Nicolás back, “...and don’t use me as a pawn in your arguments! You know that I’ll do what needs to

be done. If moving is worth it, we move and set up the mine and flowers somewhere else. If the business isn't right, we stay. It's as simple as that." Simon noticed the look on his wife's face. Elena had to tell him something. "That's how it's done, father. That's wisdom," Eleazar proclaimed triumphantly.

Husband and wife's eyes locked, and Simon understood that he had to get Nicolás out of the room. Elena planned to reveal something that the middle brother had no business knowing. Without missing a beat, he said, "well, this already seems settled and your plates are empty. Come on Nicolás, let's go see the miners. I know that you miss them." Something inside Nicolás ignited. At last, an activity that excited him.

1.0.5 The Miners

From above, various lenses adjusted the focus to follow the movement of the two figures. In theory, Nicolás' hearing could've detected the sound of the propellers. The only relative he considered moderately interesting monopolized his attention, however. Surrounded by fruit trees, Nicolás commented, "the garden looks incredible, Simon." He automatically replied, "one hundred percent polycrop farming, each plant is there for a reason."

"Here on the left, remember?" Simon said as he opened the discreet door that led to the mine. They crossed the threshold and the panorama radically changed, artificial light fell on several immersion tanks that housed dozens of miners that maintained the bitcoin network as they competed for rewards and commissions. Among them, on top of other structures, hundreds of flowering

plants grew. Fed by the heat that the machines emitted. Arranged by color.

Nicolás accelerated toward the control panel and lost himself among the screens, numbers, and wires. Simon was left pondering what the situation meant to him. The Citadel, bitcoin, the mines, and the flowers were the Negrón's business. Animals and farming were his contribution. And the possibility of creating a second quasi-sustainable farm elsewhere excited him. Especially if someone took charge of this one.

His brother-in-law's question brought him back to the material world, "the million-dollar flowers are downstairs?" Simon looked at him puzzled. "Sure, these are camouflage," he replied, then added, "wait a minute, haven't you been to the other basements?" Nicolás told him that he installed the miners and left them running, but this was the first time he was back since. "Here are the keys if you want to go down. I ate too much, I want to sleep." Nicolás took the keys and walked away rejoicing in the trust placed in him.

1.0.6 The Fall

Simon left the warehouse and took a deep breath. The hard part was almost over, one last glass of wine with the Negróns and he was home free. Elena would surely stay late talking with her brothers and he would have several hours to drink in solitude. It was going to be a great night after... "Hands up, poet Simon Derwall," Nicolás interrupted. His subconscious noticed a buzzing. Something approached.

"I thought about it and you're right, it's family time," the middle brother explained. "I'll explore the gold mine calmly tomorrow." A mechanical insect was flying above them and they didn't seem to notice. Simon surprised even himself. His instincts took over and he drew from the holster under his left arm.

This scene defined Nicolás' life. Seeing the gun pointed at him, for the first time he felt like the story's protagonist. And he liked it. The adrenaline slowed the speed of time and he had a chance to consider his situation as everything moved in slow motion around him. Was the photo of the mine he'd sent seconds ago the cause of his death? How did Simon know, though? A buzzing sound approached. Or were the Negrón's shady businesses to blame? He heard two shots and thought about how poetic it was that his favorite relative was the one to murder him.

Nicolás survived. Surprised, he turned around and saw the object. About ten meters away lay a disabled military-grade drone with two holes through it. Simon was an extraordinary shooter. Nicolás knew his drones and was familiar with the brand and model, so he immediately realized that the Negróns' lives would radically change. The flying spy not only aimed multiple cameras at them, but it also had a high-range video transmitter. The receiver could be up to 100 kilometers away.

Simon approached the drone and examined it for a few seconds. "This is not good," he determined.

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SOURCE

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