Bumps in the Night (BLUE OX)

Staring up at the concrete ceiling. The light of LEDs, the winking constellations of the server racks and idle monitors.

"Can't sleep, huh?"

"It's the dreams," Bishop replied, stepping in from the doorway. "Four Roses did a helluva job suppressing them. Now I close my eyes and it's like I'm at the damn movies."

"Your liver must be grateful."

"The hell with my liver. If I wanted to watch buddies get blown up I'd go back to the 'Stan."

"We've been over this. I'm not buying you whiskey."

Bishop snorted and sat on the edge of the cot.

"Speaking of sleep—all this light pollution can't be good for it."

"You're not the only one who has shitty dreams."

"Fair enough."

"And besides I'm so used to the sounds from the interdiction servers that I can hear another Fortean event in real time. Suppression takes *a lot* of horsepower."

Another exhalation from Bishop. "Impressive. Have you-"

"Yes, I've already built an algorithm that alerts Agent King and the team."

"The work you've done here, Falchionne—you're saving lives."

She laughed. "But at what cost?"

"By now you've got to know this is bigger than any one of us."

"Thank you, Captain! I was beginning to doubt the motives behind my captivity." Then, the snark drained from her voice: "Interdiction is seeing persistent intrusion attempts."

"Around here we call that a Tuesday night," Bishop replied.

"No, not the usual state actors. Something more... malevolent."

"There's a word I don't usually hear from you."

"Remember run_KEL?"

Bishop leaned back against the bare concrete wall of the conscripted hacker's cell.

"I remember that you told me run_KEL is a myth. Bigfoot is more real."

"Homeland Security was running entire modules of run_KEL. They called it run_CEL. Real clever. Whatever it was, it got out of control and the Air Force forcibly shut it down last year."

"Agent Tseng never found proof of that," Bishop frowned. "Are you telling me that you have?"

"I think Air Force isn't the only ones who got worried. I think someone else built something to hunt run_KEL and its clones. I think that something thinks our

interdiction protocol is a run_KEL clone."

Bishop eyes drifted across the rows of ceiling-to-floor server racks and their pulsating green and white LEDs.

"Interdiction is only active when there's an event."

"HIV buries itself in cell DNA, but the new cures root it out. These latest intrusion attempts look like that. They trigger false positives and then try to break in when interdiction goes active."

Bishop, staring.

"Falchionne, do we have a problem?"

"It's why I can't sleep."