

As David McBride was being driven uptown, a jacked-up Ford Superduty crew cab smashed through the NuLife gate, dragging a mangled section of hurricane fence behind it as it barreled down the short stretch of road leading to the parking lot. Just before reaching the lot the truck veered left, leaving the road and bashing through dead undergrowth, brush, and small trees. It pulled around the back of the building and stopped, its front end pointed toward the highway, the back end with its four-inch tubular steel wraparound bumper aimed at the side of the red brick structure. The driver gunned the engine, slammed the transmission into reverse and stomped on the gas. About the time it hit 20 mph, the truck rammed the building, reducing the outside wall of Andrew Turnbull's office to rubble. Four men wearing ski masks jumped out. While two of the men dug through busted up bricks and concrete, the other two waved P90s in the air, but the show of force wasn't necessary. Before anyone inside could react, the men found Turnbull's safe and threw it into the bed of the truck. By the time they passed through the gate they had been on the grounds all of two minutes.

The Ford Superduty pulled into a cavernous abandoned warehouse somewhere in the bowels of Newark and parked next to a black BMW 760Li. As the four men climbed from the crew cab, Mikhail Petrovsky, Samuel Keating, and Petrovsky's safecracker stepped out of the BMW. Petrovsky motioned toward a steel workbench that had been positioned in the middle of the floor. The men hauled Turnbull's safe from the bed of the truck to the bench, then climbed back in and drove out the far end of the warehouse.

The safecracker went to work, examining the safe, the lock mechanism, the door. Even though he looked like he should be unloading ships on the docks of Murmansk instead of finessing open a safe, he seemed to know what he was doing. The home office had given him their highest recommendation. He turned to Petrovsky. "I can use a robot safe dialer, and with some creative programming, I'll have this open in under an hour."

"I don't care how you get in. Just do it."

While the safecracker went to work, the bigger, taller Petrovsky glared down at the shorter, smaller Keating. "For your sake, the books had better be in there."

Twenty minutes later the robot dialer was ready. The safecracker had mounted a bracket on the door of the safe. Centered within the bracket was a motorized arm—a shaft—with three pincers on the end that grasped the dial. The safecracker entered some information into a laptop,

and, accompanied by a soft mechanical hum, the arm started turning the dial, back and forth, back and forth, and then all the way around.

“What’s that thing doing?” Petrovsky asked.

“It is programmed to try all possible combinations for this particular lock, but it can do it much faster than a human, and the programming can rule out a large number of possibilities before the robot has to try them.”

“Wouldn’t it be faster to slap some C4 on the hinges and just blow it open?”

“Yes, but the intense heat would fry whatever’s inside.”

Thirty-two minutes later, an audible click signaled that the final tumbler had fallen into place. The safecracker pointed at the L-shaped lever on the door. “Turn that forty-five degrees and you are in.”

Petrovsky did, and the safe opened. Inside was a stack of black-and-white marbled composition notebooks—the books he’d been trying to get his hands on for eight months. He lifted them out and set them on the table. Each book had a handwritten title corresponding to a specific organ—Lungs, Livers, Kidneys—or a certain aspect of technique—Nutrient Media, Progenitor Cells, Porcine Scaffold.

Keating looked through the stack, then checked the titles a second time.

“Well?” Petrovsky said. “Is this what I need? Can I send these to my employer, and they will be able to grow human organs in the laboratory?”

“Uh, yeah,” Keating replied. “I think so.”

“What do you mean, you think so?”

Keating spread out the books, reread all the titles, wiped his forehead with his shirtsleeve.

“What do you mean?” Petrovsky said again, yelling this time, his voice echoing throughout the warehouse.

“I think there’s one missing.”

Petrovsky glared at Keating. “Which one?”

“The one describing the infrared light.”

“That’s the most important of them all. That is what my employers need most. Check again. Maybe the infrared techniques are written down in one of the other books.”

Keating examined each notebook, thumbed through the pages, front to back, back to front, searching for anything related to low-level laser therapy, but he found nothing, and after he’d looked through all of them he turned to Petrovsky. “It’s not here.”

In one swift move Petrovsky pinned Keating’s head to the steel table and shoved his Glock 19 into Keating’s mouth. “For eight months,” Petrovsky screamed, “I’ve paid for your gambling and your whores, and still I have nothing.”

The safecracker backed away from the table.

Keating gripped the workbench and muttered something unintelligible.

Petrovsky jammed the muzzle of the handgun deeper into Keating’s throat. “I want that book, so you better figure out where it is.”

Keating gagged and coughed.

Petrovsky removed the gun, wiped the saliva off the barrel with one of the safecracker’s lint-free cloths, and slipped it back into his shoulder harness.

Keating rubbed the side of his head, then wiped the spit from the corners of his mouth with his shirtsleeve. After he had composed himself, he said, “I have some ideas.”