

AGENT 22

CHAPTER 1: THE SPIRE

The rain over the District didn't wash things clean; it just turned the grime into a slick, black mirror. Kaelen Voss stood on the ledge of the 44th floor, his boots finding purchase on a narrow strip of decorative granite. The wind whipped at his tactical coat, but his breathing remained rhythmic and slow.

He tapped his comms. "In position."

"You have a three-minute window before the internal sensors cycle," a cold, feminine voice replied. That was Sloane, his handler. He'd never seen her face, only heard that melodic, detached tone for the last three years. "Don't make me report a failure, Voss."

Voss didn't answer. He used a glass cutter to carve a precise circle in the reinforced pane. With a rhythmic thud of his palm, the glass popped inward. He caught it before it hit the floor.

He slipped inside the penthouse. The air smelled of expensive scotch and old secrets. This was the home of Sterling Vance, the man who funded the very shadow agency Voss worked for. Or worked for until tonight.

The objective was a black drive kept in a biometric safe behind a painting of a dying sun. Voss moved with the silence of a predator. He bypassed the laser grid with a handheld scrambler and pressed his thumb to the safe's scanner.

The light turned green.

"I'm in," Voss whispered.

"Grab the drive and move to the extraction point," Sloane said.

Voss reached for the drive, but his eyes caught a glimpse of a folder tucked beneath it. A physical file. In his world, paper was a death sentence. He flipped it open.

His own face stared back at him. Underneath the photo, stamped in red: TERMINATION ORDERED – AGENT 22.

The date on the stamp was yesterday.