**Sly 5: Thieves and Robbers**

by EikaPrime

**Summary**

Sly is lost in time. Penelope is sending Bentley post cards. How are they connected? How does Penelope know when Sly is... and what else will the gang discover by following those postcards? There are a lot of problems going on in history, and if that mouse is causing them, the gang has to get involved.

And this time, Carmelita's insisting on coming along for the ride.

100% compliant with the Official Cooper Canon. Since Sly 4 doesn't have an official year, I'm saying Sly 4 was in 2006, and this is in 2007/8. Tags for characters other than the mains will appear after those characters do. Updated weekly; updates will vary widely in length.

And of course, the necessary 'I don't own any of the Sly Cooper Characters or Franchise' disclaimer.

(I just want to say I'm seeing lots of Sly Cooper fics, new ones and updates, going up right now and it makes me really really happy because even the few I'm not reading means the fandom's alive and kicking and going awesome. And I can't message people to say how happy you're making me, so I'm doing it here. Thanks, everyone.)
The city streets are lit only by intermittent streetlights. Guards patrol on rooftops, shadowy forms of pigeons and squirrels. A van drives down one such street then turns into a parking garage. A large, gloved hand pays the fare and takes the ticket, then pulls into a spot on the bottom row.

The back of the van opens, and two shadowy figures jump out. “Are you sure about this, Bentley?” asks the large, round figure. “I know it’s a lead and all, but—”

“But it’s the only lead we have,” says the other, a small square shape in a wheelchair. “Look, this is going to be a textbook robbery. We go in, take what we need, and get out. If it’s nothing, we can just put it all back, no harm done.”

“I just don’t feel right about this,” says the first figure. “Shouldn’t we talk this over with Carmelita?”

“I don’t care how close she is to Sly. She’s still a cop. That would just tip her off.” The first figure does a wheelie. “Are you ready or not?”

“It’s been a while since we pulled a heist,” says the big figure. “I’m getting pumped!”

“Then let’s go.” And with that, the two figures split up, the small, boxy one into the sewer. And the large one?

A beeline for a building three streets down. The Interpol Evidence Lock-up. He ignores the front door, instead making his way to a small stairway into the ground in the back. He goes down the three steps, then pauses.

All the lights—streetlights, lights over the door, everything—go out. With a grunt, the hippo grabs the door and forces it open, stepping in and closing it behind him, where he takes one step into an emergency light.

Suddenly, the light flares, focusing on the character: A large pink hippo in a wrestler's mask, red gloves, blue shirt, and belt. From nowhere appears a close-up of his face, followed by the words: THE MURRAY. THE BRAWN.

Murray pulls out his binoc-u-com and looks through it. The eye-shaped binoculars contain an image of the hippo in the right corner, updating in real-time to reflect his reactions and expressions; in the left corner is a helmet-wearing turtle in a wheelchair. The rest of his binoc-u-com is decorated with pictures of other characters, a few crayon drawings, and a good-luck charm. “Okay Bentley, I’m in. Now what?”

“I may have hacked their camera system remotely before you entered, Murray, but Interpol is smart,” says Bentley. “They’ve got some security systems that aren’t run by computers. And you know what that means.”

“Yeah! Time for some punching action!”

“No! No punching,” says Bentley. “I’ve timed this very carefully. None of the people working here are criminals, so we’re not going to be beating up on them. But there are several security gates between you and the switch I need to gain access down here. Get past them and go through the red
“Righteous! This'll be easy. Leave it to... THE MURRAY.”

Murray puts away his binoc-u-com and scopes out the hallway he's in, dim and lit only by the emergency lighting. There are a number of doors on either side, but Bentley didn't say anything about going in any of them... and they're locked anyway. Instead, The Murray continues down the hall, only to come to a large security gate.

A tutorial pops up on the binoc-u-com. “It's been a while, Murray. Do you remember how to lift security gates?”

“This gate is nothing before my hulking bulk!” says The Murray. “I just press the circle button to stomp the ground, then smash the X button to lift it HIGH.”

“Swell, but keep your voice down!” Bentley whisper-yells, leaning forward in the screen and sounding like he's courting a heart attack. “If my calculations are correct, none of the guards' routes should go your way for another half hour, but if they hear something, the whole plan might fall apart. If you see any, avoid them!”

“O... kay...” Murray says in an exaggerated whisper.

The binoc-u-com screen disappears. Murray lifts the barrier then continues down the hall. He reaches a split in the path: one side intermittently lights up with a guard's flashlight, but it never goes close enough to illuminate the area past its wall-mounted gates. Murray contemplates them for a minute before being told he can't do anything about wall-mounted gates.

Eventually, Murray comes to the red door. Inside are three levers and a large orange rug in the center of the office, extending almost to the walls on all sides, in the shape of a hexagon: orange with white corners. Murray pulls out his binoc-u-com. “Okay Bentley, what do I need to do in here?”

“This is Dr. Foxworthy's office; he's in charge of criminal rehabilitation—and all the evidence of their crimes.”

“He must be important. There's a candy bowl on his desk!”

“Don't touch that!” snaps Bentley, just in time. “Everything on his desk is wired to a separate system; even without the power, if you mess with anything, he'll know.”

“Even the candy?”

“We'll get you some later. Right now, we need to use the power switches to overload the secondary security servers, then prevent the reset from going off.”

“Uh....”

“If you look under that rug, Murray, there's a large button near the center. I need you to thunderflop it, then lift all the switches. You do remember how to thunderflop, right?”

“Totally! I just jump with the X button, then press the square button in mid-air to lay the smackdown on guys! Only, they made me stop doing it in the wrestling circuit 'cause of the incident.”

“The incident?” asks Bentley, adjusting his glasses.

“It's a long story... they still haven't gotten all the lights out of the floorboards.”
“Well... just make sure that doesn't happen here. This area is a bit more highly trafficked. If anyone comes by, squeeze yourself under that massive desk; we don't want a confrontation. And don't touch anything on top of that desk!”

“Right! Switch, prepare to be **THUNDERFLOPPED** by... *THE MURRAY.*”

Bentley puts his head in his hands just before Murray puts away his binoc-u-com again and deals with the button. Before he can deal with the last switch, though, there's a noise from the hallway. Murray just barely has time to squeeze under the doctor's desk.

Someone walks in, their face in shadow, an orange fox's tail trailing behind her as she uses the flashlight on her shock pistol to look around the room. Murray flinches further under the massive desk, but the officer appears not to notice. She flicks off the light and raises a phone to her face. “All's clear here. Though what anyone would want with your office, I don't know." She pauses as though listening while making a slow circuit around the room, the expression on her face changing from boredom to resignation to irritation as she listens. "Believe me, I'm as upset as you are that he wasn't actually rehabilitated. We'll make sure to have him do a full course the next time he's in custody.” She stops at the door, a frown on her face, and almost growls into the phone, "I said *when*, not *if*. I'm going on assignment again this week; if I don't bring him back for you, I'm sure I'll bring someone.”

She leaves the room at last. “That was close,” mutters Murray.

“I agree,” pipes Bentley over the binoc-u-com. “Her office is on the top floor. We shouldn't have any further trouble with her.”

Murray finishes his tasks. “All right, little buddy, you're set to go.”

The camera switches to Bentley, somewhere in the basement, staring at a laser security grid... that flickers out. “Perfect,” he says, doing a wheelie in his chair. The camera does a close-up on him, and large words flare into light: **BENTLEY. THE BRAINS.**

He wheels his way through the large empty room full of breakables that, if this were a video game, would be an excellent opportunity to get coins. The floor and walls are solid cement; the emergency lighting provides dim, flickering cover. Of course, the doors are similarly sturdy, as Bentley discovers when he comes upon one. “I bet I can use my bombs to blow up this door,” he says, studying it. “I press the triangle button to bring out a bomb. I can tap the triangle button to place a bomb on an item directly in front of me, or drop it on the ground.” He takes care of that door, and the next two, easily.

Bentley wheels his way down the dark hallway. Pictures line the walls, photographs of criminals. On one side is their mugshot, taken when they were incarcerated; on the opposite side, it shows them rehabilitated, smiling, happy. Dates and the number of sessions they had with Dr. Foxworthy are by each of the pictures, as well as several letters thanking him for their rehabilitation. Among the photographs Bentley passes are many familiar faces: Mizz Ruby. Panda King (who may have joined the Cooper gang briefly after being rehabilitated, but that was mainly to save his daughter). Rajan. The Contessa. Jean Bison.

The next obstacle is a bit more challenging. “I should use my darts to take care of those wire sensors,” says Bentley, bringing out his binoc-u-com aiming site. “I can fire by tapping the R1 button.”

And again, not much later, “Drat. Floor lasers! But they're no match for my hover-pack. I just hit the X button to jump; then, by tapping the X button again, I get a little extra boost. I can even hold the X
button to hover for some extra distance.”

And so Bentley continues making his way down the hall. Past portraits of Octavio, General Tsao, The Grizz, and Miss Decibel. Past Penelope's portrait, which Bentley curses... though not without noting she only has the wanted poster, and two sessions marked, before her escape. She has not been rehabilitated.

“Are you almost done, Bentley?” asks Murray through the binoc-u-com. “I'm getting kinda hungry.”

“I've just reached their computer, Murray. This'll be a cinch. You should head to the elevator.” Bentley cracks his knuckles then hunches over, typing with his wheelchair's four mechanical arms as well as both hands. “Interpol hasn't updated their internal security for at least a month. This stuff is ancient.”

Bentley has his fun hacking, of course, and the player with him—I'm jealous of this player, you know, hacking is a lot of fun—but it just isn't fun to read about descriptions of an easy hacking job, so we'll just skip to when Bentley's finished. “Parsing cell scripts, rewiring elevator control parameters, updating database security parameters, installing another three back doors, centering centrifugal force, and all the doors down here will open in three, two, one.” Click.

Well, whaddaya know. It worked. The elevator dings, releasing Murray with Bentley, and the two share grins, then turn to the newly unlocked central door.

The evidence lock-up is a huge room, full of dozens upon dozens of safes. “According to their computer records, the item we need is in safe 1305,” says Bentley, wheeling his way forward beside Murray. “This may be tricky to get to.”

“Because we don't have Sly, right?” says Murray.

“No. Because it's up there,” he says, pointing to the fourth row up of safes. “We can't risk getting a ladder over here. You're going to have to get me up there.”

“Are you sure about this, Bentley?” asks Murray. “The Murray's strength is more than enough to get you up there, but if my aim's wrong—”

“Once you stomp with the circle button to pick me up, you can hold me over your shoulders easily enough. That should be all it takes.”

“Right!” says The Murray, and you can guess what happens next.

What you probably didn't guess was that Bentley, and his four mechanical wheelchair arms, have learned to crack safes. Oh yes. Sly would be proud.

With one last turn, the safe unlocks. Bentley opens it...

...and discovers it's empty. “What? But it should be here! This is all wrong! We need to pull the plug on this operation right now!”

“Looking for this?” asks a voice from the door, and the two turn, trembling, to see their old nemesis, Inspector Carmelita Fox, leaning in the doorway. She has her shock pistol aimed at them with one hand, an ancient Egyptian artifact, sealed inside an airtight plastic bag for protection, in the other.

Another sudden flare of light, and words. CARMELITA. THE... COP?!?!

“We are in so much trouble,” mutters Murray.
“Did you two really think I wouldn’t figure out what you were up to?” she demands. “A sudden cut in power, three new taps on the telephone systems, and all of it under a week after we’ve acquired evidence surrounded by mouse prints?”

“We are not working with her,” says Bentley flatly. Murray sets him on the ground.

“Didn’t say you were,” says Carmelita. “I expect you’ve got a lead on Sly. And you two idiots Didn’t TELL ME?!”

Bentley hides behind Murray as Murray cowers from her.

“I have half a mind to shoot both of you low-down, no-good thieves and haul you off to jail right now!” she says. “Instead, I'm coming with you.”

“You're what?” asks Murray, peeking out from behind his gloves.

“Carmelita, you don't understand,” says Bentley, peeking out from behind Murray. “What we're doing is a very calculated--”

Carmelita shoots right by his head, leaving scorch marks on his helmet. “I'm coming,” she says.

Chapter End Notes

And so this begins. I'd like to note that this story, while incomplete, has several chapters ready to go, and a rough plan for an entire story. If I update weekly and don't write another word, you'll still be seeing updates through October. And I plan to write a lot more.

Each 'chapter' will be a different length. Some things, like heists, take up a lot of space; others, like Bentley’s slideshows and level intros, will be only a few hundred words. Whatever the length, I've tried my hardest to make this not just a good story, but a good game. A Sly game. And I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.
Interpol Lock-Up: Ending Cutscene

Bentley Voice-Over

(Image of the van driving off Bentley on the passenger's side). It was a strange sensation, to be leaving a job with Carmelita in tow instead of firing at us. But nothing we've done has been anything but strange lately. (Scenes from game 4 scroll over his head.) Ever since Sly took down Le Paradox, we've been worried sick, looking for him. Everything we've done has been trying to deal with that—from my modifications to the time machine to Murray's new exercise regimen—and Carmelita's no different.

(Bentley glances in the back of the van. Carmelita's staring at an old, torn photo of Sly kissing her on the cheek while she looks very surprised.)

While Carmelita's always been on the opposite side of the law from us, we knew she'd been worried sick about Sly since his disappearance. While the two hadn't thrashed out their differences, they'd made up. I don't know if they can make it work, but if she's insistent on coming with us, that means she'll give it a try. Even if it means taking the biggest gamble of our lives with us.

During our last caper, my ex-girlfriend, Penelope, betrayed us: she sold the secrets of my time machine to Le Paradox and participated in his scheme, which got her thrown in jail. (Shadowy images of a mouse making said deal and of her being thrown in jail). But prison isn't a place that can hold someone as smart as Penelope, and she's been sending me post-cards ever since she broke out. (Images of the empty cell.) Based on their unique style, I can only assume she's been making the cards herself—they're not sold anywhere in the world.

(Murray parks the van, and they all exit into the safe-house very carefully. Bentley flicks on the lights to show a bulletin-board covered in postcards, each posted in the center of a piece of paper with information scribbled all around them. The postcards seem to be of locations all over the world, and follow no particular theme.)

(and then the camera does a close-up of one post-card).

Including one showing something I never expected to see.

(On the post-card was the artifact they'd just tried to steal... and one of Sly's calling cards.)

I don't know how she got this, but Penelope knows about my time machine and how it works. If this is a trap, it's a trap we have to walk into. But whether we find Sly or not, we have a lead. And we're going to follow it.

(images of the gang suiting up, the artifact being placed in the time machine's receptacle, and various preparations.)

Unfortunately... that means preparing Carmelita, too. (Bentley taps her on the shoulder and, when she turns around, offering her a mask with a glum look on his face.)
"All right, Carmelita, this is the hazard room." Bentley wheels his way into a large empty space, about the size of a football field, with white padded walls and floors and a ceiling that stretches into infinity. A handful of switches line the wall, several already in the 'down' position, color-coded in blue, pink, and green; only the orange ones are all upright. "We've got a couple of them established in our safe-houses around the world. Before anyone takes on a big job, they spend some time in here making sure they're fighting fit."

"And you want me to do this stuff?" Carmelita shrugs, holding her pistol over one shoulder. "I eat criminals for breakfast; there's no way I need--"

"Since Sly disappeared, you've taken out eighty-seven organized crime rings and averaged three criminals per day, of the 'international fugitive' tier," Bentley interrupts, "but you haven't laid a finger on the sort of people we go after."

Carmelita gestures angrily with her pistol. "I hardly think I need the help of a gang of thieves to—"

"Sure you don't. But you've made all the busts of your career chasing after us, because we like to rob the guys that get you promotions." Bentley shrugs. "And I fully admit, getting you to take out Muggshot back in Holland was a vital part of the plan, since none of us wanted to deal with him."

"That was—you little—ohhhhhhh I am going to ring Sly's scrawny neck when I see him."

Bentley adjusts his glasses. "Uh-huh. In any case, we want you in top condition, and we want to know it. So we're not going anywhere until you've completed the exercises I've laid out for you."

With that, Bentley wheels himself back out through the door, and Carmelita's left standing alone in the room.

She pulls the first switch, and a large platform drops from the ceiling. She jumps onto it, and a floor-mounted force field generator starts up. "Not bad," she says, bending over to investigate it. "I've never seen one like this before."

"It's my own design," says Bentley, his voice crackling with static over the intercom. "Now pay attention. Everyone in the gang has their strengths, and even if you're just a... temporary, law-abiding member, you need to play to yours. Before that, you need to learn the basic tools."

"I've been a cop for years. I know what to do."

"Our tools, not yours. We'll start with the mask."

"This thing?" Carmelita asks, hoisting the orange mask they gave her. "Unlike you criminals, I have no need to hide my identity."

"That's not its only use. Put it on. We can talk without the intercom then."

"I feel ridiculous," Carmelita says, pulling the mask on.
Bentley's voice changes to the typical echoey-whisper. "Perfect. All our masks serve several purposes: as long as you have it on, we'll be able to communicate. It's far more secure than most earpieces."

Carmelita growls. "So this is how you kept getting things past Interpol! We've been wondering where your earbuds are—"

"And I can hear you if you want; there's a trigger in all our gloves that lets us talk to each other. I've fixed your pair with some. Better, I can project holographic markers—way points—into your mask. Try pressing down on the L3 button—you know, the left analog stick—to bring them up. I'm projecting some now; let's just try this out."

Carmelita does so and finds a large orange arrow pointing down at the opposite edge of the platform. She grumbles the entire time she walks to it, and the other two Bentley projects, about what she was going to tell Interpol.

"Okay, great. Bring out the binoc-u-com I gave you by pressing the R3 button—you know, pressing down on the right analog stick. That's another piece of essential technology."

"They're binoculars," she grumbles, putting them to her face. "They're—wait, video imaging?"

"Yep," says Bentley. "It comes in handy. If you press the R1 button while in this mode, you can take pictures—useful for uncertain situations. They'll be automatically sent to my computer. I'm going to send in something for you to take a picture of; give it a try." With that, Bentley lowers a framed crayon drawing of Murray's down on a rope. "Try zooming in and out with the right analog stick to get a good shot."

"This is a waste of time," grumbles Carmelita, doing as he asked.

"Perfect. All right Carmelita, you've passed the basics."

"Can I take off this mask now?" she demands. "I look like an idiot."

"No. It's an essential piece of equipment!"

"You don't wear one of these stupid things," she says, watching the force-field generator turn off and jumping to the floor; the platform she was on is raised back into the air.

"It's in my helmet."

With that over, Carmelita stalks to the second switch and pushes it. Several large piles of crates and boxes thud to the ground around the room. "Okay Carmelita, this is more for my sake than yours. Every member of the gang moves a bit differently, but usually I'm a bit... busy... and can't pay attention."

"You mean you're dodging my shots?"

"Or telling Sly to, yeah. But I do have a basic idea of what you can do. We'll start with jumping. Press the X button to jump; then, while in the air, press it again to do an extra-high double jump. I'm projecting way points onto several boxes; try jumping from box to box without touching the ground."

"I can't believe you're making me do this," she says as she jumps.

"You complain more than anyone else does during this."
"What, you even make Sly do these stupid jumps?"

"Yes," says Bentley. He raises all the crates but the one she's on into the air, activates the force field, and dumps a pile of crates in front of her. "Unlike Sly, you don't climb or crawl, but you've got a mega-jump."

"It's easy, I just tap the circle button to go three times as high. If I get a running start, I can go much, much further as well." Carmelita shakes her head. "This is worse than officer training."

"Can you double jump after that?"

"Of course. But I can't do it too many times in a row, it's tiring and uses my gadget meter."

"All right. Let's put that to the test."

And so Carmelita does a lot of high and far jumping, proving very well why she keeps up with Sly. Her sneaking abilities may be... sub-par, but Bentley watches and makes notes. If they don't find Sly, she should be able to get to any high places he'd need to climb to—and if they do, knowing the cop's abilities better can't be a bad thing.

"All right, it appears your maneuverability is beyond my expectations." Bentley yanks up most of the wooden structures.

"Does that mean I'm done with this?" asks Carmelita.

"No," Bentley drops down several more crates and boxes to prove his point. "You've proven an adequate fighter in the past. That shock pistol of yours is dangerous."

She spins it in one hand. "Thanks. I especially like how it can incapacitate even the hardest criminals with just a few blows, but doesn't cause lasting damage."

"The hardest criminals?" asks Bentley. "Are we in that category?"

"Yes." Carmelita spins the pistol again. "I've won Interpol's annual shooting competition five years running. They don't call me 'crackshot' for nothing."

"Really?" asks Bentley. "You always seem to have a hard time hitting Sly."

"Can it, shellboy."

"Fine. Take out those boxes, then."

"Easy, I just tap the triangle button to shoot whatever's in front of me."

And so Carmelita kills some boxes. Those poor boxes...

"All right, you seem to be adequate at hitting opponents on the same level as you," says Bentley, "but what about moving targets?" A conveyor belt of some sort is dropped from the ceiling, another box on it. "Try taking that out."

"With the gun's automatic aim correction, all I have to do is press the triangle button and make sure it's the closest target." And so the box destruction continues.

The poor, poor boxes.

"All right, it seems you're pretty good at hitting opponents on your own level. But what about those
above and below you?" He lowers several items of furniture on ropes from the ceiling, and drops more boxes to the ground below her. "Shoot those, why don't you."

"Do you think you're giving me a challenge?" demands Carmelita. "I just hold the triangle button to bring up the aiming sights, then fire when I release it."

I think I need to make a statue to honor the boxes that gave their lives for this.

"Okay, I give. You've proven you know your way around a shock pistol."

"You really should've thought up something harder, Bentley."

"How about opponents up close?" Bentley drops a scarecrow in front of Carmelita. "Can you beat that without shooting it?"

"Of course. I just press the square button to give things a roundhouse kick. It knocks even the so-called toughest criminal to their knees."

"Right. Beat up that guy."

Which Carmelita does. With gusto. I need to apologize to scarecrows, now.

"All right, that's it. You've passed. I'm convinced you can move around and do whatever we need you to do without too much difficulty."

"Good. Then I'm taking this stupid--"

"Leave the mask on. Besides, we're going back in time. It may help you blend in."

**JOB COMPLETE**

*We're all done with the hazard room (for now). Please ignore the echoes from Carmelita's shrieks of rage.*

Chapter End Notes

It struck me how little Carmelita actually does in Sly 4. Yes, she's technically a playable character, but what does she get used for? With the infamous exception of the belly dance, Carmelita's only assignments are to shoot and shoot some more, whether it's in a contest or protecting someone else. Bentley seems almost surprised when she got schematics for The Grizz's factory (area 3) while on her own, and certainly takes no notice of her running his powerpoint during Area 4's heist. While game mechanics give her a binoc-u-com, she's never shown talking to anyone through it or examining objectives with it.

It's almost as though Bentley decided to keep the cop out of it as much as he possibly could. And when she did do jobs for them, it was either completely innocuous (the shooting contest in the old west) or another playable character was in the area. Everyone's favorite turtle was keeping an eye on the cop.
By letting her through the Hazard Room and giving her proper thieving equipment, one of two ideas must be in Bentley's shell. Either he's finally decided to trust Carmelita—or at least come to the conclusion that, so long as she and Sly are together, she's not going to haul them off to jail—or he suspects they're going to run into some major trouble when they're headed...
Bentley Voice-Over

With all our preparations complete, we strapped ourselves into the van and started the time machine. Our destination: Egypt, 1300 BC. While I was familiar with the time period in general, I was more familiar with Sly's history than anything else. He had relatives here—if Slytenkhamen the first was dead at this point, Slytenkhamen the second was sure to still be around. And unlike me, Sly would have no hesitation about messing with the time period and contacting him.

But that only gave us the neighborhood. When we arrived, we set about immediately at something just as important: camouflage. Unlike our last trips to the past, there was no evidence someone was messing with time. And our brief glimpses of the area showed everything was normal for an Egyptian village of the time.

If Sly is here, we'll find him. And we're going to do it *without* disturbing the past.

**SLY-COOPER—er, BENTLEY**

**AND THE GANG**

in

**PREDATOR IN THE DUNES**
The safe-house here is simply the van, camouflaged with sand and leaves, parked near an oasis. The back of the van is set-up to seat them, with a fold-out table to put their things on. Bentley types away on his laptop, looking at charts and blueprints; Murray periodically scarfs down slices of pizza; Carmelita cleans her shock pistol when she isn't fiddling with her 'truly ridiculous' mask. After a few moments of contemplation (of what? How his belt stays up?), Murray gets to his feet and exits out the back of the van.

It opens up a dozen paces from an oasis, with tall trees providing some amount of shade. Murray turns away from it and looks in the opposite direction, towards a small town, the flat roofs and dusty streets unremarkable in the twilight. Crocodiles carry torches through the streets; one stops to confer with a hyena and a gecko, who leap to the rooftops when they're finished speaking. In the distance stand the pyramids, tall and imposing, as reachable as a mirage. By the time Murray reaches the waypoint on the edge of town, a mere few steps away from the oasis, the van is almost invisible in the twilight.

Murray pulls out his binoc-u-com. “How's it looking, Murray?”

“I dunno Bentley, you always have Sly do the recon missions.”

“But he's not here right now. Hippos are native to this area; you won't stand out so much.”

“It just doesn't feel right.”

“I know, I know, but if I'm spotted in this chair it's all over; we'll have messed with time as much as Le Paradox ever did. And would you really want to send out Carmelita?”

Murray shudders. “All right, Bentley. What do you want me to do?”

“Without any technology or maps to rely on, I really need some recon photos. We're looking for any signs of raccoons, but also anything unusual. Get the landmarks, a few shots of the guards--we know Sly'll avoid those--and stay out of sight. The last thing we want to do is mess with anything. Try starting with that well-lit area near the center of town.”

Murray puts away his binoc-u-com and jumps onto one of the rooftops. The night is quiet; the guards stick to their patrol routes. Murray double-jumps from roof to roof in several places; in others, he drops to the street for some cautious steps. Cactuses in pots outside doors prove to be less pointed than they are bouncy, and he uses those to ascend to higher heights. He pauses halfway there as he hears running water, and detours to the southeast. A river awaits there, very low from lack of rain, its path ancient. He takes a picture.

“That river must supply the oasis during the rainy season,” says Bentley. “This time of year, it should be full. So why isn't it?”

“Maybe people are thirsty?”

“I don't know about that, Murray.”
Murray puts his binoc-u-com away and goes back the way he was going before, towards a well-lit area in the Northwest. What he finds there is... unusual, to say the least. He pulls out his binoc-u-com and snaps a picture. “That crypt has spotlights focused on it,” says Bentley. “And since when are there spotlights in 1300 BC?”

“I dunno. Maybe they always had them,” says Murray.

“Either way, that could use some investigation. If we can't find Sly, there's every chance he's holed up somewhere. That's a good place for it.”

Murray puts his binoc-u-com away and keeps going north, meaning to search all the edges of the town--and stops suddenly, pinwheeling his arms. A giant fissure, too deep to see the bottom, cuts right through the last houses, leaving crumbled brick and sand where the walls once were; the whole thing is wider than he can jump. He takes a picture of it.

“Interesting,” says Bentley moments later. “That certainly isn't in modern-day Egypt. There must have been a recent earthquake. Follow it for a while; let's see if we can find a way across. Be careful not to get too close: if the sand crumbles away, you'll be done for.”

So Murray does. Jumping on roofs and hiding in (empty) water barrels to avoid patrols. It isn't long before Murray concludes there is no crossing the fissure: it goes across the whole northern end of town, and stretches in a gentle curve to the east as well, though further away. It never gets any less narrow. But Murray does see something across it--something that is not a pyramid. It looks like a cross between the Washington Monument and a jungle gym. He takes another picture.

“What? That's—what on earth? Murray, can you get a closer look at that?”

“The Murray is strong, but he can't fly.”

“You could if that tower should be here. Those materials can't be native to the area. Hold on a second...” Bentley clacks away on his computer. “I'm getting readings indicating a high amount of electrical activity. Before they invented electricity!”

The Murray is uncomfortable with what he sees here, and decides it'd be a good idea to head back into town. Near the center of it, though, he spies something. “Bentley isn't going to like this,” he says as he takes another picture.

He's right. “Laser security? On that warehouse? We need to get to the bottom of this.”

“Now?”

“No. Keep going, Murray. I want more information. I'm missing something here.”

Murray keeps going, but he hasn't gone another four streets before he sees a crocodile exit a two-story building with some sort of... stable... and large empty area in the back. He takes another picture.

“Chariot racing,” says Bentley. “Very popular back in the day. It's a bit of an obscure sport now. Get a shot of the guard while you're at it.”

So Murray does.

“Wait a second...” Bentley says. “I'm receiving radio signals off that guard. That shouldn't happen here! Murray, is there anyone else in sight?”

“No,” says Murray. “The streets are empty. It seems like everyone's sleeping.”
“Or they're afraid to come out. Murray, I need you to get that guard. I want his weapon—and anything in his pockets.”

“But I thought I wasn't supposed to mess with the past? You've been all worried about part-time oxen!”

“That's Temporal Paradoxes, Murray. And don't worry. If what I suspect is going on, we'll have more to deal with. Sneak up behind that guy and knock him in the air with a triangle-button uppercut, then hit the circle button to grab him while he's in the air. Press the circle button to shake out all his loot.”

Well, Murray does so. And after getting quite a few Egyptian coins (and knocking the guard out in a puff of smoke), he's gained two very interesting items.

One is an advertisement for a chariot race the next day. 'BIG PRIZES, BIG HONOR. FINALS WILL BE HELD AT THE TOWER FOR THE ENJOYMENT OF THE SPICE LORD.'

And the other item? A gun. Well, a laser gun.

“I think that's all the evidence we need,” says Bentley. “Come on back, Murray. We're going to need a new plan.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Murray victory pose*
Bentley:

( Picture of the postcard ) Whatever Penelope's reason for sending us that postcard, it's clear that things are not right in ancient Egypt ( picture of the pyramids ). Spotlights ( picture ), laser security, ( close-up of the tower ), and these mysteriously guarded crypts ( seen now! ) are all things that need investigation. And of course, we're still missing our comrade, Sly ( Picture of Sly as seen in the end of Game 4, Saudi Arabia ).

Carmelita:

If we can't find that ringtail here, Bentley, then I swear—

Bentley:

Calm down Carmelita. Whatever this is, it's the work of a major criminal—don't you still want to bust those? ( Several images of Carmelita arresting past villains ).

Carmelita:

Hmph.

Murray:

So what do we do, Bentley?

Bentley:

Our goals are two-fold. If Sly is in the area, there's no way he'll agree to leave with this mysterious 'Spice Lord' around messing with things. His family's got history here. So we need to work both to find any trace of Sly, and to see what we can do about this mastermind. And to do that, we need more information. Here's the plan.

I've recreated several pyramid-shape radio-transmitters. ( Picture of a small triangular item with a
Sly will recognize them; he helped me create them for my middle school science project, and it's the same basic design. It's low tech enough not to be bothered by the locals. Murray, you'll set them up in locations around town. *(picture of Murray placing one.)* If Sly's around, he can use them to contact us or recharge his binoc-u-com; if he's not, it'll still let me monitor the area.

While Murray's doing that, I'll give Carmelita a crash course in this computer and then go to town. *(picture of Bentley looking skeptical)* Getting into those crypts will take some serious work, but it's not beyond my skills. *(Picture of Bentley staring at the crypts.)* Seeing what they're guarding may give us some insight into what's going on here.

Last of all, Carmelita, you go explore the tower. *(picture of the tower)* I can't locate any way across, but your jumping skills should do the trick. I'll give you a few more radio transmitters to place: that should be enough to cover our bases if Sly is there, and get us a look at whatever evil is being done in this town. *(Picture of Carmelita placing pyramid transmitters.)*

We've all got our assignments. Let's move out.

*Thiefnet Computer:*

*Carmelita: Lob shot. Bullets will arc high, then fall to earth.*

*Bentley: Grapple-cam.*

*Murray Upgrade: Thunder Fists—stun nearby enemies with one punch!*

Chapter End Notes

Any guesses on what the next few chapters will be? We've got a disturbance in the past, a plan to figure things out, and lots more chaos going on.

Kudos and comments are much appreciated.
**Predator In The Dunes: Job 2**

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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**PREDATOR IN THE DUNES**

**JOB 2: Sly Pyramid Placement**

This time, when Murray slips out of the safe-house, he's got some more objectives in mind than just 'Wander Around Taking Pictures'. He's got a plan. And, more importantly, he has a backpack. A backpack full of pyramid look-alikes... with crude carvings of heads in the lower corners. A turtle head, a hippo head, and a raccoon head, to be specific.

They look remarkably like the models Murray made for Bentley's project back in the orphanage.

Murray reaches his objective, the far side of the oasis, and opens the binoc-u-com. “Okay, Bentley, what do you want me to do?”

“I am not Bentley.”

“Oh. Hi, Carmelita.”

“And I cannot believe I'm expected to use this—this criminal—” she lets out a breath of annoyance. “Interpol is never going to hear about this.”

“I think Bentley has you helping me out because I'm not doing anything wrong,” says Murray.

There's a second of flabbergasted silence as Carmelita crosses her arms. “You're not?”

“Do you know how many times Bentley's read law books to us? It's always okay to take pictures or put out cameras that can see streets. I don't think I'm going inside. He would've told me to be a lot sneakier if that were the case.”

“That lousy, no good...” Carmelita puts her head in her hands. “Fine. Your objective is to place each of those decorative pyramids in places around town. When you're close to a location, press the circle button to put the pyramid in position.”

“Check.”

“You have to be careful with these, Murray. According to Bentley, they're sensitive to extreme heat, and we're in the desert. You have to position them so they won't get direct sunlight.”

“All right. I'll put them where the sun doesn't shine.”

“That's...” Carmelita rolls her eyes. “Let's go with that.”

Murray put his binoc-u-com back in his pocket and pulled up his belt. Someday, he should maybe get something to hold his belt up. Pants, maybe? No, those would never work. He'd get some suspenders. With that settled, he takes out the first pyramid and nestles it against the base of a palm tree. “Can you hear me?” he asks, leaning over and speaking straight into the top.

“That is unreasonably loud,” says Carmelita through his mask. “Why does Bentley have it so loud?”
Murray shrugs and stands up. “Bentley always has a reason.”

With the obvious signs of someone from the future messing with things, Murray doesn't need to stay out of sight... not that he doesn't try anyway. He only knocks guards out when he absolutely has to, in order to get a pyramid-shape in place. And he doesn't pick any pockets unless he's certain Carmelita isn't paying attention. The devices go up: two places along the river. Three places along the giant fissure in the ground, including directly across from the massive tower. On the roof of the chariot racing club. By both buildings with lasers blocking the doors. And of course, right outside the spotlight crypt.

Unlike many of the jobs Murray's pulled off in the past, this one is rather straightforward. It isn't long before he's finished and returning to the safe-house. Without a single sighting of Sly.

**JOB COMPLETE**

*somewhat unenthusiastic Murray victory pose*

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for your response, Thief39! I really liked the Grapple Cam myself.

So, Murray's mission was unsuccessful (for now). Anyone think Bentley will find Sly next week?
Bentley has a bit of a harder time getting around unnoticed. While he can maneuver very well in his wheelchair, he can't hide in barrels, and more than once he has to switch out his sleep darts to send someone to dreamland. With the help of the bouncy cacti, though, he does reach his destination: the roof of a building across from a laser-guarded crypt.

He pulls out his binoc-u-com. “Okay, Carmelita, I'm in position to begin.”

“And you expect me to spot you while you pull off some breaking and entering?” she demands.

“If we were in Paris, you'd have everything you needed for a warrant,” Bentley reminds her. “And a trained team of specialists to deal with it. Here you just have me. Now, do you remember what I told you about—”

“I can't believe I'm using this—this criminal technology.”

“Really?” asks Bentley, leaning back in his chair. “What about the technology is criminal, anyway?”

“You use it!”

“We also use the internet,” Bentley says dryly, then pauses as she folds her arm and glares. “Okay, maybe that wasn't the best example. Look, Carmelita, if you had this at Interpol, would you be complaining?”

Carmelita stares at him through the binoc-u-com in silence for several long seconds.

“That's what I thought,” said Bentley.

“Come to think of it, why don't we have this at Interpol?” asks Carmelita.

“Because I invented it. Look, there's an area guarded with both laser security and locks. I've located the guards that have the keys; you just have to update their positions on the binoc-u-com for me. Once I've got the keys, getting in will be a cinch: I've analyzed things, and they'll turn off the laser security systems. Maybe we'll get enough evidence to go home and get you to arrest someone properly.”

“All right, fine,” says Carmelita. She looks down, presumably at the keyboard, as she taps something out. “There's your first objective. But I cannot believe I'm doing this!”

Bentley tucks his binoc-u-com away. “Sheesh!” he mutters, too quietly for it to be picked up, then jumps down from his post and sneaks behind the first guard. “As soon as I get close enough, I just have to press the circle button,” he mutters, his mechanical arms extending as he inches closer and closer behind the alligator. It takes several picks, but he gets the key and wheels his way towards the other one. “How you doing, Carmelita?”
“The guards won't stop moving,” she says. “How am I supposed to get a lock on them when—there we go.”

“Perfect.” Bentley has to do some jumping and use his hover-pack to get behind this guy, and it's a more difficult job. With that done, Carmelita projects his new objective, and he opens the door.

“Okay, I'm going in.”

“Make sure you bring back any evidence I might be able to use,” says Carmelita as Bentley enters.

The area Bentley finds himself in appears to be a single large room, closed for the night. A fireplace dominates one large wall, the fire providing the only light. “This appears to be some sort of smithy,” says Bentley as he looks around, “but not for anything I've ever seen before.” In addition to the fireplace, Bentley finds a high-tech laser melter, used for metals such as titanium and steel, both of which are stacked in large, irregular blocks around the place; expensive molds in the shape of feathers are stacked on one wall, and a number of metal feathers have been driven into the wall, stem first, and used as hooks to hold bags of equipment. There appears to be another level, but Bentley can't exactly climb the rope ladder up there.

But he *can* use the blocks of metal as a makeshift staircase, using his hover-pack to make one jump. One item glows green up there, catching his eye: a computer. “Carmelita, you there?” he asks, putting one hand to his head to ensure his communicator's in position.

“Where did you expect me to be? Swimming?”

“Cute. Give me a shout if someone comes in; I've got some hacking to do.”

“Sure, just let me ring out my hair.”

Bentley cracks his knuckles and gets to work. And not long after he's in, he experiences a very real sense of deja vu. “Hello Bentley,” whispers the computer, just as the systems he hacked did during that fiasco with Le Paradox. “How are you doing?”

This was Penelope's work. Whatever's going on here, she had a hand in it.

“Destroy it all, Bentley,” says the computer. “It shouldn't be here.”

But, he decides as he works his way through the code, she's been very, very sloppy about it. “This is strange,” he says.

“What? Did the computer go swimming, too?”

“No. This is Penelope's work. I've got a command to shut down half the spotlights aimed at that central crypt.”

“What's weird about that? We came here on a hunch that rat was involved.”

“She didn't set any alarms for if it was turned off,” Bentley says. “Penelope liked putting so many alarms on things even *I* thought it was excessive.”

“Wait, someone more obsessive than you?”

“Cute,” says Bentley, turning off the lights. “I'm all done in here. Time for the next area.”

The next building Bentley wants is well across town. One of the guards he has to pickpocket is patrolling the dry part of the river; Bentley has to take care not to splash in the low water nearby and
alert him. The other is walking around the building in a slow circle; again, not a challenge. Bentley
lets himself in.

Large metal containers line the walls and cordon off rows barely wide enough for Bentley to
navigate. Each one has drawers, dozens of them; Bentley opens one and gets heat to the face.
“Drying racks,” he says aloud. “But I'm not familiar with this type of herb.”

“Bring some back with you,” says Carmelita. “I'll analyze it.”

Bentley nods, pocketing some, and continues up a ramp to the second floor. Dozens of automated
grinders are hard at work up here, crushing and smashing a form of red powder into being. Past them
is a second computer. It takes Bentley some smart dodging and jumping to reach it with all the
machines active. “Don't worry, fair computer, this'll be over in a jiffy.”

“Why are you here, Bentley?” asks the computer.

Bentley ignores it as he hacks, traversing the B-list with his hacker code and taking down firewalls.

“Do you want to save your friends, Bentley?” asks the computer.

This job's a little harder. Penelope set up a defense avatar. But it's not going to stand up to his coding
skills.

“Don't want... the doctor...” says the computer as Bentley finishes.

“This should turn off the rest of the spotlights,” says Bentley. “Can you confirm it, Carmelita? You
should be able to pick something up from one of the transmitters Murray placed earlier.”

“Hang on—ugh, I hate computers—there we go. It's off, all right. But it looks like there are still a
couple padlocks on the door.”

“All right,” Bentley says, wheeling himself out into a fade-to-black exiting screen. “Here's how to
find the guards with the keys.”

By the time Bentley's gotten out of the herb drying room, Carmelita's got his next two targets online.
These two guards are circling the formerly spotlit crypt (with newly installed steel door), going in
opposite directions. “Sly would make this look easy,” he mutters as he darts into the circle, grabs
some coins, and darts out again to avoid the circle of torchlight. “It just isn't as fun without him
around.”

“Did you say something?” asks Carmelita, just as Bentley grabs the second key.

“No,” Bentley says at once. “Probably just static. I'm going in.”

And so he does. On silent wheels.

The atmosphere of this place takes him back to the crypts of Prague. The descending hallway lined
in stone. The grotesquely exaggerated statues of tigers and foxes. The swinging ax trap...

...without any axes. Or, for that matter, spikes in the floor. When Bentley fires an experimental dart at
them, what comes up are bare sticks. “That's... weird,” he says.

Bentley continues down the airless corridor. Past log traps that twitch back and forth, futilely, as
something unseen prevents them from moving. Past the torchlight flickering on statue after statue,
making them appear to move; he turns around more than once to see nothing behind him. Three,
four, then five rooms... of broken traps with no cause, no explanation.

Finally, Bentley reaches the very end of the corridor, to find an old-fashioned prison cell, bars and all... and a door swinging open. He swallows hard. “Sly?” he calls into the empty cell. “Are you there?”

“I must admit, when Sly told me to expect his friends from the future, I expected someone... sneakier.”

Bentley almost jumps out of his chair. He turns on the spot to find a raccoon looking him up and down. The raccoon is wearing a tall gold-and-white striped hat, an oversized gold necklace in lieu of a shirt, and--strangely, to Bentley's perspective--a gold and white wrap-around skirt that falls to his knees. The clincher, though, was what he's carrying: twin canes, one in each hand, with staffs half as long as the one Sly used.

“Of course, he also said that times had changed,” the raccoon said. “I am Slytenkhamen Jr. Please, call me Khamen.”

“Fascinating,” Bentley says, adjusting his glasses. “It's an honor to meet you. According to the Thievious Raccoonus—I shouldn't tell you, I'm not sure if you've done it yet.”

“The book my father started is still around?”

“And referenced often,” Bentley says.

“Much as I would like to chat, I believe your presence means I can leave this accursed place,” says Khamen. “It would be best if we talked elsewhere.”

“Right,” says Bentley.

**JOB COMPLETE**

_Bentley victory pose... with Khamen looking on in befuddlement._

Chapter End Notes

And so we introduce Khamen. I do wish it'd been Sly, but hey, progress.

Please leave a comment. They make me happy.
**Bentley's Narration**

We went back to the safe-house together. Khamen quickly made himself at home, downing an entire gallon of water before offering Carmelita a veil (and narrowly avoiding being smacked for the offer). Once he settled in, he told us what had been going on.

He wasn't too clear on whether he'd found Sly or Sly'd found him (picture of the two raccoons staring at each other), but the two of them got to work trying to figure out a way to send a message. They'd actually written several things in the Thievius Raccoonus before realizing that anything added wouldn't set off the various alarms I had set monitoring the book in our time—if it was added, it had always been there, not like when things were being removed. (Picture shows dozens of messages on several pages, including one asking the 'wizard' to find him, a sketch of Murray climbing a pyramid, and a reproduction of their childhood cooky-stealin plan.)

They were trying to work out another way when the river dried up, at about the same moment that tower appeared, three months ago, in an earthquake that split Khamen's hideout to pieces. (The screen shows the earthquake and appearance of the tower in a flashback). The two of them had split up, trying to deal with this 'rage from the future' and figure out how to stop it... only Khamen had gotten locked inside the crypt he'd been investigating. (Picture of Khamen in the crypt, clutching the bars of the cell in the back.) He could disable all the traps, but he couldn't get past the laser fences. And with his safe-house under guard, he can't get at all his tools.

Sly was last seen going to investigate the tower. While he wouldn't teach Khamen any of the moves from the Thievius Raccoonus that hadn't been invented yet, that didn't stop Sly from railwalking over there himself. (Picture of the tower looming in the distance).

None of us took this news well. (Picture of them all looking dejected). We all knew Sly could take care of himself, but this might be different. But at least now we knew he was alive, and he was here.

Now we just have to talk Carmelita out of going in guns blazing and work out a plan. (Shows Bentley and Murray blocking the exits as Carmelita threatens them with her shock pistol.)

**Thiefnet Upgrades**

**Bentley: Explosive Darts.**
Carmelita checks her shock-pistol, her gloves, her bullet-proof vest, and with a sigh of irritation puts on that stupid *mask* before hoisting the small pack Bentley gave her and setting out. Thanks to the others, she has a decent idea of the town's layout... and her destination.

“Unless you're sure you've been spotted, it's always better to walk,” says Bentley in her ear. “Running attracts attention and draws more guards. Walking makes far less noise.”

“I know this, Bentley,” she mutters as she enters the streets.

“People don't look up,” Bentley says a few seconds later. “Everyone looks where they are or lower, not higher. If you're trying to go unnoticed, the roofs are your best friends—and they give you a better idea of the surrounding area.”

“I *know*, Bentley,” growls Carmelita, but she jumps onto a rooftop anyway.

“Always make a note of what you can use for cover,” Bentley adds moments later. “Like the sign on the roof of the chariot shop, or those barrels on the street below. If someone comes that you're not expecting, most people's eyes will just—”

“I would notice someone in those areas,” growls Carmelita.

“Most people aren't the pride of Interpol,” Bentley reminds her. “These are hired thugs. And... you haven't always.”

Carmelita growls under her breath and makes her way to the edge of the fissure. The radio pyramid Murray dropped earlier makes a gentle humming noise, more felt than heard, as she passes by it and pulls out her binoc-u-com. At some point, she'd taped the torn picture of Sly kissing her to the inside, as well as a copy of the rights she'd read to a criminal, and an old photograph of what looks like her graduation from police academy, being congratulated by three older foxes—two men and a woman—who may be her relatives. “I'm at the start point,” she says.

“Okay, Carmelita. Your assignment is to get to that tower, place the radio-transmitters in the spots I've indicated, and get out. We're all worried about Sly, but without more information, we can't do anything, understand? This is purely a stealth job.”

“I've done undercover work for Interpol before,” she tells Bentley. “I know how to go unnoticed.”

“It's not your strong suit. Look, Carmelita, forget about anything else, if something happens to you we're sunk and Sly will have my head. So just play it safe over there?”

“Fine,” Carmelita says, and puts her binoc-u-com away.

Jumping over the fissure leads to a loading screen for a new area. It picks up again near the base of The Tower, a large empty area with guards patrolling the edges in slow circles. “Easy does it here, Carmelita,” says Bentley over her earpiece. “Place that first device just outside the door, then start climbing. If Sly can move freely, he'll find them—and if he can't, we may pick up some interesting bits of information.”
“Where can I put it?”

“There's a vase right by the door, see? Try swapping it out for our transmitter. Put it in your pack to keep anyone from noticing.”

“You're suggesting I steal—”

“If this is a false lead we'll put it back, no harm done. Just be careful.”

“Fine,” Carmelita whispers back, then tucks her binoc-u-com away. Dodging the guards circling the tower is child's play, not that she enjoys it; from the ground, she makes a leap onto one of the tower's many erratic metal bars, sticking out at an odd angle.

I could describe Carmelita's climb of the tower in detail. I could describe the way the wind picked up to throw off her jumps sometimes, so that she had to adjust her aim and timing; I could tell you about the banners hanging everywhere, orange with white tips, that flap in the breeze and provide indications of when it's best to jump. I could explain how she gritted her teeth and pressed her back against the wall and slid sideways, toes poking over open air, while Bentley assured her that this was something anyone could do and it didn't matter how little practice she had as long as she didn't look down. I could tell you about the haphazard ropes and, as she got higher, the way some spires had plants growing along them, with pipes placed directly above each of these odd, misshapen 'branches' to provide water.

But instead, I'm going to tell you this, from one Sly Cooper fan to another; in fact, something Bentley notes aloud to Carmelita as she climbs:

“Sly would've had a field day here.”

The odd angles for jumps and spins. The uneven siding that almost seems to scream for wallhook maneuvers. The ropes tangled with each other, stretching from one area to another in ways that beg to be climbed and slid and danced upon. The random points almost tailor-made for spire jumping, electricity buzzing through them at random intervals for no reason anyone can tell; the decorative loops providing shade from the sun that could be grabbed with a cane and swung from; the various poles that beg to be walked upon even as they support pots and drip water down to the plants within; the lazily rotating fans to duck in and out of or even grab hold of the decorative edging and go for a ride like any Ferris wheel... even Carmelita can admit this looks like a thief's playground.

It's almost a shame he isn't here to enjoy it.

What am I talking about? I'm sad he isn't here to enjoy it. I want to play on this thing!

Still, it isn't long before Carmelita's reached a walkway about halfway up the tower, a balcony circling the whole perimeter, and has to stop and contact Bentley. “I can't get any higher,” she says, looking upwards. “There's just nowhere for me to stand.”

“Don't worry, this should be fine,” says Bentley, looking at the location. “See if you can plant it beneath that walkway, that'll get us some good readings.”

Carmelita's just planted her second, and final, radio-transmitter when the door flies open with a bang. “SO!” Snarls the person above her. “The second blasted Cooper has escaped.”

Carmelita eases her head out from underneath the walkway just far enough to see and freezes. Standing above her is... “Rajan,” Carmelita says, barely breathing the word.

Rajan was one of the Cooper gang's old enemies. Gone is his old electric-charged staff and turban.
He's changed his ceremonial vest and wide pants for robes more suited to the desert heat. A large ruby lies in a choker around his neck, glowing from within.

"Wha—him?! I haven't seen him since that stunt in the jungle with India! That was three years ago, what is he doing out of jail?"

"He's out on probation," says Carmelita, ducking back beneath. "Dr. Foxworthy signed off on it; he'd been cured of his worst criminal inclinations and was receiving monthly counseling sessions." She growls. "I'm going to have words with that uncle of mine. Last I knew, Rajan was trying to found his own flooring company."

"Well he's certainly floored us with this," says Bentley. "It must've been around the time Le Paradox was trying to rewrite history, that's how I didn't get the regular update on our old enemy. Stay out of sight."

"If he has Sly—"

"There's nothing we can do now!"

"He's a criminal—"

"If you blow your cover, Carmelita, we'll never get Sly back."

"At least everything here is going according to plan," snarls Rajan, strolling along the walkway; Carmelita presses herself against the edge beneath it and sneaks across, staying in hearing range. "Using the force of the river and fans to irrigate the spice plants is working better than I expected." He punches the wall beside him, leaving a dent. "If it weren't for those blasted gems, it would all be mine!"

"Gems?" mutters Bentley.

"This will be over soon enough," Rajan says again, seemingly trying to calm himself. "And then that Interpol idiot will pay for his disrespect!"

Then he's gone, back inside the building. "Come on back to the safe-house, Carmelita," says Bentley. "We need to work out a plan."

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Carmelita poses with her gun, then glances over the edge nervously and starts making her way down.*
Bentley:

(Several pictures of the area—including the crypts, tower, and Rajan—flash by as Bentley talks.) All right everybody, we've got a clear picture of what's going on now. We may not know how Rajan got here, but we do know one of our most dangerous old foes has set up shop in a time he has no right to be. If what he said is any indication, he's got Sly locked up somewhere. Judging by his conversation, he's also working with someone, who may not be here. Worst of all, he's using up most of the water. If someone doesn't stop him soon, this whole area may succumb to drought.

Our job is simple: we need to take him out and get Sly back. We're going to need to pull off a few more jobs before we can pull this off, though. Before we do anything else, we need to get Khamen back his tools. (Image of some sort of... chain? Nunchucks?)

Khamen:

Indeed. While the basics of thievery require no such effort, the traps of the crypts and sarcophogi require more finesse. Without my tools, I can disable them only with difficulty.

Bentley:

We'll get them back. You and I are going to make short work of the mess surrounding your safe-house. (Picture of a half-levelled building).

Khamen:

Oh. You. Traversing a maze of traps and treachery. Are you sure you--

Bentley:

Yes, well, I've done it before. (Picture of Bentley, sans wheelchair, jumping between lasers in what looks like a train). Although, if I haven't already, I will need to purchase a new grapple-cam before we start that job.

Khamen:

A what?
Bentley:

Anyway, once we've finished with that, we've got to find Sly's exact location. If we don't find him in the crypts or other places blocked off from Khamen, then the next most secure location is that tower. *(Picture of said tower.)* Carmelita, I know how you feel about breaking and entering, but—

Carmelita:

But Rajan is growing enough Spice to supply three continents! *(Picture of the plants Bentley found drying in one building.)* Do you know what that does to people? Increases susceptibility to hypnosis, causes fits of uncontrolled rage, hurts common sense—

Bentley:

Believe me, we know. But even with your skills, you won't be able to take Rajan on without backup. Get in there and stay as hidden as you can. *(Picture of Carmelita hiding behind a flowerpot.)* I'll give you some of my tools; if you activate them, I'll be able to use them remotely. If you can get Sly out, great, but if not, we'll get him a new binoc-u-com and keep things moving. *(Picture of Sly from game 4.)*

To do anything else, though, we need to get the rest of the team over there. *(Pictures of Bentley, Murray, and Khamen flash by.)* Rajan is fond of chariot racing, and there's an event coming up. *(Picture of a chariot.)* Murray, you'll disguise yourself as one of his guards and compete in the race. *(Picture of the racing area.)* There must be a way to get the chariots and guards over that fissure. *(Picture of the fissure.)* That's our ticket over.

We've all got our assignments. Let's move out.

*Thiefnet Computer*

*Carmelita: Stun Kick. Your roundhouse kick now stuns nearby enemies.*

*Murray: Barreling Charge. Mow down enemies in your way.*
Predator in the Dunes

JOB 5: Back Trap

Khamen exits the back of the van at a run, balancing on the balls of his feet as he moves forward. His job begin point is mere steps away from the van, and by the time he's reached it, Bentley's already wheeled over to join him. “I do not need you to accompany me, chair-turtle,” says Khamen. "Now that I know what awaits me, failure is not a possibility."

"Look, Khamen, whatever you might think you can do, there's problems occurring even you couldn't prepare for," says Bentley, adjusting his glasses. "You might be a Cooper, but there's a reason some moves in the Thievious Raccoonus aren't being used in our time."

"Mere words could never communicate all the subtleties of being taught firsthand." Khamen starts walking towards town without even glancing at Bentley. "While Sly may be my descendant, he acknowledged being self-taught. There are nuances of which he is unaware."

"Look, Khamen, I'm trying to save your life so you get descendants." Bentley wheels himself in front of Khamen, stopping the raccoon in his tracks. "Your father's specialty was the invisibility technique, right?"

"Of course—"

"It's useless against lasers," Bentley interrupts. "We've faced, and this guy has, technology that detects heat. Unless you can make yourself stone cold, some things will kill you, even when you're invisible."

Khamen growls under his breath. “And you can do that, turtle?"

“No,” says Bentley. “But the devices I control can turn that stuff off. Which is why I'm coming with you.”

Khamen snorts in irritation but continues forward. “Fine,” he grumbles.

Loading screen! Loading loading loading, we're going to Khamen's hide-out on the outskirts of town, which has been partially destroyed by that giant fissure.

When the loading screen clears, Bentley and Khamen are inside one of the Egyptian houses; light comes from the gap in the roof where the fissure goes through. A stairway reveals a basement, which is also divided in half, with a Suspiciously Unsuspicious Bookcase on the opposite side. Khamen waits by the fissure, which is too far to jump across.

The player controls Bentley and explores the house. There's a large amount of debris around—fallen stone and bits of roof, pillars that support things that don't exist anymore... and, when the proper items are bombed, they fall into the basement and create a bridge across the fissure. Khamen leaps across it at once, Bentley following.

Khamen moves the bookcase to reveal a 'hidden' door... with laser security. “So,” he says. “Are turtles capable of passing through such holes?"

“With my grapple-cam, I can get us past this barrier.”
Yep. Bentley's got the grapple-cam. You know what this means, everyone: controlling a small item with extendable grappling hooks that can either A: hold the cam in place or B: attach to a far-off location and pull the camera along with it. Along with the gun, ability to cause distractions, and self-destruct button, of course.

All of which Bentley explains aloud, presumably for Khamen's benefit, as he navigates the camera through a gap in the lasers and down the stone staircase beyond. At the bottom of the staircase is a bright red button, which Bentley presses by putting his grapple-cam on it; the lasers turn off.

“Ah. I see I underestimated you,” says Khamen.

Bentley exits the viewfinder and the two of them go down the stairs. Khamen uses one of his canes to unlock the door there, and they step through into...

...well.

Bentley, at least, has flashbacks to Prague. Swinging axes, spikes in the floors, swords thrusting from the walls at intervals, massive pits, giant rocks rolling down predetermined paths, spotlights, laser grids that move back and forth along select paths, guards on the rare locations that are safe... and there, at the very end, are Khamen's tools in a ceremonial case.

Khamen's grip on his canes tighten. “My security has been... reactivated, and repositioned. Without my tools, I cannot get through this.”

“Hmmm.” Bentley says. He wheels back and forth in front of the closest obstacle, careful not to trigger it. “Gimme a moment to think.”

“Think, you say,” says Khamen. “Think. It's not like a turtle can fly—”

“Wait a minute,” says Bentley. “Khamen, can you—I don't think walking on ropes was a skill you'd know.”

“It is not,” says Khamen. “Do you mean merely to mock me?”

“How about climbing them?” asks Bentley.

“Of course I can climb them,” says Khamen. “I can climb pipes, I can climb ropes... I can hook my canes over them to slide along or climb across them, hand over hand. Ropes are no challenge.”

“Perfect,” says Bentley. “I've got a plan. I'll get my grapple-cam to that chandelier,” he says, pointing; unlit candles dangle from it. “Once it's up there, I'll extend the wire; you should be able to climb to its position. From there I'll locate another safe location, and a third, until you cross the room.”

“And once I have my tools,” Khamen says, “this room will be... of no concern. Are you certain you can do such a thing?”

“Don't doubt my skills with this, Khamen,” says Bentley, already bringing up his virtual keyboard. “I may not have your athletic capabilities, but I am a god of technology.”

“Do you not fear Anubis will take offense?”

“It's just an expression. Sheesh!”

And so begins some teamwork. The grapple-cam, of course, is familiar to anyone who's played
games 3 or 4. Controlling Khamen as he moves along it, however, is trickier. For the first time this game, players are introduced to grabbing onto things with canes (and Khamen can strike out with the cane he's not using to slide) and climbing along ropes and wires and such (Khamen does so mainly with his legs, canes held tight in either hand). A few guards get shoved into pits along the way, since getting a clear shot that avoids all the traps and spotlights is a bit of a challenge.

At last, however, Khamen's reached the case. He pulls out his tool, which appears to be a length of chain he uses to connect his twin canes. “At last,” he murmurs.

“All right, Khamen, you've got your tools,” says Bentley. “Let's see what those things can do.”

“Let's see,” Khamen murmurs to himself. “In order to use my destabilizer, I need to approach a trap and press the circle button.” He approaches the closest trap—triple swinging axes, for the record—in a crouched position, then, when he uses the device, uses one cane to whip the other in a circle through the air, wrapping around all three axes and making them... vanish, as though sucked into the cane. “Then, I can reposition the devices, and turn them on once more, by pressing triangle.” There's an obvious spot meant to have swinging axes, with scrape marks on the ground, and Khamen walks over to that and presses the circle button; a swing of his other cane, and the axes are swinging merrily along over there, and the spikes along the next part of the path retreat.

“That's remarkable,” says Bentley over their earpieces. “How did you create such a device?”

“I myself am skilled with technology, though I am only capable of altering one trap at a time,” Khamen says, as he continues along the path to the next trap. “Alas, it does not seem to work on the items from your time; perhaps it is not yet advanced enough. And I cannot rid the world of problems set into the ground.”

“You'll still need to time yourself to avoid the lasers and spotlights, though.”

“That will be... a trifling thing,” says Khamen, doing so.

Negotiating the path of death takes time, some careful jumping, a bit of climbing, and careful timing, but it's just one more job. They finish with ease.

“Khamen?” asks Bentley when they're done, and headed back up the stairway to Khamen's hideout.

“What is it?”

“Can I inspect your tools? I really want a set of those.”

Khamen laughs quietly. “Only if you explain the design of your grapple-cam. While I understand you do not wish to tamper with time and give me technology, knowing its design could prove... useful, in the future.”

JOB COMPLETE

_Bentley gives himself a massage with some of his robotic arms; Khamen stands sideways to the camera, crossing his canes and looking stern._
“All right Khamen,” says Bentley over the binoc-u-com, “we need to get Murray into that chariot race. If we do that, we'll be able to get the whole gang over to the tower for the heist. We'll need it to rescue Sly.”

“And how, exactly, am I necessary for Murray to drive a chariot?”

“The race is only open to Rajan's guards. None of them are hippos. In order for us to pull this off, you'll need to steal Murray a disguise.”

“I... don't see how this can possibly work,” says Khamen. “Rajan guards, they are... tall. Fierce. Green. With tails. Having Murray pass as one of them is more than impossible.”

“Which means we get to do it. Those are all the traits we'll need to make Murray embody. Now, I've marked several locations on your binoc-u-com for items you'll have to steal for Murray's disguise. First on the list is that broken fence by the fissure.”

“Are you sure you're not just making up work for me?” asks Khamen.

“Just steal the fence already.”

Khamen pockets his binoc-u-com and makes his way through town, pickpocketing guards as he goes —purely for practice, of course. The fence is a rope-and-wood thing, with most of the wooden spikes broken off; stealing it is as simple as untying it.

He holds it over head in the classic 'ITEM GET!' pose, only to have Murray appear from nowhere behind him and snatch it out of his hands, tie the rope around his waist, and run off, several feet of rope-and-wood spiked fence dragging behind him.

“Great,” says Bentley over the earpiece. “Next up: a green tablecloth.”

“Are you implying something about my skills?” asks Khamen, as he leaps from roof to roof. The waypoint Bentley's projecting is on the other side of town; getting there will take a few minutes.

“No. This is vital for the heist.”

“If you say so,” says Khamen. The tablecloth he's supposed to steal turns out to be a piece of laundry, hanging on a line; Khamen snatches it and holds it over his head. ITEM GET!

Murray runs up and grabs the tablecloth from Khamen's hand. A blur of motion turns into an old-fashioned dust cloud as Murray does something, complete with sound effects: 'Ooof'. 'No, not there!' 'Owowowowowowowow!' 'There we go.'

When the dust clears, Murray.... has used his belt to hold the tablecloth to his waist, with one corner coming to rest over his head, dangling between his eyes; one corner dragging on the ground, tied to the end of the broken fence so it covers it; and the last two corners in each hand. He raises his arms and flaps the tablecloth like wings. “THE MURRAY, AWAY!”
Khamen stares after him in silence for a moment. “This is a horrible idea,” he says at last.

“Terrific idea, I agree. Now, the next item we're going to need is several leaves from one of the palm trees at the oasis.”

“Are you sure this will qualify as 'stealing' Bentley?” asks Khamen as he heads back that way. “It seems to be running errands. Errands anyone else could do.”

“That is not true! Carmelita's on her way to the tower again, and Murray and I... can't climb.”

“I see. So it's my climbing skills you wish for. Hmf.” Khamen sits on top of the tree he grabs the leaves from to do the 'ITEM GET!' shot this time... and then the tree starts bending. Khamen glances down to see Murray frantically trying to climb the tree and succeeding only in shaking it. He tosses the leaves down.

Murray uses the leaves to create a 'snout' of some sort for his crocodile disguise. The stems of the leaves are clearly visible.

“All right, the last thing we need is one of the guard's military-grade flak jackets.”

“I need to steal a what?” asks Khamen.

“Steal one of the guard's shirts,” says Bentley. “Just go up to a guard and pickpocket them until you've got their clothing. Just press the circle button once you've gotten close enough. Should be easy for a thief of your caliber, right?”

“That is... I mean—”

“Perfect. Off you go, Khamen.”

Boy, does Khamen have some uncomplimentary things to mutter under his breath about this one! But yes, he does manage to steal the shirt off someone's back. He's a Cooper, after all.

And this time, rather than hold up the item, he just tosses it over his shoulder. Murray catches it, and in a moment, TRANSFORMS!!!!... by which I mean he puts the jacket on over the tablecloth. And he looks... like a pink hippo in a jacket with leaves on his face wearing a tablecloth and dragging a fence.

But it appears to satisfy Bentley. "Great. You're all done for now, Khamen. Come on back to the safe-house."

"No," Khamen says, watching Murray wrestle with the tablecloth. With the jacket constraining it, it's wrapped around him properly but the dangling edges for his arms are a problem; Murray tucks them under his gloves.

"No?" asks Bentley.

"I will stay and watch the chariot races. Doubtless the events there shall be entertaining.”

“Uh-huh,” says Bentley, adjusting his glasses. “You don't think Murray can pull it off, do you.”

“No.”

“Trust me,” says Bentley. “He'll be fine.”

All right, moving on, let's go see how Murray's doing. He's... well, he's walking in the front door of
the Chariot shop. “I hear you're having a race!” he shouts, banging one fist on the counter.

The shop's owner, a jackal with a lazy eye, blinks at him slowly. “We are,” he says, looking Murray up and down. “But it's only open to those who serve the spice lord. Do you—”

“Do I serve the spice lord?” Murray asks, putting one hand to his chest and holding the tablecloth in place. “Of course I do! Would I be wearing this jacket if I didn't?” he asks, turning to show it off, his 'tail' dragging on the floor as he spins.

“I... see,” says the Jackal. “Well then, I suppose all is in order... do you have your entry fee?”

“Totally!” Murray says.

When next we see Murray, he's standing in a chariot, picking up the reins. It's not a large vehicle, but it holds him, and it's set high enough that there's a good few feet of space between the bottom and the wheels—a design clearly made so that he can see above the heads of the animal he'll be commanding.

Oh, the animal he'll be commanding? The chariots aren't pulled by horses, you see. They're not pulled by camels, either, though that would make sense in the desert. Oh, no.

They're wild hippos.

That's right. The Murray is going to control a chariot pulled by a wild hippo.

“Okay Murray,” says Bentley over the binoc-u-com. “The vehicle you're driving is... a bit strange, but you should be able to handle it. Press the X button to snap your whip in the air; that'll scare it into speeding up. Use the L1 button to pull back on the reins and turn left; use the R1 button to pull back on the reins and turn right; and press both buttons at the same time to slow down or stop. If things get hairy out there, you can use the left analog stick to lean in different directions. Try ramming yourself sideways into some opponents—or even pressing the square button while pressing left or right to punch them. It's all fair here.”

All fair indeed.

The Murray trounces the competition, to Khamen's shock, and is awarded a small trophy... and told when to return to the chariot shop to go to the finals.

**JOB COMPLETE**

*The Murray does a victory pose with his trophy*
“All right, Carmelita,” says Bentley over the binoc-u-com once she's crossed the fissure once again. “We need you to explore that tower. We don't know what's going to be up there, so if you need to, contact me and toss the grapple-cam or slap on my remote hacking device; I'll take care of things there.”

“Of course, Bentley,” Carmelita says, focusing her camera on the door. It opens, and Rajan comes out; he appears to be speaking with a guard. “I'm sure it will be fine.”

“If you find Sly, but you can't free him, don't try it anyway,” says Bentley. “We've got a plan in place. Get him that mask you're carrying, then get out. You'll play a vital part in taking down Rajan; we can't lose you as well as Sly in an ill-advised attempt at rescue.”

“Bentley,” says Carmelita, “if you think for one minute I'm leaving him behind again—”

“Again?” asks Bentley. “Usually it's been us trying to leave you behind!”

“If he hadn't fought Le Paradox alone, then—”

“Look, Carmelita, you can't blame yourself,” says Bentley. “Just... get in there and stay out of sight. We'll worry about whether we can get Sly out now or if we have to wait once we've found him. And be fast. Rajan will only be gone long enough to watch the chariot races. Khamen and Murray are entered in the final heat; they'll give you some warning.”

Carmelita shoves her binoc-u-com into her pocket. This time, when she approaches the tower, she goes right in through the front door... after opening it a crack and glancing through first, of course. No one in sight. She slips inside and stands in the bare stone room, letting the door close behind her.

The inside of the tower is made of stone, cold and gray and utterly un-Egyptian. A doorway directly opposite from where she stands catches her attention, and she moves forward to investigate, only to discover it's heavily trapped—too heavily for her to even hope of getting through. A staircase spirals around the edges of the room, wide and thick, and so she begins climbing that.

About one story up she comes to a door. Closed, locked. Directly across the room is a landing, just out of jumping distance... and on that landing a single guard. Fast asleep. Standing right next to a large, red, highly shootable switch.

Congratulations. Interpol's best shot gets to climb a tower full of switches that have to be shot to open doors. And yes, I do mean full of switches. By the time Carmelita's reached the balcony level, near where she put that radio-transmitter pyramid, she's shot lots of switches. Moving switches, tiny switches, big switches, switches on timers, Carmelita's nailed them all. I mean, it's obvious none of them were designed to be shot at. There's another staircase going up the wall, parallel to the one she's on, and the switches are always by platforms: it seems obvious guards are supposed to buzz people through. Most of them are unguarded, however. And the few that do have guards, well... as any Sly Cooper fan knows, guards aren't very good at guarding things.

This seems to be the top of the staircase, in any event. Or, at least, this staircase. The room she's arrived at takes up half the tower; the other staircase's entrance can be seen on the far side. A wall
divides the tower neatly in half. No one's in sight.

There are two ways out of this room. One is a rope ladder that goes straight up, to a hatch in the ceiling; presumably, there's another room up there. With a massive padlock on the hatch to keep it closed, of course.

The other way out is a door in the center of the wall dividing the tower in two. It's strong, sturdy, almost certainly unbreakable. And next to it is a modern-day computer, keeping it closed.

Carmelita puts one hand to her head to ensure the communicator works. “Bentley,” she says. “I am deputizing you for police work and assisting me with cracking this computer for—”

“I know, we've got plenty if you want to arrest him, let me at the computer! You don't need to justify it, yeesh!”

Carmelita slaps Bentley's remote... computer... hacking... thing on the tower and Bentley gets to work. This is undoubtedly more of Penelope's work. “Hello, Bentley,” the computer greets him. Perhaps his hacking style is too unique for its own good... or maybe he's just the only one who's ever cracked her servers.

“Saving your friends, Bentley?” the computer asks him as he makes his way through B-trees and breaks down her firewalls. He finds himself being accosted by the anti-virus, of all things, and almost laughs; he's never dealt with that before.

“Don't look in its eyes,” her computer warns as he breaks through her defenses. What a bunch of nonsense. “Okay Carmelita, I'm opening the door,” says Bentley.

And so he does. And what's on the other side?

I think the next room can be properly described as a death trap. There's no doubt that large sections of the floor will kill on contact; there's equally no doubt that these things can't be turned off or removed. Tiny patches of safe ground litter the place, all within Carmelita's jumping distance—just—but little else; banners line the walls, orange with white tips like those outside, hanging from hooks.

And across the room, chained hand and foot to the wall, back to Carmelita, is a raccoon in a tattered blue shirt and hat.

“I found you,” Carmelita says, bringing up her binoc-u-com. She zooms in on him, noting how the cuffs go around both his gloves, how his feet dangle a good few inches off the ground.

Bentley responds through the binoc-u-com. “You found Sly? He's there? Where—whatever you do, Carmelita, do not yell out to him. Do you see those wires dangling off the ends of the banners? They're sensitive to sound. Make too much noise and every guard in the place will come running.”

“So I'll just have to get close enough to talk to him,” Carmelita murmurs.

“Are you sure you can make those jumps?” Bentley asks, as Carmelita focuses on spot after spot, trying to plan a route.

“It won't be easy,” Carmelita admits, “but busting criminals never is. I'll get to Sly.”

“Okay. Once you've reached him, give him his new mask—you may have to tie it on for him. I doubt you're capable of picking those locks, and if he could escape he wouldn't be here. But be careful.”
“I make no promises,” Carmelita says, and puts her binoc-u-com away before Bentley’s done scolding her. Getting through this area will be a major test of her skills. One wrong move won’t just mean failure and her own capture, maybe death—it’ll mean Sly will still be trapped here, and Rajan and his guards on alert for others from the future.

So, naturally, Carmelita crosses with the sort of ease that would make Olympic Medalists cry foul. I mean, I’m not sure what type of Olympic Medalist would be doing that, but they’d do it. I promise you.

“Sly,” she says when she’s across, and lays a hand on his shoulder.

Sly jerks against the chains. “Well, I suppose it had to happen sometime,” he says to the wall. “I didn’t know my imagination was this good.”

“Get over yourself, Ringtail, and look at me.”

Sly does, but his expression doesn’t change. “All right, next rehearsal time. Look, Carmelita, I was an absolute idiot. I wasn’t honest with you when I should have, and—”

“It’s all in the past, Ringtail,” says Carmelita. “And now isn’t the time for it, anyway. “

“Really?” asks Sly, raising one eyebrow. “Because, I mean, we’re in the past, after all.”


“I came with your friends,” she says.

“Bentley and Murray? They’re here? Well, that changes things. What do you know about what’s going on?” Sly asks. “Cause I could fill you in, but I’d really appreciate getting down from here first.”

“I was sent ahead with this,” Carmelita says, showing him the new mask. “I don’t have the keys to your chains. But I promise, Ringtail—I’ll come back for you. And with your mask on, you’ll be able to hear the plan.”

Carmelita changes his mask as Sly holds still. “Guess I won’t be able to make suggestions, though,” says Sly. “But I’ll be here if you need me. And, Carmelita?”

“Yes?”

“I... I, uh—”

“I know,” says Carmelita. She stands on her toes and gives him a kiss on the nose. “Me, too.”
Bentley:

All right everyone, the pieces are in place and we've made contact with Sly. (picture of Sly). All we have to do now is go get him and end Rajan's reign of terror over ancient Egypt. (picture of Egypt).

Khamen:

Ancient, is it?

Bentley:

Sorry, Khamen. Just what we're used to calling it. (picture of the Sphynx). In any case, this plan is going to require all of our skills. We're going to have to work together. Here's the plan.

First off is getting across the fissure. (picture of the fissure.) Carmelita, you can jump it, but the rest of us will tag along with Murray. (picture of Murray driving a chariot, hippo and all.) There's enough space beneath that chariot for me to huddle, and no one will notice an extra pair of wheels there if I'm careful. Khamen, you'll also ride in the chariot, making sure to stay out of sight. (picture of Khamen crouching in a chariot.)

Once we're across, we'll need to split up. The races will take place outside of the tower, on the far side of the fissure. (picture of the outside of the tower.) Murray, you need to race—and make it entertaining. (picture of Murray racing in his alligator costume.) We need you to serve as a distraction.

Murray:

You got it, Bentley. No one distractinates like The Murray.

Bentley:

While the race is going on, Khamen, you're up. According to Sly, he's chained like that specifically so he can't pick the locks, and the keys are in Rajan's pockets at all times. (picture of Rajan) While Rajan's distracted, you sneak up behind him and pickpocket them.

Khamen:

Ah. At last, a fitting job for a thief.

Bentley:

...Right. Anyway, once you've got the keys, get into the tower. (picture of the tower.) Carmelita and I will be waiting there—if there were any guards on the ground floor, we'll have taken them out by that point. (picture of Carmelita standing on a pile of unconscious guards.) Carmelita, you'll take the keys and head up to Sly. (picture of Carmelita on the stairs.) Khamen and I will make our way
through the death-trap corridor to the basement. *(picture of death-trap corridor)* That's the core of Rajan's spice-grinding operation; *(picture of game 2's spice grinder)* while he has some smaller shops in town, it's nothing like what's in that basement. If I've done my math right, *(picture of math test)* and I always do my math right, *(Bentley draws an A+ on the test)* a few well-placed bombs should bring the whole operation to a halt.

**Carmelita:**

And then, I can slap the handcuffs on him.

**Bentley:**

Prooobably not until we get to the present, but yes.

**Carmelita:**

Fine.

**Bentley:**

In any case, Carmelita, you'll need to make your way back up to Sly. It's hard to say how many guards'll be on duty with the race going on, but you should still be careful. *(picture of the massive death-trap room Sly's trapped in.)* Getting to Sly might be the easy part: he tried to sound normal, but I get the feeling he hasn't been eating well, and he's no doubt out of practice after his lengthy incarceration. *(picture of Sly chained to the wall.)* You may need to help him out.

With Rajan's spice production halted, he'll have no reason to stay in the past: as soon as he can get to the present, he will, and we'll be waiting for him. *(picture of Bentley, Murray, and Carmelita looking tough in front of the van.)* In the meantime, if you see any part of his operation to destroy, do it. And keep an eye out for Sly's cane. *(picture of the cane.)* Khamen and I will probably find it in the basement, but if it's somewhere else, say something and grab it.

All right, we're as prepared as we can be. Everyone, move out!
Operation: Tiger Races

PREDATOR IN THE DUNES

OPERATION: TIGER RACES

Murray starts the mission, of course, by dressing like an 'alligator' (Seriously, how on earth does that disguise fool anyone?) and getting in his chariot. While he’s ‘preparing’ for the upcoming event—which includes cleaning the wheels, testing the balance, and obeying Bentley's order not to feed the hungry hippos—he maneuvers his chariot near the edge of the chariot course.

Bentley and Khamen jump and hover over the wall and take their positions. “Okay, Murray, I'm ready,” says Bentley into his earpiece. He grabs the underside of the chariot with all his robot arms, ready to roll along when the chariot does.

“As am I,” murmurs Khamen, crouched just before Murray. “Let us be on our way.”

With a crack of the whip, Murray puts his chariot last in line and follows the others to the ridge. Play switches to Carmelita as she follows them through town, a few streets away, using her skills as a cop tailing a suspect to keep them from getting too far out of sight or noticing her (though if it'd been Sly down there he would've. He always did. And Murray gives her a cheery little one-handed wave every time he notices her somewhere, so either her skills are in need of improvement or The Cooper Gang has way too much experience with noticing when they’re watched). The chariots lead her out into the desert, where one of the lesser guards waits on the other side; with the press of a button, two halves of a bridge, one on either side, raise out of the fissure and join.

The chariots rattle over them, Murray's included, and then the guard lowers the gate once more.

Carmelita waits until the chariots are a distance away and the guard isn't paying attention to jump over and shoot him. While he’s stunned, she cuffs him and removes his communication devices, then sets him under the nearby tent. There’ll be no reinforcements from the town after that.

LOADING SCREEN

Bentley slips out of the bottom of the chariot by releasing his handholds and allowing it to continue driving without him. Carmelita meets him, at the base of the tower. “You ready?” asks Carmelita.

“Wait for the race to start,” says Bentley. He checks his dart gun, priming it for action. “We want to catch anyone inside off guard.”

The two of them set themselves to wait. Khamen, meanwhile, slips out of Murray's chariot in the confusion of all the racers getting themselves set for the race. Rajan is watching from a platform built into one side of the tower, about a full story up. Khamen climbs one of several large blocks with a stylized lightning bolt on it and crouches just beneath the platform, waiting for his moment.

A jackal climbs to the starting pole and waves a red flag for attention. "The race will be in three laps," he announces. Alligators, get in position.

All right, everyone! This heist requires doing multiple things at once... so will the narrative. Be prepared for things to REWIND and show us a different character. Why do we need to do this? Because how else can we RACE with The Murray and PICKPOCKET with Khamen at the same time?
And so, without further ado, let's look at the... um... race course. You know, that oddly-shaped oval surrounded by a cactus fence with dust tornadoes in three spots and random obstacles ranging from unrealistically large cacti to the windmill blades that need to be dodged just like mini golf? The sort of course that makes you wonder if the drivers are supposed to survive it? Yeah, that. And The Murray's going to drive it. With his hippo.

This is a great idea, what are you talking about? All Murray has to do, according to Bentley's instructions, is make it 'entertaining'; entertaining enough that Rajan stays transfixed and doesn't notice Khamen pickpocketing from him.

Of course, since this is a Sly Cooper game and The Murray is racing, that means he's going to win. Two parts because he's a great driver, even if he's... driving... a wild hippo... when he himself is a hippo... and he's wearing a tablecloth, and a leaf-snout, and dragging a fence. One part because he punches the other drivers whenever he gets anywhere near them—or they get anywhere near him—and being punched by The Murray is enough to unsettle anyone.

You know, that's two laps of the race The Murray's done now. What say we REWIND and go see what Khamen's doing?

As the race begins, Khamen waits at his post for the sound of cheering to get loud, then peeks over the edge. Rajan's standing at the end of the platform, staring at the race; at irregular intervals he growls, fiddles with the large jewel on his choker, and turns to one side to eat from a large plate of food on a table there, right next to a big red button. The food is liberally covered in red powder: Spice dust. Very illegal, very expensive, and what Rajan grows. For most people, too much Spice can cause fits of uncontrolled rage... but Rajan's been using it for so long he's always one misstep away from one of those rages.

Khamen had better be careful.

Khamen takes his chance and starts pickpocketing. If Rajan weren't stroking that dang choker so often, he'd take that, too! It's got a huge jewel in it; it almost seems to glow from the inside. Khamen finds himself staring at the jewel, entranced. In fact, whenever Rajan strokes the jewel, Khamen is briefly unable to move. Still, he is a Cooper. He's got all the keys before the end of the first lap and, with one last look at the choker, he ducks off the platform and makes his way to the tower's inside.

REWIND

Let's see what Bentley and Carmelita are doing, then? As the starting flag is waved and the race begins, the cheering can be heard from their position on either side of the front door.

Bentley looks at Carmelita.

Carmelita nods.

Bentley holds up his fingers to count down. Three. Two...

On 'one' Carmelita kicks open the door and shoots whatever's closest. The player controls Bentley for this, swinging his wheels to attack and knocking out enemies with sleep darts. Carmelita handles most of the work, but Bentley has to do his share of knock-outs.

They've just finished tying up the last unconscious guard when Khamen comes in. “Great, we've got plenty of time,” says Bentley. “Carmelita?”

“I'll take the keys,” she says, holding out her hands, and the player takes over as Carmelita. She gets to make her way up the stairs, just like last time. Different from last time, though, is that this time
there are guards by all the buttons. And more coming down. And Carmelita no longer cares about being sneaky or subtle.

No one who meets her on the stairs is a flashlight guard; all of them are racing, or watching the race. Carmelita's dealing with hyenas and geckos. And sure, there are a lot of them.

But this is *Carmelita*. 

They should've stayed in bed.

Well over a dozen unconscious guards later, Carmelita reaches the landing and the room of Sly's. Due to Bentley's hacking, it's still unlocked. She goes straight inside, not bothering to be quiet. “Sly!”

“Carmelita.” Sly twists to look at her over his shoulder as she approaches. “It's... *amazing* to see you. You look...”

“Can it, ringtail,” she says, using the keys to unlock him. “The flirty chit-chat can wait until we're out.”

“But there will be flirty chit-chat, right?” asks Sly as he drops to the ground.

Carmelita straightens up from unlocking his feet and smiles at him. “In your dreams.”

REWIND

Carmelita takes the keys and makes her way up the stairs. “Okay, Khamen, we need to make our way through that hallway,” says Bentley.

“You mean I need to disable the traps,” says Khamen, taking care of the first one.

“Yes,” says Bentley, wheeling his way in. “You should put that one back once we're through; it'll keep any guards from coming after us.

Khamen does so, then turns to face the obstacle course that faces them.

In one sense, it's not that different from what Khamen had to do when he got his tools back: take traps blocking their way and reposition them, often in such a way that they destroy the mechanism holding a gate closed or that blocks a guard room. In another, it was rather different. No spotlights. No real guards. Just an endless descent into a dark, damp basement.

When they arrive at the bottom, a few things are immediately noticeable.

The first: the river flows through here. Most of its flow is being diverted through pipes and pumped through the tower. A healthy water level, nearly full at the entrance, is lowered to almost nothing by the end. The river bisects the tower; in order to reach the other side, they'll have to do some jumping or hovering.

The second: The glowing, pulsing, whirling sphere of darkness floating a foot above the ground—or where the ground would be, if it weren't over the river—in the center of the tower. It looks like the embodiment of a bad idea. Four chains hold it in place, stretched taut in four different directions and anchored to the sides of the tower, two near the floor and two near the ceiling. Bentley can't tell how they're attached to the sphere. For all he can tell, they simply vanish somewhere into its depths.

The third is the Spice dust, dumped from somewhere overhead every few seconds. There are a
number of moving platforms on the walls, going in and out, up and down, all at awkward jumps and timings; somewhere near the top is something that causes the Spice manufactured elsewhere in the tower to be dropped down here. The red dust goes directly into the dark sphere and doesn't come out.

The last might be most important: Sly's cane. The family heirloom, passed down from Cooper to Cooper in one form or another, the one Sly inherited from his father so many years ago. Hanging on the wall near the ceiling, between two of the chains holding the black sphere in place. The only possible way up to it is via those moving, shifting platforms.

REWIND

Let's check in with The Murray's race! He won, of course, and the results are... as you expected. The cheering crowd, the flowers being thrown (cactus flowers, of course), the hippo he drove getting a well-deserved drink while his opponents curse (and in some cases, hit) their less successful steeds.

A large trophy is held in the air by the jackal who waved the starting flag. It rightfully belongs to The Murray, as the winner, so he walks over to claim it, on a victory pedestal just below Rajan's balcony, where Rajan watches and eats Spice-covered food. As Murray accepts the trophy, his leaf-snout falls off.


“You're not a real crocodile, are you?” says one guard in the crowd.

“Hey, what's the meaning of this?” says someone else.

And Rajan leans way over the balcony, inspecting him. “YOU!” he snarls. “I know you! The fat, pathetic weakling who works with the Cooper Gang!”

The Murray props his hands on his hips. “Weakling? The Murray beat you like the kitten you are!”

“And if the hippo is here...” he snarls, stroking the jewel around his neck. “GUARDS! A POUND OF SPICE AND THE TROPHY TO THE MAN WHO KILLS THIS HIPPO.” With that yell, he slaps the big red button on the table and turns to climb the tower.

MEANWHILE

An alarm sounds on the wall over the door. Bentley and Khamen turn to the door, to see dozens of Rajan's lesser guards, hyenas and geckos, running towards them at full speed. And, of course, each of the things moving up and down shoots out a laser that goes straight across.

“I do believe,” says Khamen, crouching into a fighter's stance with his canes at the ready, “that this was not a part of the plan.”

MEANWHILE

“Carmelita, you need to get Sly and get out of there,” says Murray over her headset; the sound of fighting echoes in their ears. “Rajan's onto us, and he headed towards your position. We'll meet at the rendezvous.”

“Come on, ringtail,” she says, leading him out into the main room. One glance through the door and she slams it shut. “He's already halfway up.”

“Then let's climb down the outside,” says Sly, just as lasers block that exit. Of course.
“I am not leaving this criminal here to do untold amounts of harm.” Carmelita checks her pistol. “He goes down now. Sly, what sort of shape are you in?”

“Good enough for a fight,” he says. “I'll do what I can to back you up.”

That's all the time they have. Rajan shoves open the door. “COOPER! Your gang has taunted me for the last time!”

“Only one problem,” says Carmelita. “I'm not Cooper.”

“But, Carmelita, I am?” says Sly.

“Shush. You just let me handle this,” says Carmelita.

“YOU! You destroyed my hard-won empire! And now you have followed me here!”

“It's my job to take down criminals,” says Carmelita. “Hands up, and I may show a little mercy.”

“Mercy?” asks Rajan, leaning on his staff. “Mercy? MERCY is a thing for weaklings, a tale told to the unfit and unwell! I shall DESTROY you, you and your allies!”

And so begins a boss fight. Only, as Carmelita realizes after a few shots, there's one problem. “My shock pistol isn't affecting him. We've got to think of something else!”

“Then for now, let's run. Come on!” Sly grabs her arm and pulls her out of Rajan's way, to the rope ladder into the ceiling, the trapdoor now conveniently unlocked. The two of them haul themselves up at full speed...

...and into a proper area for a boss fight. Ohhhh yeah, this is more like it. In addition to the much wider floor, there are a number of platforms in jumping distance, and a lot of pipes gracing the walls, though they don't seem to have water running to them at the moment.

“Carmelita, how are you and Sly doing?” asks Bentley over the binoc-u-com.

“We're safe for the moment,” says Carmelita, “but unless we can figure out a way to boost my shock pistol, Rajan's gonna be a problem.”

“Hold on a second,” says the camera, switching to Bentley, standing by a wall in the dungeon he was in earlier, “just give me time. Khamen, can you hold them for a second?” he yells, taking his hand from his head.

“I can, but not much longer,” says Khamen. “Think quickly, chair-turtle.”

Control switches to Khamen. The lasers are blocking any hope of getting to a higher level; the guards keep coming in, traps or no traps. And boy, is Khamen using any and all of the traps around the edges of the room to his advantage—falling blocks of death, swinging axes, arrows that shoot from the wall, he takes them off and puts them back and rearranges them and keeps the guards from even entering the room they're in. It's all giving Bentley flashbacks to Prague and the bad mojo bomb, but he tries to ignore it; Khamen's knocked out all the guards at this point. There must be something—

then he spies something further up in the room. “Of course! If I turn the wheel on those pipes, that'll alter the flow of the water. Carmelita, are there pipes in the room you're in?”

“Yes—and Rajan's gonna be here in a second!”
“The only problem is, there are lasers between us and those pipes. I doubt there's any way for you to turn them off up there, but if you see a power box—”

“Not to worry, guys,” says The Murray over the headset. The camera switches to The Murray, mid-brawl, surrounded by crocodile guards and restless hippos still tied to their (parked) chariots. “The Murray can do something about those lasers.”

And boy, can he. Unlike him, most of the crocodiles whip their hippo-racehorse-substitutes. It takes a bit of work, but The Murray destroys the chains holding one wild hippo to its chariot; it dashes straight ahead, shouldering aside a power box as it does so.


“Then let us destroy the chain,” says Khamen.

“That might work,” says Bentley. “You stay up here to turn the wheel; I'll go down below and bomb that support.”

And that's just what they do. Bentley bombs, Khamen turns the wheel, and they brace themselves for the worst. “Did anything change up there?” asks Bentley.

“We've got water!” says Carmelita; the camera switches to her, just as she dodges one of Rajan's attacks. The player controls her and continues dodging him. “But it's filling a container, not falling down below.”

“Carmelita, hang on!” says Sly, jumping to one of the platforms. “If you lure him over here I'll dump the water on him.”

That's right. Rajan is in a Spice induced haze of anger, and you have to lead him, matador-style, over to Sly, so he can dump water on Rajan's head and you can actually hurt him.

And whaddaya know, it works...or, at the very least, it does something. The shots get absorbed into the red gem Rajan's wearing around his neck, two, three, four, five; at the sixth blow, it cracks, and Rajan's whole body is surrounded by a massive jolt of electricity... which destroys the pipe so no more water comes out.

Guess Murray needs to free another hippo. “That's right, my hungry friends. Freedom awaits you. THE MURRAY will permit this freedom!”

And be a large ham, but really, what would The Murray be if he weren't?

“There goes another power box, Bentley!”

“Perfect. Khamen, you head for that wheel; I have to bomb that other support.” Play swaps between the two of them, so the player does platforming with Khamen and bombing with Bentley both—and it seems near instantaneous that the pipe is sabotaged, sending the water shooting up to Carmelita.

“Sly! Can you—”

“On my way.”

In short, it's a pretty typical boss fight, with the stages each getting slightly more complicated (number of guards The Murray has to take out, the platforming Bentley and Khamen have to do, the
number of shots that gem absorbs before discharging them all and cracking) but things play out much
the same. Bentley has to use an exploding dart to take out the third chain (the orb shaking wildly,
swinging in all sorts of random directions, as though struggling to be released), and Rajan is
throwing bolts of lightning from his staff at Carmelita (really, he needs to learn to watch his temper)
but it's nothing they haven't done before. Just... under a lot more pressure.

“The guards have cleared out,” says Murray over his binoc-u-com when he's destroyed the fourth
electricity box. “I'm going to head towards the rendezvous; we may need the van.”

“See you there, Murray,” says Bentley, even as the player controls his jumps. “Khamen, you grab
Sly's cane. I'll make my way to the last wheel before I take care of that chain. I don't know what that
orb is, but once it's released, things may get messy.”

“I understand, chair-turtle,” says Khamen. “Do as you must, and I shall do the same.”

“Just be ready,” says Bentley, reaching the wheel. He takes out his binoc-u-com and shoots the last
chain just as Khamen grabs Sly's cane, then spins the wheel.

The sphere is released, all right, but it doesn't drop to the floor. Instead, it starts to rise—through the
ceiling.

“Carmelita, you need to hurry,” says Bentley over the binoc-u-com as she and Sly try to position
Rajan for another spray of water. “We have some... unexplained technological or supernatural
phenomena on its way to your position. I don't know what it does, but you need to get out of there
before we find out.”

Carmelita and Sly together manage the final blow, shattering the gem on Rajan's choker. He slumps
forward, seemingly unconscious, in cutscene time, just as the giant glowing orb rises through the
floor and into their tower room. And starts to pulse eerie light.

Rajan slides on the floor towards the orb and in; so does everything not bolted down. Orange
banners with white tips flap as they try to go to it; Carmelita and Sly have to brace themselves. Pieces
of the wall fly past them, too, opening a way to escape. “Sly!” says Carmelita.

“I'm on it,” says Sly. “Let's go!”

The final sequence of the boss fight is Carmelita frantically climbing DOWN the outside of tower.
Sly goes with her—or ahead of her, or behind her, depending on what master thief moves he's doing,
given that his paraglider got destroyed sometime since he went missing—but the tower is falling into
pieces behind them as the two of them frantically make their way down. The two reach the bottom
just as Murray pulls up in the van, Bentley and Khamen already inside, and they jump in and speed
away.

Behind them, there's a burst of black light—or maybe you'd call it darkness—and both the tower and
the fissure disappear, as though nothing was ever there.
It was odd, being in the back of the van, watching out the window as that tower disappeared. But I couldn't get caught up in it.

For one, there were more important things around—and more specifically, important people. They'd missed me. And I'd missed them. More than anyone could say.

(Of course, some people expressed this differently than others.

(Staying friendly, Bentley proceeds threaten to shoot Carmelita with a sleepdart if she doesn't behave rationally, and she releases Sly, who stops her from turning away by putting a hand on her shoulder. The two exchange smiles before Carmelita turns to talk to Murray and Khamen in the front seats. Sly moves over to Bentley; Bentley's eyes are watering, and Sly goes to give him a handclasp before being pulled in for a hug by all the arms of Bentley's wheelchair.)

Once we were out of the blast radius, Murray pulled over, and we spent some time catching up. (cue Murray lifting Sly in the sort of hug that may break bones). Khamen tolerated it—he's not the most touchy-feely sort of guy—and after some discussion, we decided to spend one last night here, back at their 'hideout'. It was time for a celebration.

(Yes, they're roasting hotdogs and marshmallows over a campfire in the middle of the night in ancient Egyptian desert, because why wouldn't they?)

We set Khamen up in his back-up safe-house, one of the crypts Rajan had trapped with lasers, and got everything packed in the van. Then it was time to head back home.

Carmelita left to go back to Interpol, where she got a surprised by a commendation (Barkley shakes Carmelita's hand): it seems Rajan had turned up unconscious yesterday, along with several hundred pounds of spice and the materials used to make it. We don't know how he got there, or how Interpol knew it was her, but he's back behind bars. (Picture of Rajan scowling, holding the bars of his prison cell in anger; Carmelita and another cop, a fox like her, stand nearby. While Carmelita is recognizable, the other is new. The two turn to walk away). Dr. Foxworthy, who specializes in criminal rehabilitation, has decided not to set Rajan up with counseling sessions this time, since they clearly didn't take before.

And as for me? I just enjoyed being back.

(Yes, there's no doubt there'll be hard times ahead. Something's up, and those postcards from Penelope keep coming. But right now, it's time to take a break, kick back, and maybe go out to a nice dinner.)

And while I'm at it, I should take Carmelita on a date.
End of Area 1.

Chapter End Notes

Now that the first area has been completed, I feel it's appropriate to take a moment to talk about some liberties I'm taking with this fic. While I've been careful to follow the official Cooper Canon as closely as possible, there are a few gray areas, and I've used author discretion as necessary.

First: The given ages of the characters. Carmelita was born in 1981; Sly, Bentley, and Murray were born in 1984. Their ages were consistent for the first three games (18 in Thievious Raccoonus, 20 in Band of Thieves, 21 in Honor Among Thieves) but an age wasn't given for game 4 (Thieves in Time) which also suffered major delays. Since Sly and Carmelita were clearly in a serious relationship (which would take months) but Sly hadn't proposed or stolen anything yet, an 8-year gap seems unlikely. Game 3 took place in 2005, so I've placed Game 4 in 2006, possibly ending in 2007. Sly 5, therefore, begins sometime late in 2007, possibly in early 2008, and makes Sly about age 24.

Second: Given the locations Coopers are stated to live around the globe, and the number of times those dates overlap, I've chosen to assume that the Cooper family had branches around the globe... which gradually became fewer and fewer branches, due to Clockwerk. The Thievious Raccoonus would be passed from person to person, but is just as likely to go from aunt to niece as parent to child, or even from cousin to cousin.

Third: More time travel will occur. The info we have on Coopers always includes the date they were most active, not their birth or death. I've decided that date is when they were between the ages of 20-30 (started stealing as a teenager, hit their prime or pulled their most famous job, continued stealing for many more years). Not that we're likely to see many more Coopers; after all, if they're not being messed with, I doubt Sly would deliberately seek them out...

That's about it. If you've stuck with me so far, prepare for a fun ride. I'm currently working on (stuck on) area 3, job 6 (or 5 or 8, things can happen in various orders) and could continue updating through November without writing another word. The entire document stands at about 54,000 words and you've gotten about 20,000. And I plan to write a fair bit more.
Sly enters the hazard room in fine form, cane in hand, twirling it and ready. An unpulled switch stands along the wall, marked in blue; he pulls it, making two platforms lower, one on each side of the room. He jumps onto the nearest one and waits for the force field to start. He pulls out his binoc-u-com. “Okay Bentley, what are we doing in here today?”

“You're a great thief, Sly, but between your captivity and the other events, it's been a while since you've been on a job. We need to do some exercises before you can go back in the field.”

“What did you have in mind?” Sly asks, leaning on his cane.

“Let's start with movement.” Bentley adjusts his glasses. “Now, you're by far the most maneuverable member of the team. The Thievious Raccoonus contained all sorts of tips from your ancestors.”

“None on dating a cop,” says Sly.

“Why don't you try impressing her with some rail walking and rail sliding?” Bentley asks, dropping some ropes and wires between the two points. “She was quite taken with Tennessee Kid Cooper when we were in the old west. Just—”

“Jump and hit the circle button to land on pipes and ropes,” says Sly. He puts away his binoc-u-com and crosses to the other platform, regaining a feel for walking on different materials and controlling his slide down slippery objects. When he's finished and on the other side he says, “Come on, this is Carmelita we're talking about.”

“How about your ninja spire jump?” Machinery raises the ropes and wires and drops down a set of pointed objects: spears, weather vanes, even a few ridiculously sturdy hats. “She never met Rioichi. Jump and press the circle button to land on narrow points.”

Sly gets from point A to point B in seconds. “Come on, pal, aren't you going to give me a challenge?”

“Not until you've proven you're still good with tight spaces,” says Bentley, dropping an air-vent maze before him. “You're the only member of the team that can get through those.”

“I know Carmelita came with you guys just because of me, but... is she a part of the gang now?” asks Sly, crawling through the maze. “I just can't picture her as a thief.”

“I can't picture you as a cop, either,” Bentley says once Sly's through. “You two can work out whatever craziness you've started later, after we've dealt with our current mess.”

“Right. So, you said you had a challenge?”

“When dealing with prepared guards, sometimes there won't be anything to climb. Those are good times to look for cracks or dents that you can use like a wall-hook.”

“Oh, I just love finding hooking spots,” says Sly. “I just jump and hit the circle button to latch on.”

“Yep. Once you're on, lean back—you know, press away from where you're facing—and press the X button to launch yourself upwards. Or, just press the triangle button to let go and drop.”
“Leaning on hooks,” says Sly. “I'm sure Carmelita would find something arresting about that.”

The obstacle this time is an almost sheer wall with lots of nooks and crannies, sparkling blue in typical style to indicate Sly can do one of his master thief moves with them. He makes it to the top of the wall and pauses. “You put an outright hook up here, too, Bentley?”

“I did. Jump and press the circle button to grab onto hooks with your cane; you can then swing back and forth, and press the X button to let go.”

“Couldn't I just swing one way?”

“No.”

Sly crosses the gap by swinging on hooks to discover the opposite platform has been raised high in the air. “All right then, what's next?”

“I retrieved a new paraglider for you. Press the R1 button—you know, the button you use to run with—while in the air to deploy it. I'm dropping an obstacle course for you; give it a try.”

Sly does, with ease.

“All right, that's enough movement,” says Bentley, raising the obstacle course out of the way. “Now for a little more complex stuff: actual thieving.”

“You're not gonna make me pick locks, are you?” asks Sly. “If any of the guys we steal from found a door forced that way, it'd blow the whole operation.”

“Of course I'm not. But I am going to make you do a crash course on pickpocketing.”

“Easy, I just sneak up behind someone and press the circle button.”

A scarecrow pops out of the floor, on a stick, with a very obvious back pocket with something stuffed inside it. “Why don't you demonstrate that for me?”

Yep. Sly pickpockets a scarecrow, and then has to demonstrate his skills on a moving scarecrow. “Much as I love getting my hand in someone's pants, Bentley, do you have anything more challenging for me to do?” asks Sly over the binoc-u-com.

“Right. Let's review taking down guards. You're good in a fight, Sly, but you're not like Murray.”

“I'm the thief, not the muscle; it's best for everyone if no one knows I'm there.”

“Course. But sometimes, you're going to have to fight. When you can, keep them from seeing you by using a stealth slam. You can only use this on guards that haven't seen you, Sly. Don't try it on someone already on your tail.”

“If someone has my tail, then I'm in trouble.”

“Even if it's Carmelita?” asks Bentley, adjusting his glasses.

“Well... depends on if it's a cops and robbers situation or a different one.”

“Uh-huh. In any case, sneak up behind a guard—you may have to be even closer for this than for pickpocketing—”

“Because you can't hurt someone with their pants.”
Bentley stares at him in silence for several long moments, before sighing and planting his face in his palm. “Are you done making jokes?”

“Sure. For now.”

“Sneak up behind them, then press the triangle button to smack them in the air with your cane. Then, while they're still in the air, press the square button to grab them and smack them down hard.”

Sly demonstrates this on a scarecrow. Enthusiastically.

“All right Sly, just one last thing. As you know, it's often very useful to go undercover in these operations. I've left you a disguise hooked up to your L2 button; press it to get to work.”

Sly does so, and finds himself wearing... a prison costume. “Very funny, Bentley.”

“Isn't it, though? Now, guards are paranoid. They often wind up checking on everyone, even each other. In order to keep from being caught, you need—”

“My trade mark Italian A'cent!”

“...No. You need to know the passwords. Usually I'll have hacked their databases to discover them before sending you in, but you may need to eavesdrop on guards. Anyway, approach the guard and give him this password: square triangle square square.”

Sly walks up to the scarecrow and says, in his trademark Italian Accent, “Squawe Tri-angle Squawe Squawe.”

“Okay, that's the last thing I needed you to do,” says Bentley, turning off the force-field. He wheels himself out into the room. “Did you have to use the accent?”

“Of course, I love that thing.” Sly jumps to the ground.

“It would get you arrested by a native speaker,” says Bentley.

“Yeah... it didn't work too well on Rajan, either.”

If there were a picture for visible silence, it would show Bentley’s expression now. Pure, disbeliefing, horrified, 'Of course this is Sly he would do something that stupid' visible silence, shown in a look.

Sly shrugs. “It worked in Arabia.”

HAZARD ROOM: COMPLETE
Fishing For Feathers: Opening

SLY VOICE-OVER

(Normal, everyday scene: Sly reading the paper, Murray working out, Bentley tinkering with something) It was good to be back. We weren't committing any crimes in the present day, so Carmelita wasn't after us.

(Image of Carmelita in her little black dress) Quite the opposite, in fact: she took a vacation for the first time since she got assigned to throw me in jail. Her bosses never learned I'd pulled off that museum job, so as far as anyone else was concerned, (images from the end of game 3) I was the undercover officer who helped her break up the Cooper gang, even if we didn't lock them away. And now, I was bringing her to plays, museums, and restaurants. (images of them doing each of these things as they come up.) We even went camping. (image of them randomly breaking up some form of smuggling ring in the middle of the woods while their half-set-up tent falls down in the background.) Once.

But we all knew the good times could only last so long. Penelope was still sending Bentley postcards,(images of said postcards) and after following that last one, they didn't seem safe to ignore.(Shows Bentley analyzing postcards and writing notes.) Based on Bentley's analysis of the three we've gotten since my rescue, there's something else going on in the past. And for us to check it out, we'll need a necklace on display at the Paris Museum of Modern History. (Image of necklace)

Hit up that place for the necklace would be a cakewalk...(Sly rubbing hands together... and then frowning) but the last time I robbed a museum, I got in hot water with Carmelita. (Image from Sly 4's opening sequence.) So this time, instead of trying to go under her nose... I told her about it.(Image of him doing just that.)

(Image of Carmelita bursting into the safe-house brandishing a jewelry carrying case in one hand and the mask Bentley gave her in the other.) She had it classified as 'evidence' and 'secured' in Interpol's evidence lock-up by the end of the week. And now, we're on our way to a Caribbean Island in the 1600's. (Group of them in the van, setting off)

You know... (Sly adjusts rear-view mirror to look at Carmelita in the back) I think I love that woman.

SLY COOPER

AND THE GANG

IN:

FISHING FOR FEATHERS
The safe-house appears to be a small hut with a straw roof. Sly, Bentley, Murray, and Carmelita sit at a small circular table as they finish their last set-up. Bentley taps away at his laptop, checking that the relaying devices in the time machine allow him to get internet; The Murray lifts weights with one hand while he waits. Carmelita inspects her mask inside and out before using it to clean her shock pistol. Sly plays with his hat, spinning it on one finger, throwing it in the air and letting it land on his head.

At a nod from Bentley, Sly gets to his feet. He leaves through the hut's front door into a period of twilight. The safe-house is on one edge of a small village filled with identical huts, stretching away towards the beach; drying racks, baskets of fresh fish, and fishing poles are in abundance. The huts peter out close to the shore, where a dock juts out into the water, a dozen simple fishing boats waiting there.

Behind the safe-house, further into the island, starts a forest. The trees travel uphill and block all sign of anything else.

For all this village's peaceful look, there are signs of trouble here. Tapirs prowl the streets, flashlights in hand and guns at the ready; one carries an elderly tortoise by the shell and throws them inside a hut, yelling about curfew. A hastily constructed prison stands not far from the safe-house, cracks and sagging ceilings reinforced by lasers and guards.

Sly uses a basket of fish to bounce to a nearby rooftop and walks on a clothesline to stand on top of the safe-house. He pulls out his binoc-u-com. “All right, Bentley, what's the plan?”

“You sure you're up for this, Sly?” asks Bentley. “It's been a while since you've been in action.”

“Of course!” Sly twirls his cane in one hand. “There's nothing I'd rather be doing than re-redistributing the wealth.”

“Really?” asks Bentley, adjusting his glasses. “Not even spending time with the other side of the law?”

“I said nothing, not no one,” says Sly.

“Uh-huh.” Bentley doesn't sound convinced. “Anyway, your objective is some recon photos. I'd like to get a better idea of this place. Get me a picture of a fishing boat, the prison, and one of those guards; then make your way into the woods. I need a clearer idea of what's going on here.”
“Coming right up,” says Sly, and puts his binoc-u-com away. Since the prison's so close, he decides to start with that, making his way around to the front of it and balancing on some clotheslines while he takes a picture.

“Interesting,” says Bentley. “That design is new. If it weren't for the lasers, it probably wouldn't hold anyone.”

Sly snorts and moves to a different angle for another picture, showing guards standing on the alert at every corner, even on the side closest to the cliff by the ocean. “Or maybe it's not just the lasers keeping people in there,” says Bentley. “If those guards have laser weapons, no one here will know how to respond.”

“Don't I know it,” says Sly, putting his binoc-u-com away. It takes a bit of effort, but he manages to get to the beach without once touching the ground: jumping from roof to roof or walking on clotheslines, aiming so he bounces on baskets of fish rather than touching the ground... it's a fun little challenge he makes for himself as he somersaults over the drying racks and lands in the sand by the docks for a picture of one of the boats.

“Those fishing boats have seen better days,” says Bentley. It seems that's all that needs commenting on.

But as Sly turns to leave, he spots something further down the beach, where it meets the woods and the ground starts rising: a cave. He takes a picture of that.

“Not an unexpected find, given the geological make-up of this island,” comments Bentley. “Interesting. There appears to be a faint radio signal emanating from that cave.”

Radio signals in this time period mean that Bentley will probably be going down there later, but Sly's in no rush. He gets back on the rooftops and finds a guard patrolling alone, then waits until he can get a good shot at the guy's face... and his gun. “Yep. That doesn't belong here,” says Bentley. “Okay buddy, that's enough from around town. Get into the woods: that slope doesn't qualify as a mountain, but it's high enough. Let's go for a full view.”

“Anything you know of for pictures?” asks Sly.

“Just keep an eye out,” says Bentley.

Sly tucks his binoc-u-com away and heads into the woods, skirting around a macaw patrolling a nearby rooftop. The trees are all sorts of tropical, palm trees with coconuts near the beach and others Sly can't name with actual branches further in. He climbs one and uses the treetops to make his way along, then ducks back to the ground to avoid a monkey on patrol. The tapirs are easier to avoid, with their bright flashlights and the noise they make crashing along; Sly steers clear.

He's near the top of the hill, about halfway across the island, when he finds something that does not belong here: a fence, strands of barbed wire protecting the sheer cement wall that rises well above his head. “Now that looks like it belongs around a prison,” says Sly, taking a picture of it.

“Yet another sign that something, or someone, shouldn't be here,” says Bentley. “See if you can find any weaknesses or a way around.”

Sly starts walking along the edge of the fence, keeping an eye out. Near the center of the island is a door, or at least an opening someone could get through. Not him, though. Between the four flashlight guards, spotlights, and laser security, it's obvious no one is getting through that opening unwatched. “Well, that's no help,” Bentley confirms when he's sent the picture.
Something else further along is a bit more promising: a spot where the wall isn't so perfect. “It looks like a tree fell on it,” Bentley confirms. “If we took care of the barbed wire, we could probably break through it here.”

And, better for Sly's purposes right now, at the very far side of the island the island just... stops. Rather than being a gentle circle, the way he half expected, this looks as though some giant took a hammer and hacked away at it. A ninja-spire jump here, a wall-hook there, and a bit of sidling along a cliff side gets him on the other side of the wall, but the cliff itself continues, higher and higher, as it goes further along the island's edge.

It takes a bit more time to get through the forest, but when Sly emerges into the moonlight at the top of a cliff, his jaw drops. “Hoo boy, Carmelita's gonna have a field day with this one,” he says, eyeing the narrow path to the ground. He can get pictures well enough from where he is, so he stays there and brings out his binoc-u-com.

The first picture Sly takes is the big pile of gold and gems in the middle of the beach. Monkeys and macaws are guarding the cart it's resting on, which appears to have broken a wheel; they can't get it moving. “Just remember, Sly, we can't take anything,” Bentley mutters in his ear. “Not only might it alter all of history, but Carmelita would kill us.”

Sly's next picture is more... to the point. “One, two... that's five different pirate ships down there, Sly! Bloodthirsty cutthroats that may suffer from scurvy... and definitely don't have good hygiene. You're better off staying away.”

Sly's next picture is even more concerning: a large tower, built with stone and materials they definitely shouldn't have in this time period, with four evenly-spaced spirals overlapping around its edges. From his position, he's nearly level with a landing about halfway up, and can see the glint of a computer screen a bit higher than that; banners, orange with white tips, flutter wherever the spirals meet. “I don't know who built that,” Bentley says, “but that's their base. We'll have to explore more later.”

Then Sly spots the worst thing of all. “Bentley,” he says, “I think we know who's doing this.”

“What?”

But when Sly takes the picture, that says it all. A tall rooster, heavy muscles visible even through his feathers, with a purple sash holding on a heavy golden breastplate. His massive shield is strapped to his back at the moment, leaving his jeweled gauntlets exposed, but he's wearing the same helmet, gold with a large red plume, he was when Sly fought him to a draw in China.

General Tsao. The worst man Sly has ever fought, by his own reckoning, because he wasn't driven by greed, revenge, or morals, but by his own sense of superiority and determination to lord it over everyone he deems inferior.

“That's all the pictures I need. Come on back to the safe-house, and we'll start working on a plan.”

“Keep yuh hands where I can see 'em and tun around slowly,” says a woman somewhere behind Sly. “I don't know where yuh came from, but I don't fancy any lubuhhs in my ocean.”

Sly freezes, the binoc-u-com barely in his pocket. “Oh come on, it's an awfully big ocean,” Sly says, turning as she asked; he lifts the butt of his cane just enough that it doesn't drag in the dirt. The only thing visible under the trees is her pistol, old fashioned and no good for long range, but more than enough when he's this close. “Surely it's big enough for two.”
She chuckles. “You've got some iron in your cannon, don't you?” she asks, stepping forward into the light. Sly's breath catches in his throat.

Which, you know, it'd do for just about any woman, but this is different. This woman's wearing a full-body wet suit and boots that flare around her knee, but her step's as soft as his. This woman's got a mask over her eyes with only one eye hole, the other sealed shut in a sort of eye patch. This woman wears a bandanna to keep her short hair out of her face. This woman only has one hand, the other being a metal hook, gold and gleaming and curved almost into the shape of a question mark. This woman is a raccoon.

One featured in the Thievious Raccoonus for stealing from pirates.

“Not from around here, are you, lubbuh?” she asks, not lowering her gun an inch. She begins to circle Sly, inspecting him; Sly leans sideways on his cane and lets her. “If those clothes ahe local, I'm the queen. You wouldn't happen ta know about those othuh lubbuhs who've been messin around here?”

“I've had the displeasure of making one's acquaintance before.” Sly moves his head to keep watching her. “I've got some messages to deliver.”

She cocks her head. “With yuh fist?”

“If that's what's closest,” he agrees. “The overgrown feather duster and I have some... philosophical differences.”

She finishes her circle and props her hands on her hips. “Mask, cane on a pole, red pouch on leg, belt with blue raccoon head on it, blue cap, blue shirt, blue boots, and talkin like a lubbuh with more iron than a smithy. So you'd be this Sly Cooper my uncle Riochi was tellin' me about, then, when I got the book from him?”

Sly may be shocked, but he isn't about to be outdone. “Eye patch, full-body sneak suit, hook hand, those all match, but according to that same book, Henriette, you use a dagger, not a gun. Nice to meet you; I don't have near as much sailing experience, but I did steal a pirate ship and have a fair adventure a few years back.”

“I left li'l rustless in the vault when I lost this a year back,” she says, holding up her hook hand. "Not that you look surprised to see it. Spose that detail's in the book, too?"

"Of course." Sly gives her a half-bow and offers her his hand. "Listen, I'm here with the rest of my gang, and an... honorable member, who isn't actually a thief. Would you mind coming back to the safe-house with me?"

She grins, snags his wrist with her hook, and twists it around, nearly knocking Sly over. "I could use some fairhr hands on this job. Why not; you lot can assist me."

"Hey, you'll be assisting us!” says Sly.

"Keep tellin yuhself that, lubbuh. Thuh ole binin shack on the edge of town, init it?" She starts back into the woods without waiting for a response.

Sly scrambles to catch up. "Yeah, actually, it is. Oh, and... don't tell Bentley how you heard of me. He's fretting himself sick about messing up the past by mistake."

**JOB COMPLETE**
Sly spins his cane once, puts it over his shoulder, and sprints after Henriette, who isn't waiting around.

Chapter End Notes

Well, so much for not seeing any more Cooper ancestors. To be fair, I told the truth: Sly didn't exactly go looking for her. Anyone want to guess what's going on?
Sly Voice-Over

Once we got back to the safe-house, I had to explain where Henriette had come from... not that it needed much explanation. (Shows Henriette staring down Bentley intently, as Bentley puts his head in his hands and shakes his head.) Bentley seemed almost resigned to me finding someone I was related to whenever we went. But as for why she was there, well, that was something she had to tell us.

(The group of them sit around the table in the safe-house.) Henriette made her living stealing from pirates—but, as she pointed out to Carmelita, she's not actually a thief. (A number of papers with government seals are slapped on the table; Henriette splays them out.) She had the papers required to be a privateer, and all her 'robberies' were legal, by the strictest sense of the word. (Carmelita and Sly pick the papers up and look through them with identical expressions of skepticism.) It didn't sit very well with either of us—a Cooper who's not a thief? And employed by a government? Legal piracy?—but we didn't have time to dwell on it.

(Cartoonish images of ships on a sea rise from the table.) Henriette's not just captain of her own ship, but a whole fleet of ships, served with protecting merchants from getting attacked by other countries—for a fee—and taking out enemy vessels of all sorts, made legal by the war going on. Only thing is, someone was taking out ships from her fleet, and not just one or two on the edges of things. (The ships vanish, one by one, poofing from existence.) Five ships vanished, with their occupants found floating in lifeboats and telling stories of impossible weapons and worse guns, captains missing.

(Shows Henriette on the shore, peering through trees at General Tsao.) She'd spent weeks tracking the reports back here. Her first mate was watching the rest of the fleet, but she and one ship were on the shore, trying to free her crew from that impossible jail and take out the person behind it before he could do any more damage.

(The image reverts to the safe-house.) And now here she is, ready to take on pirates with us. Not quite what I pictured happening, but who am I to argue?
FFF Slideshow 1

FISHING FOR FEATHERS

Slideshow 1

Bentley:

All right everyone, we may not know what General Tsao is doing here, but we know it's got to stop. (Picture of General Tsao) We all know what happened the last time we dealt with him—

Henriette:

Cept me, lubbuhs. (Picture of Henriette)

Carmelita:

Neither do I. Though he was arrested for plaguing the streets with vampires. (Picture of the vampires).

Bentley:

I'll tell you later, Carmelita. (Picture of Bentley in his briefly-used 'Wedding Planner' disguise.) In any case, he is far too dangerous to leave here, even if all he were doing was fishing. (Picture of Murray fishing.) But to get at him, we're going to have to pull off a few more jobs. Carmelita, given that none of this is technically illegal, due to Henriette's status as a privateer and her duties to the queen, (picture of her paperwork) you'll be taking more of an active role this time. Will that be a problem?

Carmelita:

I still can't believe a Cooper's on the right side of the law. (Numerous pictures of Carmelita chasing Sly.)

Sly:

Honestly, neither can I. Are you sure it's not cover for something—

Henriette:

A course not. Law's a funny thing in this branch o' the world, lubbuhs: on the sea, everythin's so muddled laws scarce apply, so I'm all but a constable meself. (Carmelita-chasing-Sly pics continue!) And out here? Where everyone's in it for themselves and their country? You serve your country and it's legal as can be, far as they're concerned, and what else matters? (Picture of Great Britain's flag).

Bentley:

Can we stop with the history lessons and get on with the plan? (Picture of a history book). Sheesh, it's like a kindergarten class in here. (Picture of Sly, Bentley, and Murray making their infamous kookie-stealin plan.)

Murray:

Does that mean we have crayons?
Bentley:

*long-suffering sigh* Murray, you'll start things off by going down to the fishing village and making yourself useful. *(Picture of Murray rowing a boat).* While I haven't fully analyzed what's going on, Henriette's testimony has confirmed the village is being forced to feed General Tsao and his sailors, leaving them little for themselves. There's no way they'll turn down an extra set of hands. If you listen in, you should pick up some useful information.

While Murray's doing that, I'm going to head over to that tower. One thing we know about General Tsao: he doesn't care what lines he crosses *(picture of the time he entered the safe-house and stole Bentley's laptop).* He's also smarter than he looks with technology. Disabling and bugging it will take my personal touch.

Sly, you and Carmelita are going to take a different approach. There's a cave on the beach giving off radio signals. *(Picture of the cave).* I don't know what you'll find inside, but you're both people General Tsao would recognize, and our best bets if there's tricky maneuvering. That cave will make the binoc-u-coms malfunction, so we'll need both of you down there. Besides, you've worked well together in the past. *(Picture of them in the helicopter, game 2).*

Carmelita:

Yeah, when it's the lesser evil. *(Picture of Sly in a jetpack facing Clockwerk).*

Bentley:

All right already. Last of all, Sly and Henriette are going to get her people out of jail. Based on the jail's location, the quietest, quickest way to get them out would be to have them swim for it.

Sly:

Woah, wait, you can swim? *(picture of Sly giving the ocean an angry look.)*

Henriette:

If you think fo one minute that anyone I let on a boat wi' me cahn't, you must have the wuhst brains of a Coopuh so far.

Bentley:

Anyway, Sly, you'll need to get the prison open while Henriette takes out the guards, then get them in the water and away before they catch onto us. Unlike the rest of the jobs we've got to accomplish, this one is best done at night.

We've all got our assignments. Let's get to it!

*Thiefnet Computer.*

*Sly: Stealth Slam*

*Sly: Throwable Wall Hooks. These one-use wall hooks can be attached in numerous places*
throughout time.

Sly: Alarm Clock.

Bentley: Trap Sabotage. Using a variation of Khamen's tools, keep mechanical traps from working for a period of time.

Murray: Super Shake. A nonstop shake that makes enemies drop everything in their pockets.

Carmelita: Autofire. Hold the button and shoot like crazy!
FFF Job 2

FISHING FOR FEATHERS

Job 2: Fish Or Swim

Murray leaves the safe-house and makes his way through the village, dodging guards with the ease of instinctive practice... but that doesn't explain his outfit. When he gets near the beach, he opens the binoc-u-com. “Okay, Bentley. What do you need me to do?”

“You need to go down to the beach and make friends with the locals,” says Bentley. “Are you wearing what I told you to?”

Murray looks down at his tattered white sailor's shirt with blue trim and no pants before flattening the white-and-blue hat on his head for what may be the fiftieth time. He's still got his old belt and wrestler's mask on, though, and the overall picture is rather... well, you won't forget it anytime soon, that's for sure. “Is this really what sailors wear?”

“It is in this time period,” says Bentley. “Now go down there and find some people to talk to. A village like this must see people all the time, friendly as well as mean. Tell them you're willing to work for a few meals and look as pitiful as you can. That oughta do it.”

“If you say so,” says Murray, and puts his binoc-u-com away. This time, as he makes his way down the beach, he doesn't try to stay hidden. His targets are a group of elderly tortoises, standing in a circle and shaking their heads as they talk.

It's easy to tell what they're talking about, too: the boat they're standing by has a busted sail.

"Ahoy, fellow sailor friends!" greets Murray when he's close enough. "I am an excellent rower, and I'm short on food. For a few fish, I'll take you anywhere you want to go."

"That sounds like a bargain to me, sure 'nuff," says one tortoise. "But we've got ta feed the mil'tree. We won't get much fish to share."

"Well, let's see how much fish we get!" Murray says, pounding one hand into his other fist—oh look, he's still wearing his wrestler's gloves. "I don't need much. But I can't fish from the shore."

“Tell ya what,” says the other. “You row us to our traps, and while we pull 'em up, you can fish to your hearts delight. Keep what you get that way.”

“Sounds good to me!” says Murray, striking a pose. “We're gonna be awesome.”

So, the fishermen get in the boat and Murray pushes it into the sea before jumping in the back and taking up the oars.

Rowing controls are pretty much identical to the last time Murray rowed a boat, back in Blood Bath Bay of game 3. Joystick to aim, tap X to row forward and Square to row backwards, but this time he's not in a sewer or on a river, he's on the sea. Which, granted, is rather calm now, but still. He has to navigate around the reefs near the shore, greenish-colored walls that don't quite stick out of the water but can be seen through it, to get to the first location the fishermen left their traps, about a quarter of the way around the island.

We get a brief cutscene while Murray fishes and the tortoises haul up their traps, dump out the fish, and bait the trap. “First stop's always the hardest, in'it, Joe,” says one.
“Shucks, I wish we could save this place for last,” says another, stretching. “My back is killin me.”

“You wanna do another lap of the island?” asks the first. “Cause that's what it'll take, the way these currents go. You're close to shore, you've always gotta head around the island clockwise.”

Murray pulls in a fish just as they lower their traps. He puts his fishing pole in the boat beside him, the fish in a bucket, and picks up his oars.

“Nice work, Murray,” says Bentley over the binoc-u-com as Murray starts navigating the boat through even tighter coral twists and turns and mazes and even some moving parts how does coral move I don't even know. “I bet Henriette will be glad to know about those currents.”

The next spot, halfway around the island—General Tsao's tower and pirate fleet visible, but a fair distance away—features the same scene: tortoises dealing with traps, Murray fishing. “I do wish we could get in closer,” says the tortoise that didn't speak last time. “This here area just hasn't got as much goods as closer to the beach.”

“You want that rooster to sink this boat?” demands another. “Guy's got feathers on his head that came from—”

“What is he, a peacock?” says the last. Murray reels in a fish.

“You're half right.” The tortoise speaking kicks the last trap over the side of the boat, where it splashes into the sea. “Shooting any boat that isn't his if they get too close—guy's got the manners of a skunk.”

Then it's time to go again. Murray has to focus here: it seems as though, in addition to the coral and rocks and reefs surrounding the island, General Tsao and his minions have been dumping trash (and bombs) in the water. “Great work, Murray. We'll have to make sure Henriette knows all this before she goes sailing again.”

They stop again almost all the way around the island, after a particularly tough row involving swordfish (with actual swords) trying to slice the boat whenever it held still, leaving Murray no time to wait for good opportunities to dodge the other obstacles or maneuver with great care. This time, as he fishes (and adds one of those swordfish to his bucket), one of the tortoises sigh. “One thing you have to hand it to them, they make a fine cup a tea.”

“Aye, they do at that,” says another. “But it seems a bit silly, don't it? The way they carry those cups around with 'em all the time.”

“The things they use their teacups for,” says the third, shaking his head. “It'd break a proper Englishman's heart. I swear, I saw one hiding his keys in a teapot yesterday.”

Bentley humms over the binoc-u-com as Murray starts rowing again, letting him know that the last bit of information was overheard—and unwelcome. But he doesn't comment on it, instead letting Murray row through a series of obstacles that combine all the misery he already went through.

Murray reaches the last stop without issue, and fishes quietly. He's pulling in a large fish when one of the tortoises puts a flipper on his shoulder. “See that, sonnyboy?” he asks, pointing out into the distance: there's a distinct ripple on the water. “Piece of advice: keep yourself outta those waters, you and whatever ship you're on. There's a monster out there, a real ship-killer. No one can stop it.”

“Okay,” says Murray.

But Bentley's voice in his head, as Murray rows back to shore, says something different. “A monster,
huh? We've dealt with one of those before. That could prove useful.”

Murray pulls the boat back to shore. “Good work, sonny,” says one of the fishermen. “If you want to do it again, be here this time tomorrow.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Murray does a victory pose, bucket full of fish in his hand, then stops, looks inside it, and runs out of the 'Job Complete' screen, saying “I need to get these fish fried and delicious!”*
FFF Job 3

FISHING FOR FEATHERS

Job 3: Spell-unking

Sly makes his way through town, picking pockets and pocketing golden fish hooks, in a roundabout route that seems aimless but he chose on purpose. It takes him through all the guards' patrol routes that Bentley plotted earlier, and even as he steals their (low-quality but still valuable 'antique') wallets he's also making sure everyone is where they should be. It's only when he's sure there's not going to be an ambush or unnecessarily nasty surprise that he follows instructions and goes to the end of the beach to the waypoint Bentley's projecting.

Carmelita's waiting for him there, arms crossed and foot tapping impatiently. Sly brings up his binoc-u-com to talk to Bentley as well as her. “So, we're investigating some radio signals in this cave, right?”

“Yep,” says Bentley. “General Tsao would recognize both of you—you weren't in disguise when you beat him up, Sly, or Carmelita when she arrested him.”

“So?” says Carmelita. “He went down in one shot.”

“He was taken completely by surprise,” says Bentley, “and not in armor. Sly fought him to a draw.”

“If he hadn't run, I would've beaten him,” says Sly, raising an eyebrow.

“Not without taking some serious damage,” Bentley says, throwing up his hands. “Look, I know you both think you have more important things to do but face facts. One-on-one you might win, but it's too close to call and together you'll kick him from one side of the island to the other. More importantly, that cave's too deep for reliable outside communication in the best of times. Those radio waves will scramble things even further.”

“You're saying you want us together because we won't be able to contact you for back-up,” says Sly.

“Right. You and Insp—uh, Carmelita have a history of working together in stressful situations.”

Carmelita snorts, but the sound doesn't match her expression. “All right. Let's get this over with.”

The two of them put their binoc-u-coms away. “So, Carmelita,” says Sly. “You and me, together at last.”

“Just try to keep up,” says Carmelita, heading into the cave.

LOADING SCREEN

The game resumes in a huge cavern with a long, winding path through it, sloping downwards as it goes—not enough to use the paraglider, but enough to give a decent view of the whole area. Carmelita and Sly stop where they are to take it in.

There are six areas designed as checkpoints, each with two guards. Three deep, wide pits alternate with tall stone walls, partially blocking their view of the path and certainly nothing that can be climbed. Behind each barrier is a switch of some sort, set solidly into the ground, clearly designed to raise bridges or open gates so people can get through; getting to each switch would take some serious
platforming skills on either of their parts, and the idea that any of the guards could reach those switches is more ridiculous than the idea of a giant fighting robot posing as a water tower.

“Huh,” says Sly, leaning on his cave. “Scary as this looks, I don't think it'll be too bad.”

“I've infiltrated plenty of criminal compounds,” says Carmelita. “If this is any indication, General Tsao's done too much of the wrong thing.”

“Are any of those obstacles going to be a problem for you?” asks Sly, tipping his hat back.

“Of course not,” Carmelita says.

“Okay, but listen. Soon as we're past each obstacle, we should try to take out those guards simultaneously. We don't want them alerting their fellows.”

“Are you worried about leaving a trail of unconscious bodies?” asks Carmelita.

Sly shrugs. “Never hurt anything before. Besides, General Tsao's the sort to shoot the messenger. They won't dare to tell him—and if they do, he'll write it off as their own fault.”

With that, the job starts. This one involves a fair amount of switching back and forth between the two characters: Carmelita will jump to small platforms midway over the pits and across, while Sly spire-jumps and swings on curiously shaped stalactites, and the both take care of their guards at the same time, be it with a shock pistol to the back or a neat stealth slam. The walls are just within Carmelita's jump height, though she has to time it around the patrolling guards up there, and Sly can wall-hook his way to the tops. Sure, it's a long path, but they don't even have to look at the gate-opening switches located off it. They just have to keep moving.

“All right, what's down here that General Chicken's so intent on hiding?” asks Sly when they get past the final wall. The path's leveled out to a large flat circular area, where a couple fires burn unattended, keeping the air in the cave warm. Between the two fires is a pit, with a small ramp leading down into it and a large gemstone at the bottom, glowing with a gentle pulse.

“We need to take evidence back to base,” says Carmelita, glancing around, her shock pistol at the ready. “That way, I can get a warrant written—”

“You mean, Bentley can analyze this and maybe get us more information so we can take him out?” asks Sly. He doesn't bother with the ramp, just jumps in, leaving his shoulders level with the ground. “You have to think about things differently when you're working this way.”

“Like you had to think about things when you were posing as my partner?” asks Carmelita.

Sly winces and rests his elbows on the floor. “Look, Carmelita... I never got to say this. But... as sorry as I am for lying to you, you gave me that chance.”

“I did what?” she asks.

“That day, with Dr. M,” says Sly. “The Cooper Vault falling apart, you'd somehow followed me in there, it was falling apart and I'd taken my second head wound of the day. When I woke up and said I didn't remember who I was, I didn't—it came back at some point between getting out of there alive and getting on the boat. You were the one who said I was your partner; you were the one who had Interpol believing I was an informant. But I went along with it because I wanted a chance to be with you, to see if we could work this out, more than anything else I'd ever wanted.”

“Sly...” Carmelita says, a little smile on her face, then shakes her head. “We can talk about this later,”
she says, turning her back to him. “Right now, we need to focus on the job.”

“You're right,” says Sly. “But—we will talk?”

“We will,” she promises. “Now get that stone and get up here.”

“All right. It looks pretty heavy. We may have to actually use the—”

Carmelita keeps her back to Sly, watching for enemies. “Use the what, Sly? Bridges? Gates?”

Sly doesn't answer.

“How about you?”

Carmelita turns around.

Sly stands there, the rock in both hands, unmoving. A very slight glow surrounds him.

“This isn't funny, ringtail,” Carmelita says, moving around the edges of the pit. He doesn't respond, even when she's in front of him. “Sly?”

She jumps in the pit, and the camera does a close-up on Sly's face. Mouth partly open. Eyes wide behind his mask, pupils grown to encompass his whole face. There's absolutely no response, even when she waves a hand in front of his face; his entire body is glowing, matching the pulse of the rock.

So Carmelita shoots the rock from his hands. It bounces on the ground a few feet away and lays there, unharmed. “Sly!”

Sly rubs his face with his hands. “I'm okay.”

“How many fingers am I holding up?” she asks.

“Three. Really, I'm fine. But... I don't think we want to touch that rock,” he says.

“I agree. But we can't leave it here.” Carmelita shakes her fist. “I don't know what that evil, in-hhibited low-life is doing with it, but this cannot be permitted to remain here.”

“Not that I disagree with you, but how do you expect to get it out?” Sly asks. He walks over to the rock and whacks it with his cane; it rolls a few feet. “Golfing the whole way?”

“If that's what it takes, ringtail.”

“Well, I hope you're good at putting,” says Sly, surveying the trip before them, “because we've got a long way to go.”

The player takes control of Sly again. “If you can hit the first switch, I'll push our rock through the gate,” says Carmelita, waiting by the rock. The switch is off the path, too far away from the wall to jump to. In order to reach it, Sly has to use wall-hooks to climb partway up the wall, inch his way along sideways, and ninja-spire jump a few times. When he stands on the switch, the gate opens; when he gets off it, it closes again. “I'll wait here for you to cross,” says Sly.

Play switches to Carmelita. She proceeds to shoot the giant rock... thing... several times. Each time it bounces forwards before stopping. She can even hit it in the air, with good timing, to make it go further.
When she's through the gate, Sly lets it close. The next switch is going to be one she'll have to hit. She has to megajump onto a tall platform, then shoot a piece of the wall that juts out very unstably and looks vaguely target-like to make another platform fall, which she also has to jump to. Several stalactites block her way to the switch, fence-like, and she shoots them out before jumping to it.

Play goes back to Sly, who whacks the thing with his cane. His way of moving it is slower, but more controlled, which is good: the bridge that forms over the chasm doesn't have any railings, and while dropping it would keep General Tsao from using it, he could probably make another. If they get it to Bentley, they may be able to figure out what it is—and stop any others from working on them.

Play continues until they get out of the cave. The two of them take turns shoving the block forward, Sly whacking it and Carmelita shooting it, onto the beach. “I am not looking forward to getting this thing through town,” says Sly.

“I heard that,” says Bentley over the binoc-u-com. “What did you find in there?”

“Something for you to look at,” says Carmelita, putting one hand to her head to get clearer reception. “But we can't touch it.”

“Got it. I'll send Murray down with one of the carts the locals use to haul around fish. Think that'll be big enough?”

Sly hits the rock one more time, sending it bouncing into the sand. “I think that'll work.”

**JOB: COMPLETE**

*Carmelita does a victory pose with her gun while Sly spins his cane at the success.*
Carmelita returns to the safe-house with Murray, but Sly stays out, wandering from building to building until he ends up opposite the prison: the starting point of his next job. He pulls out his binoc-u-com and focuses on the entrance. “Okay Bentley, what's the plan?”

“Henriette has scoped out a swimming route she and her crew can take around the edges of the island,” says Bentley; Sly refocuses his binoc-u-com behind the prison, to the cliffside there. Henriette waves her hook hand at him and indicates a rope stretched taut, a slide down the cliff to the sea. “But first, we've got to get them out.”

“Okay, what do you need me to do here?”

“After Murray got information from some fishermen, I did a little extra sleuthing. They really cut corners inside that building—they shove food in through the windows, there aren't even individual cells—but they put a lot of money into making it escape-proof. The prison doesn't use normal locks. To get inside, you have to use the pristine ceremonial tea service from the shop in the center of town.”

Sly turns around, letting his binoc-u-com give a view of town before focusing on an unremarkable building near the center. “So I just have to break in there?”

“Despite its looks, that building is a marvel of modern technology,” says Bentley. “The highest quality locks, a top-notch security system... I don't think my bombs would even scratch the walls. To get inside, you're going to have to pick a few pockets, then go inside and get the tea set.”

“All right. I'll talk to you again when I've got it.”

Sly puts his binoc-u-com away and considers the area. Based on the waypoints, there are five pockets for him to pick, in positions ranging from 'strolling the beach' to 'standing on top of the prison' to 'guarding the wall in the woods' to 'wandering aimlessly through town' to, of course, the one guard that there always has to be asleep with his back to a wall in an awkward position to get to. And boy, is he ever in an awkward position. After climbing a tree and leaping from treetop to treetop and shimmying across a cliff and dropping partway down it onto a tiny ledge he can actually get at the guy's pocket, and getting back up involves paragliding until he can grab a hook-like rock outcropping and swing to a few rocks he can ninja-spire jump on back to safety.

Why does there always have to be that one sleeping guard in a stupid spot. Why.

Once that's over with, the trip back to town is easy enough to be almost insulting. Sly lets himself into the teashop and stops just inside to take it in. The randomly-moving lasers on the floor compliment the spotlights moving in slow circles, but the tea set—very delicate, porcelain or something, with blue flowers painted on the teapot and all the mugs—is on the far side of the room, in plain view.

Sly crosses the room, retrieves the tea set, and crosses back with his normal skill. The only sign that anyone was there is the blue Cooper mask he left in place of the teapot, the way he's done with all his crimes since he was a teenager. If Bentley knew, he'd certainly scold Sly. But Bentley doesn't
Once outside, Sly climbs to the roof and pulls out his binoc-u-com. “Okay Bentley, I've got the tea set.”

“Great. Now, the lock system to open the prison is a little complicated. First, you need to go to the prison and slot the four teacups into the slots in the walls.”

“Okay,” says Sly.

“All the locks are activated by weight. You're going to have to fill the teapot with water from the sea and bring it back to the prison to fill all the cups before putting it into its own spot in the back wall.”

“Sure, sounds easy enough,” says Sly.

“That teapot is a special design,” says Bentley. “It senses when someone's holding it and heats up its contents accordingly. Once you've filled it with water, you'll have to put it down every now and then to keep the water from boiling. If the teapot whistles, every guard around will come running. And that thing is delicate: you can't take any damage while holding it, and you can't set it down on just anything.”

“Hmmmm.” Sly zooms in on a few tables scattered by doorways throughout town. “Looks like there are a few safe spots along the way. I'll figure something out.”

Sly puts the binoc-u-com away and sets about putting the teacups in the prison. Then he goes to take care of the teapot. For those of us who've played Sly 2, what happens next is strongly reminiscent of the problems involved with bugging Rajan's office. For those who haven't, however, Sly's trials can be summarized with a lot of running, putting down the teapot—fast—and getting out of the way before any guards, following the sound of his feet, find him. None of them pay attention to the teapot when it's just sitting on the table, but Sly still has to wait for them to clear out before he can grab the teapot and go running again.

This task would be impossible for a thief less skilled than Sly. But for Sly, it's just another day's work. A rather faster one than usual, but still just another day. The moon hasn't even moved in the sky when Sly's filled all the teacups (and dumped out the extra water before the dumb thing can whistle). “I'm all done, Henriette,” he says, slotting the kettle into its place.

“That's fine, lubbuh, I'll take it from here,” she says, moving to the front of the prison.

The door slams open from the inside, and five pirates tumble out, scurvy sea dogs the lot of them—literally, they're dogs. As soon as they catch sight of Henriette, they stop their mad scramble and line up, backs to the prison, though none of them salute her.

“Mangy, Rangy, Fleabag, Biter, and Spot, it's good to see you all again,” she greets them.

“Nice ta'see you too, cap'n,” says one; I don't know who's who. “We owe ya one.”

“You owe me a cut a'yer pay,” she informs them all, “or a favor. But right now, we need ta git. Follow me, chaps. We're goin swimmin.”

Henriette moves away, followed by her captains, to the line she tied earlier. She jumps and hits the circle button to latch on, then slides along her hook far faster than Sly could run it. She lands on a rock at the bottom, scarce big enough for the pirates that follow her, and leaps into the sea.

“Okay Henriette,” says Bentley over the earpiece/maskpiece/whatever, “you're going to have to
swim. Now, the guards are on the alert all over the island after that break-in, but they can't see your boat from here. But you can't get to the boat from the water without a few pirates in there to hoist you up, since you made your ship so..."

“I like knowin' no one can get on without me invitin' em,” says Henriette. “Don't worry, lubbuh, I got it all covered.”

Bentley gives her a tutorial on swimming—though how he knows when none of that gang knows how to swim is beyond me—and lets her at it. Joystick to move, hold triangle to go faster, X to jump out of the water, circle to go underwater (which involves air meters, joy), and the square button to bop sharks on the nose. Which she does. Several times.

“Oy Biter!” she says at one point, when the cliff seems particularly scalable. “Here are directions to the boat. Keep a low-down and quiet!”

“Aye-aye, Cap’n,” he says, and jumps out of the water.

She leads the others further around the island, smacking sharks and dodging electric traps with the others swimming behind her. She sends up Fleabag before going through a tricky diving section that involves a lot of almost-drowning, and orders Mangy and Rangi to swim in opposite directions as decoys while she gets out of the water and destroys an electric generator making a laser grid... after which they both get out.

Spot is the last one to go, halfway around the island. “Keep the boat safe for me,” she tells him. “I'll flash mirror signals when you need to swing round next.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Henriette hauls herself, dripping, from the water. Her victory 'pose' involves ringing water from her hair and walking off before it fades away, in the opposite direction Spot went.*
Bentley wheels himself from the safe-house and into the woods. Unlike the others, he can't use the
treetops to dodge guards, or easily take out anyone who spots him: his progress is a lot slower
because of that. While he does stick to the winding path through the woods, the guards' spotlights let
him know when they're coming a long ways off, and that's when he gets off the path and hides in the
bushes. He only leaves it when the giant fence comes in sight, making his way along it to the mission
start point: the giant cracked part of the wall.

He pulls out his binoc-u-com. Back at the safe-house, Sly sits at his computer, ready to talk to him.
“All right Bentley, this should be a simple in-and-out job,” says Sly.

“I'm not even going in, not really,” says Bentley. He's almost babbling: being in the field brings out
his nerves. “Like the tower Rajan was using, this one has plenty of ways to climb the outside, as well
as a landing halfway up. I don't even have to go inside to bug it.”

“Right. You don't even have to face General Tsao,” says Sly. “But before anything else, you've got
to get past this wall.”

“My trigger bombs should do the trick,” says Bentley. “They're a bit stronger than my normal
bombs. And that'll give me time to get clear.”

“Not sure you should take it,” says Sly. “Soon as that goes off, they'll all come running to see what's
up. If you're not through the gap by then, you may not be able to make it.”

“I'll keep that in mind,” says Bentley, and puts his binoc-u-com away. Setting the bomb is as easy as
pressing a button. Bentley gets to a safe distance to set it off... and, before the smoke of the explosion
has even disappeared, moves back towards it and uses his hover-pack to jump over the last rubble
and through to the other side. Behind him, a half-dozen flashlight guards converge on the hole, but
that isn't important right now. He'll worry about them when it's time to go back, if they're still there.

There's no path through the woods on this side—or at least, not one Bentley feels safe using—so he
has to pick his way through the roots and trees. When he gets to the cliff opposite the tower, he
pauses. Even with his hover-pack, it's too far to jump from one to the other; even Carmelita couldn't
make it. And the only path down is guarded. A guard hut at the top, a guard hut at the bottom, and a
last guard who makes his way from top to bottom and back again over and over.

The best part about guards is they're not very good at guarding things. The ones in the guard huts, at
the top and bottom, seem to be nearly asleep. Bentley waits for the right moment, then slips past the
one at the top and tails the moving guard down the path. When the path's level with the roof of the
bottom guard house, Bentley jumps to it, then to the ground. Getting back up there will be a bit more
of a scramble—even with his best hover-boosters, he'll have to cling to the ledge and haul his
wheelchair up after himself—but there's no doubt he can do it.

With that taken care of, Bentley eases his way closer to the tower. There's one guard circling it, and
another two patrolling the nearby beach, as well as one on each pirate ship docked nearby. In
addition, General Tsao himself is on the beach, inspecting the massive pile of gold there.
“Interesting,” says Bentley, pausing in his travels for a chat over his binoc-u-com.
“What's interesting?” asks Sly.

“Could you get Henriette on here?” Bentley asks.


After a moment of static, Henriette's face appears in the right corner. “I have got to get me some of these for me crew,” she says.

“Sorry, they won't be available for about four hundred years,” says Bentley.

“So?”

“So you get one to use for now, and we're taking it back when we go,” snaps Bentley.

“Come on, what's it gonna hurt?”

“Everything.” Bentley changes the subject. “Do you see those ships?”

“Hmmm,” says Henriette; a hand comes into view on the screen with her, one of Sly's, clearly showing her how to adjust the picture. “Those are my ships! The ones where they took my captains for ransom and left my crews in rowboats! Bit cocky, inn't he?”

“I thought that was obvious on sight,” says Bentley. “But what are you talking about?”

“A single guard on board? That sort of security isn't enough to stop a sugared weasel. Look,” she says, and Bentley's binoc-u-com zooms in on the ships, “they ain't even tied to the dock. Any blighter with a rope could tow them out to sea.”

“That may come in handy,” says Bentley. “We'll get them back later; I've got to get climbing.”

With that, Bentley puts his binoc-u-com away again and approaches the tower. With only one guard circling it, sneaking up close and putting the listening device by the door was easy. With that, he jumps onto the nearest decorative ramp and starts on his way up.

Four decorative ramps spiral up the tower, two going one way and two going another, each just barely wide enough for Bentley's chair. There's no room for error here: he has to remain pressed against the wall or he's going to fall off. The spots where two ramps intersect is impossible to roll up; pennants hang from those sections, waving gently in the breeze, orange with white tips. Bentley has to double jump high enough to get above the collision point, then hover his way back onto the tower. As it gets higher, the ramps get steeper. Bentley slides backwards whenever he stops moving forwards, and he can't make the jumps anymore. Instead, he has to bomb the places where the spirals meet.

It's no easy task, that's sure enough, but the spirals end at the balcony halfway up the tower; the only way to continue upwards is inside. Bentley sure isn't making the jumps that'd be needed to get higher-- he doesn't know why General Tsao has stones dangling from wires off the top of the tower, but it's not something he needs to find out. Bentley jumps his way to the balcony and stays there a moment, panting for breath, before wheeling his way to the door and placing his second bug just outside it.

A computer terminal sits just outside that door, waiting. Taunting him.

Bentley stops there and brings out his binoc-u-com, where he focuses on the beach. General Tsao is still there, lecturing his guards about something. “Looks like I have time for some hacking,” Bentley
says, cracking his knuckles. “Whether it's a way in or not, this will be useful.”

With that, the screen switches to a loading screen, and settles into Bentley's usual avatar. “Hello, Bentley,” whispers the code: Penelope's work yet again. “You shouldn't be here.”

Bentley snorts. Of course he should. But he and Penelope didn't see eye to eye on the most important things; medieval England taught him that. Some things need to stay the way they are, and the past is one of them: who knows what messing with it will do. And other things need to be changed, sure, but their old disagreements about making weapons... that's not the way to do it, whatever she thinks.

“He's after you, Bentley,” whispers Penelope. “Run.”

Bentley starts in his chair, taking his eyes off the computer for a moment to glance around—but no, even from here he can see General Tsao still on the beach. It's just Penelope messing with him. Once he didn't try to contact her for 'help' retrieving Sly in the past and strike a deal, she must've known he'd keep messing up her plans.

He finishes hacking with a quick tippy-tippy-tap of keys. The whole system hums for a moment as he takes his hands away; then, with an unnatural silence, the door slides into the ceiling, allowing him entry inside.

Bentley peeks through for guards before wheeling himself in. “Holy smokes, this is huge,” he says, gazing around.

“What did you find?” asks Sly over the maskpiece.

Bentley checks for cameras before wheeling himself in closer. The room takes up the entire tower; a trapdoor in the ceiling indicates going higher may be possible, but not for Bentley. The floor is smooth; the walls are patterned in target designs. But what interests Bentley are around the edges of the room.

The pedestals are simple white designs, evenly spaced, one on either side of the door he came in as well as on either side of the staircase leading into this room. Domed covers, clear as glass but made of a much harder material, stand on each one, protecting the contents inside. On each pedestal stand gems, ranging in size from that of a circle made by your thumb and first finger to the size of Bentley's head. Most have only one gem, but the smaller gems—those the size of Bentley's palm and smaller—have two or more, with the smallest having a circle of ten, with one in the center. Each gem is set in gold, waiting to be put on necklace or bracelet, made into a button or sewn on a sash.

And each one is floating above the base of the pedestal, bobbing up and down under their own power.

Getting closer to examine them is going to be tricky. Each pedestal is tightly guarded with lasers, extending from floor to ceiling, a tight circle that's impossible to fit through. “Those look important,” says Bentley, adjusting his glasses. “I bet I could fit my grapple-cam into that gap. Once it's in position, I can use one of the grappling lines to lift the cover. If I do it right, I should be able to get one of those small gems.”

Maneuvering the grapple-cam through all the lasers and into position isn't easy, since tripping one both destroys it and sets off an alarm... but Bentley gets it into position and raises the cover over the circle of ten gems.

“Hey Bentley, you need to hurry it up in there,” says Sly. “One of your spy devices has Tsao talking at the base of the tower.”
“It shouldn’t be much longer, I just need to use my sleep darts to shoot the center gem out of the circle,” says Bentley. And he does just that, replaces the lid, and wheels himself out of there.

**JOB: COMPLETE**

*Bentley does a victory pose on the outside of the tower, then starts climbing down.*
Bentley:

We may not quite know what's going on just yet, but we have made some major progress. After analyzing both the gem I stole *(picture of said gem)* and the giant stone Sly and Carmelita brought back, *(picture of the rock)* I discovered something terrible. I haven't figured out how yet, but it seems General Tsao is experimenting with mind control.

Sly:

With voodoo like Mizz Ruby? *(Picture)*

Murray:

Is he all... hypnotizing people like The Contessa? *(picture)*

Carmelita:

Or is it just plain old-fashioned manipulation, like what Neyla *(picture)* specialized in?

Bentley:

No, no, and no. It may have magical elements—we did see that General Tsao knew the principals of magic when he summoned a stone dragon to fight us *(picture of the dragon)*—but I can't figure it out. But it does explain why he's here. To make these items, he needs high-quality materials. Just the sort of things he's been stealing.

Henriette:

So let's take 'em back, then.

Bentley:

That's the idea. Before we take him out, we're going to have to pull off a few more jobs. Here's the plan.

Murray, you and I are going to do something about those stolen pirate ships. *(Pictures of the pirate*
I'll sneak my way onto those boats and take out the guards without raising any alarms. Once the guards are out, you're going to have to do a bit more rowing. *(Picture of Murray rowing the boat from earlier).* If we can get the boats far enough out to see, Henriette's captains can take them back.

Henriette:

Right nice of you to do that. I'll send them straight after the rest of that cabin boy's fleet, never yuh fear.

Bentley:

Okay, great. Once that's done with, you and Carmelita are going on a trip. When Murray was working with the fishermen, they pointed out an area they dare not go. Apparently there's a monster there that kills ships.

Henriette:

I've heard that one b'fore. Fair point, though: those bloody sirens would've been the end of us if my first mate had workin ears.

Bentley:

Yes, well, we've dealt with ship-killers before. *(Picture from game 3, with the Guru riding Crusher).* But there's always something to be gained by studying them. If we know what these guys are scared of, we may be able to make anyone from this time who's working for General Tsao run as far and fast as they can in the other direction.

Carmelita:

Jail is where they should go.

Henriette:

Not enough space in there for all those chaps. And who's gonna blame a lad hard on his luck an tryin' ta improve it?

Bentley:

That's... really not important right now. Once you're done with that, come back to the safe-house. Sly, you're going to have to do some legwork. When I hacked that PC, I put in a little keyboard tracking device. It looks like General Tsao has some sort of receiver on top of the cliff. *(Picture of the cliff, picture of satellites).* I need you to take it out.
While you do that, I'll head back to the tower. With General Tsao gone, it's the perfect time to explore. We encountered some odd things in the last place we were in (picture of the black glowing orb of DOOM), so I'd rather have a heads-up if we'll have to deal with something like that again.

Once we've pulled off these jobs, we'll be ready to make our move.

*Thiefnet Computer.*

*Sly: Not-Drowning 1. Swim through calm, clear water; if you can see the bottom, you'll be fine.*

*Bentley: Trigger Bomb.*

*Murray: Herculean Strength. Jump while carrying objects.*

*Carmelita: Charge shot. A slower but more powerful shot. Take out flashlight guards in one hit!*
Just a heads up: I realized I made a mistake in the order of some of the Thiefnet upgrades. The first Bentley skill for this area has been updated. His new upgrade, Trap Sabotage, is a variation on Khamen's skill. It's in Ch. 22, if you want to get the exact text. The update that was mistakenly in Ch. 22 will be during Slideshow 1 of area 3—chapter 38, if I counted right. While I don't think either update is required for game completion (I haven't finished writing yet, so I'm not going to commit either way) it makes sense to give Bentley a skill related to area 1's ancestor as soon after area 1 as I can. Similarly, you'll notice Sly got an upgrade that can be attributed to Henriette in the last slideshow; this is a pattern I plan to continue.

**FISHING FOR FEATHERS**

**Job 6: Row, Row, Row Your Boat**

Murray exits the safe-house into the night and makes his way up the hill, through the trees. He couldn't get past the fence earlier, but now, the spot where Bentley blew up has been 'repaired' with some branches. One good punch takes them out and clears the way.

With that done, Murray continues. He takes the same path to the beach Bentley used earlier, avoiding the still-sleepy guards: there's no point knocking them out when they're already nearly unconscious. Once at the dock, he's joined by Bentley for the start of the mission. Bentley's carrying a long, sturdy length of rope on the handles of his wheelchair; he reaches back to pat it, and check it's still there, before speaking.

“Okay Murray,” says Bentley, adjusting his glasses. “The local guards General Tsao is using aren't bad people; they just need the pay. So I don't want to take them out, if we can help it.”

“What do you want me to do?” asks Murray.

“I'll make my way onto the boats first and put the guards to sleep,” says Bentley. “Once I've taken out each guard, you'll take them off the boat and leave them in that hut.” Bentley nods to a shack at the end of the dock. “Once we're done, I'll lock them in. That should keep General Tsao from punishing them too harshly, and give them a good excuse if they need it.”

“Okay,” says Murray. “I'll wait for your signal.”

When doing something like this, a million, billion things can go wrong. A guard can deviate from their patrol route. A restless friend may drop by for a chat. An alarm could be called for another reason, putting everyone on high alert. Even something as simple as a sneeze could jeopardize the entire operation.

So Bentley waits on the dock until the tickle's left his nose before he makes his way up the gangplank and onto the first ship. That guard is walking the deck in a slow circle, ignoring the bow and stern of the boat; it seems obvious that he'd be asleep already, if he weren't moving. Bentley brings out his binoc-u-com to aim and waits for just the right moment to shoot his sleep dart.
The guard's out like a light before he even hits the ground. “Murray, you're up,” says Bentley.

Murray makes his way on board, stomps the boat beside the guard's head to launch him into Murray's arms, and carries the guard to the guard shack. There are a few beds in there, not enough, and Murray places the guard gently in one. “All clear,” he says over the binoc-u-com.

The job is fiddly, requiring care on both of their parts. The more boats Bentley does, the more alert and random the guards move about on; sometimes he has to time his shot so they're not standing on trap doors where Murray can't stomp. Even when they're not on trap doors, Murray has to be careful when picking them up, as these ships have a surprising number of breakables about that'll cause a lot of noise—and bring other guards running—if he touches them. But it all goes smoothly enough in the end, and they block all the windows, and the door, of the little hut when they're finished.

With that done, the two of them climb onto one of the boats and lower a lifeboat. Murray jumps into the lifeboat and waves; Bentley throws down a length of rope. Murray ties one end to the back of the lifeboat while Bentley secures the other to the front of the boat itself.

With that done, Murray is all set to start rowing. And row he does. Floating seaweed can gum up the oars, but not mess up the bigger boat; the same principal applies to all of the obstacles he faces.

When he's far enough out to see, Henriette's crew picks him up. Then, using the knowledge of the currents Murray told them earlier, they drop him back off on shore.

Getting the rest of those boats out to sea takes most of the night, but The Murray doesn't mind. He enjoys rowing. And challenging as the dodging is, it's what he does best.

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Murray does a victory pose with his oars as flabbergasted pirates look on.*
I would just like to say that 'Calamari Damacy' is the best job title I've come up with so far and I am immensely, crazily proud of it. Carry on.

**FISHING FOR FEATHERS**

**Job 7: Calamari Damacy**

Carmelita leaves the safe-house in the pale light of dawn and walks down to the beach. Henriette is there, waiting; she trots up to Carmelita. “Do you know how to swim, lubbuh?”

“I can't cross large distances,” says Carmelita, “or fight any sort of current. But I have made sure I know how to not drown.”

Henriette props her hands on her hips. “We're gonna tie you to the mast.”

“You're what?” demands Carmelita.

“One end o' the rope around the mast, the other around yer waist,” says Henriette, turning her back on Carmelita to get into the rowboat. “We only do it fer storms, but wi' you, lubbuh, I ain't takin a chance. You were one o' mine, I'd be makin' ya swim right now.”

Carmelita sighs. “I suppose I can't argue the point,” she says, irritation in her voice, as she gets on the other side of the boat and settles onto a seat. “But I will be free to move around?”

“Course,” says Henriette, and starts to row.

The game flashes out into a brief loading screen, then reopens when they're on the boat proper. Henriette is in her element, waving to her sailors, barking orders, shooing some of them below deck and others into the rigging. True to her word, she tosses Carmelita one end of a sturdy length of rope first thing, and sets about tying the other end to the mast.

Carmelita ties the rope around her waist and takes up a position near the center of the boat, where she can see almost anything. “I'll be steerin' a'course,” says Henriette, “but you know where we're goin. Use the L1 button to tell me to steer to port—that's 'left' to you landlubbers, and the R1 button to steer to the starboard—right. An if'n I need to fire any cannonballs, well, I'll use the L2 button to get my crew to fire on the port side o' me ship, and the R2 for the other. Think you can remember that?”

“You're the sailor,” says Carmelita, twirling her gun on one finger. “I'll leave that to you. But if anything comes up, I've got my shock pistol to help me.”

“All right, then let's get underway,” says Henriette.

Sailing is just as much fun as it was in game 3. Granted, there aren't any other ships out here to fight (at the moment), but Henriette spends some time just enjoying her day. She detours around some rocks in the path and keeps a sharp lookout for anything unexpected... but it's just another day.
"We're closing in on the position," says Carmelita. "Remember, we're after some sort of ship killer—"

"What scared the seaweed-slurpin' fishermen," finishes Henriette. "Probably a proper pirate. Shouldn't be a hard fight if it is."

Carmelita nods and goes to stand beside Henriette, stretching the rope to the limit. "You're actually legal?"

"Not used to it from us Coopers, are you?" says Henriette, glancing at her. "Truth be told, not all of us're thieves. Family's stretched across the globe at this point and I've got twenty or thirty cousins, but half of 'em are honest as the day is long, and only one o' the rest is worth handing the Thievious off to when I'm done."

Carmelita snorts. "So it wouldn't be an insult to his family tradition if Sly weren't stealing?"

"No, who told him that?" says Henriette. "Course, all the 'rents want their kid to be the next best thief and carry on the tradition, name passed down in Cooper lore, but it don't happen. I don't know what generation Sly is, but there's a tally sheet in the back, and every third person what gets it goes through before passing it on and takes out anythin' that isn't useful anymore. That gets placed in the vault. One o' me great aunts, Karin Coopergiwa, developed a technique that makes any loose change move towards her, and that's great. Grand one ta' pass on. Her bits on keepin' candles from flickering as you walk past is already out o date." She shrugs. "And none o' my writings on using a ship'll be any use soon as someone makes a better one."

"Huh," Carmelita says. "You need to tell Sly this. Maybe it'll convince him to quit stealing for good so he can become a cop and we can actually have a relationship."

"Odds o' that are about as good as you growing wings," says Henriette. "We play loose with the law, all o' us Coopers do, bend it and rub against it, but not with ourselves. Sly's a thief, plain as salt in the ocean. But you can be in the wrong without bein' wrong, and that's what we Coopers are best at."

"And I suppose you know so much about—"

Carmelita's interrupted by a low-pitched burbling noise, like boiling water trying to escape the pot. She runs to the front of the boat—as far forwards as she can anyway—to see something massive, easily twice the size of the boat, bubbling in the water ahead. "Henriette," says Carmelita, "I think we found it."

"It's a big 'un, in't it?" she says cheerfully.

That cheer dies when the thing rises. It's hard to say what it is, or what it once was, around the debris stuck to it. Rocks, sharks, entire fishing boats are caught in the mass of carnage around this thing. Six tentacles rise from the water and raise once, splashing down, and then start propelling the massive thing towards the ship.

A few things become obvious very quickly.

The first: if that thing catches them, not just a glancing blow but catches them, they'll be as stuck as everything else.

The second: It's not quite as fast as they are.

The third: Carmelita's shock pistol stuns it for a few moments.
And most important: if the dang thing can be hit with a cannonball when it's stunned, some of that stuff will fall off and sink beneath the waves. Like, say, other boats.

Shouting strategy back and forth, Carmelita and Henriette get to work. Carmelita runs all around the boat, firing when she can and almost tying herself to the mast when she runs in too many circles; Henriette uses good steering and timing to turn the ship at just the right moments to avoid the thing and fire at it.

Bit by bit, pieces fall off. Masts from boats, then the boats themselves. Then smaller boats. Whole tree trunks. Sharks, and dolphins, that swim away frantically. And as things fall off, it gets smaller. And faster. Things just can't be easy, can they.

When it's smaller than they are, it turns to flee. “We can't let it get away!” shouts Carmelita. “It'll just do this again.”

“Right you are, mate,” says Henriette. “Hope ye're in for some sharp shooting, cause that blighter's fast!”

Is Carmelita in for some sharp shooting on a fast moving target? Of course she is. Carmelita would never admit it, but she lives for this sort of chase. Why else did she never ask to be reassigned off the Sly Cooper case?

Besides her crush on him, of course.

As pieces fall off, the monster gradually becomes revealed. Henriette slings a rope at it, lassoing one of its tentacles, and they pull the monster to a halt. Without its massive coat of debris, it turns out to be a giant squid.

A young one. At that size, it could suck up a rowboat, at the most.

Which Henriette and Carmelita immediately decide to test by getting into one of their lifeboats and rowing out to inspect the thing.

“This is what caused all the trouble?” Carmelita asks; the squid seems to shy away from her. “How on earth does knowing about this help us on the heist?”

“I dunno, mate,” says Henriette. She reaches out her hand and rubs its head; her hand sticks. She has to use her hook hand to pry it loose. “Poor thing can't help it.”

Soon as Henriette's got her hand free, the squid presses closer to the boat, leaning its head towards Henriette's hand. Carmelita raises her shock pistol, but Henriette just laughs, wraps her bandanna around her hand, and pets it again. “Seems all it wants is a little affection.”

“Are you seriously petting it?” demands Carmelita, her gun still drawn. “It's a monster! A menace! It deserves to be—”

“I'm gonna keep Sushi as a pet,” says Henriette.

“Sushi?” Carmelita asks, not lowering her pistol.

“Its name, mate,” says Henriette, turning to Carmelita. “You'd make a fine member of my crew, with your aim and your sea sense, but you don't know nothin about forgiveness.”

**JOB COMPLETE**
Henriette poses by giving the giant squid a one-armed hug while Carmelita looks like she's not sure how to react.
Sly makes his way to the mission start zone by jumping from tree to tree, making a game with how little he can touch the ground. Below him, tapirs use their flashlights; here and there, monkeys sit atop the trees, and he avoids those. Sidling along branches, jumping from branch to branch, climbing to the top and gazing out over the world... it was times like these that he knew just how good it was to be a thief. Sure, nothing beat the adrenaline rush of being chased down an alley, Carmelita yelling behind him, or the heart-in-his-throat rush when he was moments away from being discovered. But this... this is nice.

Of course, all trees are cleared within jumping distance of the wall, but that's no problem. Sly goes around. When he's safe on the other side, he climbs one of the trees there and brings out his binoc-u-com. “Okay Bentley, what am I doing here?”

“Sly, I need you to climb to the top of that cliff and tell me what you find up there,” says Bentley. “That's the most likely location of General Tsao's satellites. Once you find it, I can talk you through splicing me in so I can monitor everything he's doing.”

“All right, just leave it to me.”

Sly tucks his binoc-u-com away and studies the cliff face. There doesn't seem to be a good way to get on it from here, so he backtracks towards his detour around the wall. From there, rather than jumping from spot to spot and back to the other side, he leaps to a spot with a place he can wall-hook leap from, and from there lands on an old, frayed piece of rope stretched between two segments of cliff side. This takes him on the side of the cliff away from the rest of the island, open sea stretching beneath him and into the distance, and he sees a new landscape.

In his head, he hears Bentley mutter about how the locals must use those ropes when they steal seagull eggs. Indeed, when he gets too close to a nest, seagulls dive at him, trying to knock him away. Sly really doesn't care where the ropes came from, though. They let him go up and down a sight easier than leaping blindly, and it's a fair bit of fun, too.

Swinging and climbing and missing and gliding to a better perch, finding a nice spot to stand and admire the view, it's all just part of the job. And if seagulls nearly bash him off the cliff face and one manages to steal his hat, well, he laughs the entire time he steals it back.

Cheeky things.

At last, he reaches the cliff top to find... something he rather didn't expect. He pulls out his binoc-u-com and focuses on it. “Bentley, I don't think I can splice into that,” he says.

“Drat,” says Bentley, looking at the tiny box-like protrusion at the top of the cliff. “That's definitely where the signal's coming out... but where's the rest of it being stored?”

“Beats me,” says Sly. “If there were wires, I could follow them.”

“It can't be far,” says Bentley. “It's probably inside one of the caves along the cliff. See if you can locate it.”
“Sure, I'll just take the elevator,” says Sly.

“Uh-huh,” says Bentley, adjusting his glasses. “You'll be up there a while if you wait for it to be built. Like, say, three hundred years.”

“That'll still be worth the wait,” Sly says, looking back over the cliff side. The side he just came up is pockmarked with caves and, if he decides to go to the bottom, there's even one opening partially submerged in the waves. “Look Bentley, last time I went in a cave around here it was too dangerous for me to go alone. So what gives?”

“Do you really want to see Murray climb those?”

“Sure. Let's just attach some springs to his feet, he'll love it.”

Bentley doesn't respond. Instead, he simply looks at Sly, the expression of pure exasperation that he must have used so many times at this point that it's practically patented.

“...Forget I said anything.”

“Thought so.”

Sly puts away his binoc-u-com and starts the work of checking all those caves. It's easy, if it weren't for the wind picking up. He can't jump into it, so he has to either wait for it to switch directions—which it does often, as though the weather itself is playing with him—or not jump. When he jumps with it, though, he can go a lot farther—which is a lot of fun when the paraglider gets added into play.

He finds some interesting things on his way down: a hidden guard station with binoculars aimed at the ocean, waiting for a ship to swing into view (Sly knocks those guards out, pockets their wallets, and takes every pair of binoculars. Even the ones that are bolted down. And anything that can possibly be sold, too, of course); a family of a species he's sure is extinct in the present day, that he almost decides to take with him back to the present if Bentley weren't having a heart attack over it; even a treasure map. A few of the caves have wires running down the backs of them, indicating that, yes, Sly needs to go even lower.

Of course, it's not in the very bottom cave. I mean, there is a very nice item he'd run back to the safe-house if Bentley wouldn't throw a hissy fit about it, either to put on display in his personal collection or to sell; there are also what look like messages in bottles, three of them, that if he bothered to collect them—and the many others scattered around the island—would undoubtedly give him something nice. But the actual machine he needs to splice is about 3/4 of the way down, in a cave that requires a fair bit of maneuvering to get into.

The box with all the wires on it uses a combination lock. Sly cracks his knuckles and crouches next to it, ignoring the rest of the world as he turns it this way and that, ever-so-slowly, feeling for the moment things click into place. As for the splicing itself? Takes three seconds; he's inserted enough splice clips by now that he doesn't even need Bentley to tell him where it goes in this system.

“Perfect, Sly. Hmmm... it looks like the ships he uses all have GPS positioners on them, and he uses this to direct them to different coordinates, and keep track of where they are. He's even outfitted Henrique's stolen ships with them. This could prove useful for the heist.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly twirls his hat on his cane, then snatches it back before a seagull can steal it.*
Sly hasn't even made it off the cliff when he notices something happening by the path through the wall. One paraglide later (man, he loves that thing) and he's on a nearby tree, in perfect position to watch General Tsao stalk through.

He brings up his binoc-u-com at once. “Hey Bentley, something's going on.”

“Bentley's not here,” says Carmelita. “He left to do some more legwork on that tower.”

“Huh,” says Sly, focusing in on Tsao, who's making all the guards cower away. “At least this guy isn't there.”

“General Tsao,” Carmelita spits. “If you hold him, I'll come arrest him.”

“Calm down,” says Sly, adjusting his view as Tsao starts swaggering through the woods. “If we make our move too soon, everything could go wrong.”

“Like what? I take him to prison?”

“And we never figure out what the deal is with the tower and time traveling,” Sly says. “Pass. Worst case, we don't capture him, Bentley's plan is ruined, and, I don't know, we destroy history?”

Carmelita growls under her breath. “Fine. I hate it when you make sense. But what do we do about him now?”

“I'll follow him without being seen,” says Sly. “Maybe we can learn something. I'll keep you in the loop, in case he says anything that triggers cop instincts but not thief ones.”

With that, Sly puts his binoc-u-com away but turns up the sensitivity of the microphone and starts after General Tsao. He's cautious, that's for sure: even here, he stops to double check his surroundings often. Sly has to take to the forest floor to avoid some monkey guards, and that's when he sees Tsao jump to look at the treetops, too, as an extra measure of security. He gulps at that. Tsao's the first person Sly's followed to look up without a good reason, like suspicious noise or Sly getting in a fight and the guards calling for assistance or sounding alarms. He's going to have to rely on staying out of sight through other means.

Still, now that he's following General Tsao, he can tell there's something... off... about his movements. “I don't think the tropics agree with this guy,” he mutters, knowing Carmelita can hear him. “He's walking like he's trying to keep the sand from his shoes.”

Carmelita snorts. “In this place? Good luck.”

General Tsao detours around the edge of town, leaping onto the roof of their safe-house (Sly's heart beats in his throat) and past it until he reaches the prison. “Oh, the broken prison,” he says, staring at it from over his shield. “If only my guards had been prepared for the tricks of native throwbacks. Ah well,” he continues, turning away. “It's nothing my trained fleet of sharks can't handle. If only I had more collars, I could tame more of them.”
“Carmelita, did you hear that?” asks Sly, not bothering to take out his binoc-u-com; he stays inside a barrel as Tsao continues on his way.

“I'm going to add animal cruelty to my list of charges,” Carmelita mutters.

“We'd best tell Henriette to stay out of the water until we can figure out how to deal with it.” Sly pops out of the barrel and runs to the corner Tsao just turned down so he can peek after him. “Where is she now?”

“Bentley hooked her up to the GPS's of Tsao's pirate ships. She's chasing after them.”

“That sounds like a lot of fun.” Sly bounces to a rooftop and runs over Tsao's head at an opportune moment. It looks like he's going to the tea house.

“In your dreams, Ringtail.”

Tsao does a full circle around the tea house and even jumps on top of it... but fails to notice Sly hiding behind the chimney. “I would like to find the thieves that made off with the tea set,” says Tsao, gazing off into the ocean. “While not as high quality as my family's own, ancestral tea set, it was based on it and of... superior quality. They were wise to run while they had the chance. Had they remained, they may have compromised the secret escape passage before I brutally slaughtered them.”

Sly waits for Tsao to jump off the roof again before darting to the edge of it and staring down, watching him. “Secret escape passage, huh?” he says, twirling his cane. “I'd say that's worth looking into.”

“Look into it later, Ringtail,” says Carmelita. “Right now, you need to keep on his tail!”

“Of course,” Sly says, jumping to another rooftop and then off it, dodging Tsao's paranoia. “Boy, this brings back memories, doesn't it, Carm?”

Carmelita doesn't respond for a few streets. “I don't think I've ever tailed you like this.”

“You never noticed me, then?” Sly stops on top of a clothesline. “I just thought you'd always decided it wasn't worth dealing with me on your rare day off.”

“You...” Carmelita catches her outrage with a single word. “How often did you follow me?”

“Often enough that I wasn't guessing about your favorite places to eat,” Sly admits. “Murray thought it was cute. Bentley thought it was creepy, but admitted watching the cop on our tail was a good idea.” He ducks into a doorway to stay out of sight as Tsao backtracks a few steps before leaving town and heading for the cave Sly and Carmelita searched earlier.

“I suppose I can see his point,” says Carmelita.

Sly has to be a bit more careful as he creeps along the beach: there are far fewer places to hide around here. He takes a risk and moves ahead of Tsao, to the cave's entrance, where a lone tree shadows the opening. If Tsao goes a different way, he may get caught, but if he doesn't go now, he won't be close enough to hear.

“I do hope the doctor doesn't blame me for the loss of his precious stone,” says Tsao. He stares into the cave but doesn't go in, to Sly's great relief. “He did leave me with the impression that he had enough samples to control another dozen people, although I would serve him even without it.”
Sly almost falls out of the tree.

“The insult of being forced to wear such a thing cannot go unpunished, however,” says Tsao, turning away. “It may take him months to create another such stone. If I can rid myself of these jeweled gauntlets, I could have some form of revenge. Or perhaps I could return to the present and live in the lap of luxury while he labors here like a commoner. My legacy does not suit me for this task.”

Then he turns and makes his way down the beach. “Sounds like Tsao's being forced to be here,” mutters Sly.

“If we can destroy those gauntlets, we might be able to follow him and arrest them both,” says Carmelita. “That should take care of the problem.”

“Good thing we've got that stone.” Sly leaps from the tree and paraglides to a rock sticking out of the sea, then leaps again onto a buoy. There are a number of them in the shallow water, marking traps; he has to use his ninja spire jump to land on them, but it's keeping him out of General Tsao's sight.

And where is General Tsao strutting to this time? To a group of fishermen standing by their boats on the beach, unloading their catch. Sly paraglides onto a boat and hides behind a sail to listen.

“Why hello there, worthless peasants,” he says, puffing out his chest imperiously, metal plate gleaming. “I trust you have enough fish for today's shipment?”

“Do you really have to take it all?” asks one tortoise. General Tsao glares at him, and he ducks his head. “Meaning no disrespect, sir. We just haven't been able to trade or smoke any for lean times.”

“Or eat enough,” mutters another.

“Do not worry, little peasants,” he says, glaring over his shield at them. “It is not your place to question your betters. I need this fish, and my needs are greater than yours. And as long as I get the fish, I won't be needing another meal of turtle soup. Do you understand me?”

The other tortoises hide in their shells while the one who questioned General Tsao stutters out, “Yes, sir, I understand, sir. We—we'll have the shipment by the path in an hour.”

“Very well then. I shall return to my meditations in my beautiful tower.” He raises a hand in farewell, light gleaming off the gem on the back of his hand, and leaves.

Sly follows him to the edge of town. “The sooner we get rid of this guy, the better,” says Sly.

“For once, I agree with you,” says Carmelita. “Turtle soup?”

“Let's not tell Bentley.”

“Agreed,” says Carmelita. “Though I'll make sure he knows he's got to hurry. But now that Tsao's gone... feel like investigating that tea house again?”

“What, the cop's proposing breaking and entering?”

“Come back to the safe-house and I'll write you a warrant,” says Carmelita.

“No thanks,” Sly says, and makes his way across the roofs to the tea house “Unlike Henriette, I don't need government approval.”

Ooooooo... I'm going to end the conversation now because I can't think of anything to come after that. It feels like such a burn but you can just picture Carmelita wincing about it, too.
In any case, Sly sneaks back into the tea house with the spotlights and laser security. It doesn't take long to determine the secret way out can't be in the area covered by lasers, so he makes his way across them, near where the teapot was stored. Now that he thinks about it, since the tea set was being used as keys, it doesn't make sense for there to be a fully functioning stove back here. Less sense for there to be an oven. Least sense of all that it looks very, very modern.

“All right Carmelita, I'm going to try crawling in the oven,” says Sly.

“Why on earth would you do that?” she asks.

“Only place I can think of for the passage. Plus, it's big enough for even him to fit,” Sly adds.

“I guess that's a good reason,” says Carmelita. “Just... be careful, Ringtail.”

“I will be, Carm. Promise.” Sly turns down the listener's sensitivity anyway, though, before he goes in the oven.

It's a SLIDE. Okay? It's a SLIDE. We've had all sorts of fun shenanigans in Sly games before with racing and arcade-style shooters and rhythm games and motion controls and BOATS and SHOOTING but we've never had a SLIDE before. One of those slides that requires jumping at specific points and aiming yourself along narrow portions and ducking and avoiding random traps because of COURSE Sly didn't turn off all the security and it's really, really fun because it's a SLIDE. And Sly laughs like a little kid the entire way down.

The slide comes out inside the ocean cave at the base of the cliff. “Huh,” says Sly, gazing around. “so if General Tsao tries to escape through there, he'll come out here.”

“He may also send reinforcements through there,” says Bentley in his ear.

“Nice to hear from you, pal,” says Sly. “How'd your mission go?”

“It was... uneventful. Come on back to the safe-house; it's time to hatch a plan.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly does a victory pose, then grins, looks back at the slide, and vanishes from the screen. A few moments later, he's seen coming out the bottom of the slide again.*
Chapter 32

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

FISHING FOR FEATHERS

Job 10: Turtle Soup

Bentley leaves Carmelita in charge of his computer, since Murray is sleeping... actually, Carmelita may be the better choice even if she is a cop. Either way, Bentley's trusting her with his life as he makes his way through the jungle and to the hole in the wall.

Which is almost suspiciously unguarded. Either these guys have horrific short-term memories, it's a trap, or they just don't care. And it's not a trap.

He pulls out his binoc-u-com when he reaches his mission start point. “Okay, Carmelita, I'm about to go in. ...are you there? Carmelita?”

“Oh! Sorry, Bentley.” Carmelita turns to him. “Sly just told me he saw General Tsao going through the checkpoint at the wall. He's going to keep an eye on him, give us a heads up when Tsao gets back.”

“That'll make my life a little easier,” Bentley admits, adjusting his glasses. “I may be in there a while.”

“What are you looking for?” asks Carmelita.

“While we were in the basement of the tower in Egypt, Khamen and I found a giant black orb of some sort chained in the center of the room,” Bentley says. “When we destroyed the chains, it rose up, and the whole tower—as well as everything in it, everyone in it, and even that huge fissure from the earthquake—disappeared.”

“Huh,” says Carmelita. “I've never heard of anything like that in Interpol.”

“Believe me, I'm well aware,” says Bentley. “I've read through your files numerous times.”

“You what?!”

“Look, Carmelita, the point is that I'm going to see if there's another of those things here,” Bentley says. “If there is, and I can figure out what it is, and what it does... that may give us some answers.”

“Okay,” says Carmelita. “But watch your back in there. Whether or not General Tsao's in at the moment, I get the feeling he's got some tight security measures. The things I saw when we arrested him and searched his palace for additional evidence...”

“I do have some idea,” Bentley says, and puts his binoc-u-com away.

Under the circumstances, it is entirely reasonable for Bentley to wheel himself in the front door... so that's exactly what he does. There aren't any guards there. Patrolling the beach, sure, and the path to get to the beach, of course, but not on the door to the tower itself, or even inside the tower. Someone's been slacking. Then again, Tsao's always considered himself invincible; the thought of needing redundant security probably never occurred to him.
That thinking stops the second Bentley tries to take the sloped path to the basement... and has to stop at the top. It's a straight shot down, of course. It's also an obstacle course of lasers.

Time to bring out something we haven't seen yet in this game, but veterans of the series will remember well: the RC car. This remote-controlled gadget can go forwards by holding the X button, backwards by holding the square button, and turn with the joystick; it allows Bentley to see anything in front of it; and, probably most important, it has a gun that can be fired with the R1 button. Bentley may not know what he's going to find down there, but unlike his chair, the car is small enough to go through.

And into a bona fide obstacle course, curse it. It's nothing compared to the mess Penelope had to deal with in Tsao's treasure temple—a little detail Bentley hates being grateful for, since he never could match her RC skills—but more than enough to have his palms sweating on the controller. Sure, he may beat the others at video games nine times out of ten, but this sort of finicky detail work will never be in his comfort zone.

When he gets the car to the bottom of the stairs, he finds a large button to drive it onto. The lasers in front of him flicker a few times before disappearing. “Excellent,” Bentley says, and wheels his way down.

It's a lot faster when you don't have to worry about laser security. And when you're not a remote control car about three inches long. At the bottom, Bentley looks around. Another black orb is nowhere in sight... but there is another hallway, heading off into the unknown.

Bentley wheels his car off the button, letting the laser security reassert itself so no one can follow him down. “How you doing over there, Bentley?” asks Carmelita over the binoc-u-com.

“I've made some progress in my explorations,” Bentley says, putting the car in a corner so it'll be difficult to notice. “This place is bigger than the basement in Rajan's tower.”

“All right. General Tsao seems to be making a tour of the town,” says Carmelita. “And I'm drawing you an official warrant for your actions today.”

“Do you have the authority to do that?” he asks.

“Went out of my way to get it last month,” she snaps, “after that last debacle. But it's not supposed to be for a case I'm on. I'll get suspended from the force if this gets out.”


Carmelita chuckles. “You may have a point, shell boy.”

Bentley turns his attention back to the hallway then. Or... not quite a hallway. It has walls and a roof, but water instead of floor, lapping gently with the waves of the ocean. Floating in the hallway, bobbing gently in place, are rounded floating platforms, raised in the middle, with hexagonal patterns on them; Bentley has to jump from one to the other on his way across. The water steams gently, indicating that it's not directly from the ocean: this has been heated.

About halfway down the hallway, a ladder leads up—not that Bentley can climb it. There is, however, a slowly spinning wheel going from the water to the top. It scoops up water with long-handled buckets and deposits the water at the top; Bentley balances on one of the handles as it goes up. The water is being deposited into a gutter of sorts that flows down one side of the rest of the hallway, which has a new obstacle: giant knives, their blades stretching the width of the hallway,
pounding into the ground at intervals that only make sense to them. “I really don't like the look of this,” says Bentley.

The end of the hallway opens into a large, round room. The gutter of liquid deepens into a moat that Bentley has to jump over; it circles all the edges of the room. A fan-like device in the center of the ceiling connects to a number of long wooden sticks, with wide flat ends that extend down the walls and into the moat. The water is murky and green, with various items floating in it that can't quite be made out.

None of that matters to Bentley right now. In the center of the room, chained top and bottom to each of those sticks, is another light-sucking black orb. “Fascinating,” Bentley says, adjusting his glasses. “Now, let's see what sort of readings I get off this.”

There's a 'time passes' sort of cut, then it shows Bentley wheeling his way up the ramp to the tower's main floor. “General Tsao's on his way back to the tower,” says Carmelita. “You done in there?”

“I'll be out in just a moment,” says Bentley. “But I'm going to leave my RC car in the basement. We may have to get back down there in a hurry.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Bentley does a victory pose before using his mechanical arms to give himself a shell massage.*

Chapter End Notes

Hey guys, sorry for having to say this. My apartment’s had a number of issues in recent months—plumbing problems two years ago, a heat issue over the winter, and a burst pipe last week. My landlord's been thinking about kicking people out of the apartments and renovating them for a few months now, and I just got the official letter. My apartment will be first; I (and all my possessions) need to Get Out.

Because I have so much written already, changing 'writing time' to 'packing time' won't hurt updates, but a rather unpredictable schedule may make things weird. Right now, I update between getting home from work and going to bed every Tuesday. With this craziness going on, you may see an update a day early, or a day late, or at an otherwise weird time... though there'll still be one a week.

Thanks for your patience.
Bentley:

All right everyone, my analysis of that black ball in Tsao's basement was very... interesting. *(Picture of the black ball).* It's some sort of anchor. Tsao wasn't sent into this time alone— the tower *(picture)*, the tea shop *(picture)*, even the wall *(picture)* came with him. That black orb is keeping it all here. If we release it, then all of that—and him—goes back to the present. *(Picture of the area 1 stuff vanishing).*

Carmelita:

That's going to make it hard to arrest him. *(Picture of Carmelita arresting him, game 3)*

Bentley:

Yes, well, that's why we're going to make sure he doesn't come back. It's time for Operation: Fox Fried Chicken. *(Title slide)*

Henriette:

That is a darn awful name, turtle.

Bentley:

We have a few different objectives here. First things first, we need to destroy Tsao's operation. *(Picture of the tower).* If there's nothing for him to return to, then a fresh start would be very expensive in time and money. *(Picture of the piles of gems and gold)* Too expensive for him to get before Carmelita catches up to him again if he escapes us here. In order to pull that off, we're going to need to take care of his ships. *All* of them. *(Picture of the ships).* Henriette's made a great start with her fellow pirates—

Henriette:

Privateers!

Bentley:

Privateers, right. But he has a large fleet of smaller ships that can't go as far, but that he uses to bring in the loot. *(Picture of the smaller ships, which look like they may be up to short sea voyages at the best).* The water in that harbor is too shallow to go after them with your big ship, Henriette, so you may have to use some... unconventional means. *(Picture of Bentley staring at the sea with ?'s over his head. Drawn in sharpie.)*

Henriette:

Already got i' planned, Bentley. Continue.
Bentley:

Right. While Henriette's taking care of that, I need Murray to make some mayhem in town. (Picture of Murray in town). Forget subtlety: I want that teahouse destroyed, with the secret passage rendered unusable. Do whatever you have to to knock that option out of commission. (Picture of Murray being... Murray.)

Murray:

Oh yeah! I am ON IT, Bentley! It's been too long since I've gotten to engage in some high-quality destruction!

Bentley:

...Right. In case things go haywire, we'll leave a rowboat for you at the end of the escape tunnel. (Picture of said rowboat there). Between his boats being destroyed and the destruction of his escape route, General Tsao (Picture of General Tsao) will be outraged. If my psychological profile is correct (Picture of Bentley with a clipboard), he'll storm out of his tower to take care of business. Murray, you should wait at the wall (Picture of the wall) and Henriette, you stay at sea (picture of the boats) in case he tries for those, but he shouldn't get that far. Because that's when the three of us will get to work. (Picture of Sly, Bentley, and Carmelita).

Carmelita, you engage Tsao in a fight on the beach. (Picture of Carmelita fighting Tsao) I don't know if you'll be able to beat him, but you should at least keep him engaged while Sly and I take care of our parts.

Carmelita:

Oh, I am absolutely going to take him out. I'll have him cuffed before anyone else has their job half finished.

Bentley:

Sly, once Tsao is out of the tower you need to climb it. (Picture of Sly climbing it). I'll give you a special bag; if you use your cane, you should be able to steal all the items on the middle landing without touching them. (picture of Sly golfing with his cane). My analysis shows they're all made with pieces of that mind-control stone you and Carmelita got earlier (picture of the stone); if you don't touch them and they all go in the bag, you have a 98.7% chance of remaining unaffected.

Sly:

Huh. Not sure what we'll do with them after, though (picture of the jewelry). Selling them just wouldn't be right, and the idea of keeping them gives me the creeps.

Carmelita:

We're handing them over as evidence—

Bentley:

Sorry, Carmelita, but that's too big of a temptation even for an Interpol officer. It's not like one of your own hasn't gone astray before. (Pictures of Neyla and The Contessa flash by on the screen.)

Carmelita:
Grrr....

**Bentley:**

We'll figure out how to destroy them later. In any case, I'll make my way back to that room in the basement. *(Picture of the weird water-stirring room)*. I've been working on a more powerful charge for my bombs, and a remote detonation device. *(Picture of a giant flippin' remote)*. Destroying the chains holding the black orb worked last time. *(Picture of the black orb)*. We'll try it again this time. And if Tsao's sucked back to the future with everything else, well...

**Sly:**

He'll be beaten to a pulp, handcuffed, and left with nothing. Not bad.

**Bentley:**

We've all got our assignments. So check your weapons and pull on your masks—that means you, Carmelita—and we'll move out. *(Picture of Carmelita's mask)*.
FFF Heist

FISHING FOR FEATHERS

OPERATION: FOX FRIED CHICKEN

Everyone leaves the safe-house at about the same time. Murray makes his way through the streets to the tea shop, then jumps onto the roof and pulls out his binoc-u-com. "Okay Bentley, I'm in position."

"I'm all ready here, chaps," says Henriette.

"I've taken my position," says Carmelita. "As soon as he shows his face..."

"Just don't move too early," says Sly. "Bentley and I are ready to head up the tower the second Tsao comes out."

"And remember: once I've released that black orb, there's no telling what will happen," Bentley says. "I won't hit that button while any of us are in the tower. Having it vanish from underneath us, or suddenly being beneath the ocean, would be disastrous."

"We know!" Sly interrupts.

"All right. Murray, Henriette, you're up."

"Already on it, lubbuh."


He leaps off the roof and belly-flops in the middle of the tight knot of guards in front of the tea shop, knocking them all silly with one blow, and then punching until he's sure they'll stay down. Then he enters the tea hut and gets to work. Everything that can be broken gets broken. That includes the things producing the laser fences. Some laser emitters just can't handle being hit by three or more tables. Some spotlight generators can't keep working after being belly-flopped by a hippo. Some of these things explode and damage the structure's stability, bringing pieces of the roof down.

The Murray has to squeeze in through the oven and down the slide to escape. Since he's less...maneuverable than Sly, going down the slide is a bit more of a challenge. But he manages. Yelling 'WOO HOO!' and 'YEAH!' and 'THIS IS AWESOME!' the whole way down.

"Okay guys, I'm at the rowboat," says The Murray. "I'll start making my way to the wall. How are things over there?"

REWIND

"All right. Murray, Henriette, you're up."

"Already on it, lubbuh," says Henriette, one hand to her ear. She leans back in her tiny sailboat and grabs the bullhorn. A pair of reins lay in her hook. "Those lubbuh's won't know what hit 'em."

With that, she sails into the bay by General Tsao's tower and grabs the bullhorn. "OY YOU LOT OF BABBOON-FACED FLEA-BITTEN CABIN BOYS! YOU CLAM-TONGUED
That... gets the intended result. A dozen boats get launched at once.

Henriette lowers her sail. “It’s time, Sushi,” she says, taking the reins between hook and hand and giving them a little tug. The sticky squid rises to the surface, rubbing its front tentacles together. “We’ll have to start with them as smaller than you, my boy, but we’re gonna take them all out.”

The controls for Sushi are identical to the chariot Murray drove in Egypt. There are a few differences, of course. Sushi doesn’t turn as well as the chariot. And Sushi doesn’t seem to have brakes. But there are LOTS of things for Sushi to, uh, absorb?, as Henriette guides him along, her tiny fishing boat bouncing along behind him, laughing with glee when she's not insulting the idiotic, pus-filled wastes of skin who have tried to stand against her.

Sly, Bentley, and Carmelita just stand on the guard's house and watch it happen. Sly and Carmelita are cheering for all they're worth, making excited commentary and suggestions as though watching a sporting match of some sort; Bentley is the only one consistently speaking to her over the binoc-u-com, telling her when Sushi’s big enough to go for larger ships and reminding her which ones are too big as of yet (though Sly and Carmelita can be heard cheering in the background); he has his laptop on his lap and continually checks it. Sly even uses his 'pirate accent' to mock the swabbies.

“Okay guys, I'm at the rowboat,” says The Murray over the binoc-u-com. “I'll start making my way to the wall. How are things over there?”

“Henriette's just about to take care of the dock,” says Bentley. “Oh! Carmelita, Tsao's on the move. Get to the beach.”

“About time,” says Carmelita. “Time to roast some bird.”

“Just take care of yourself.” Sly puts a hand on her arm and squeezes. “Bentley and I will be by pretty quick, but if it gets to be too much, get out of there. I'm sure Sushi would be happy to pick you up.”

“I'm not gonna need it, Ringtail,” says Carmelita, and leaps off the guard's hut. She runs to the middle of the beach and stands there, waiting.

Sly and Bentley make their way closer to the tower, using anything and everything they can to stay hidden as they get close. They're in position to watch as General Tsao slams open the door and saunters out, light flashing off his golden armor. “My shipping fleet... destroyed! What fiend has caused this dishonor?”

“All right, Tsao,” yells Carmelita on the beach. “Hands up! You're wanted for breaking probation, piracy, looting, and—”

“You think to arrest me?” Demands Tsao, stalking towards her; Bentley and Sly sneak behind him, through the open door and inside. “You have no surprise this time, Miss Fox.”

“That's inspector!”

“You are a female—weak. Emotional. You are destined to lose. Lose to the Black Magic of the FAMILY TSAO!”
All right, there are three different characters we could follow right now: Carmelita, in a fight with a giant chicken; Bentley, about to make his way back through the laser-and-water obstacle course; and Sly, who's going to climb the tower and steal. Who should we do first?

Well, let's go with Sly. That should be interesting. Don't worry, we'll check on the other two soon.

Sly stops a step inside the tower and looks around; Bentley moves past him towards the basement. A staircase winds its way up the edges, full of gaps that aren't meant to be crossed without a guard triggering them to open. Pennants flap all over the place, hung on the walls and on poles from the staircase, orange triangles with white tips; ropes stretch between some of them. Sly doesn't even bother checking the smoothness of the walls as he makes his way up. Really, between the ropes, poles, and hooks with pennants hanging from them, they couldn't have made his climb easier if they tried.

In fact, just taking the staircase like normal would probably be slower. But hey, if you can't have fun doing crazy acrobatics climbing up a tower without touching the staircase while your closest friend sets up bombs and the love of your life is fighting a magic-wielding rooster, when can you?

Yes, that was a rhetorical question. In any case, Sly reaches the top of the stairs very quickly... and discovers the door to the main room is locked. By a combination lock, of all things. He has to stop right where he is and start turning the wheel, feeling for the click of the tumblers with his eyes half closed, while listening to the hiss of the shock pistol and General Tsao's yells from outside.

It is rather distracting, but at least none of the sounds are Carmelita in pain. Sly wouldn't be able to handle that.

The lock clicks open. Sly shoulders open the door and finds himself in the room Bentley was in earlier, the large room with well protected gems at intervals around it like the numbers of a clock. There's also a rope ladder to continue higher, which Sly will definitely check out if there's time. Right now, though, he has another problem.

Sly removes the bag Bentley gave him from his back and sets it on the ground, undoes the zipper. Then, starting with the smallest gems and using the sort of skill other thieves would kill for, he reaches his cane through the laser wall and uses the same motion as pickpocketing to pop them off the table and into the bag. “Ya know, Bentley, if you figure out how to get the mind control charm off these, I'd really like to sell them,” he mutters as he moves to the third pedestal.

“That would be rather profitable,” says Bentley, “but I'm more concerned with how many of the guards we've seen may have been wearing these things. Have you been pickpocketing?”

“No much,” Sly says, working with the heavier gems of the fourth pedestal. “You were so worried about the timeline.”

“Well, just something to keep in mind.”

Sly's finished six of the pedestals now and has started needing to hit the gems off the pedestals and golf them into the bag, so why don't we leave him alone?

REWIND

With a press of a button on his wheelchair, Bentley moves the RC car back into position to turn off the laser security. Behind him, Sly starts his climb up the tower, but Bentley can't focus on that right now. He wheels himself down into the basement at top speed and, from there, makes his way through the hallway death gauntlet of water, floating debris, and weird water wheels.
Once in the orb room, he pauses for a moment to study it. There are six large poles going around the room, stirring the water at the edges; in addition to moving in a circle, they’re also going up and down. Each of the six poles has a chain attached to it, with the other end going into the orb: two are attached at the bottom, two at the middles, and two at the tops. There’s nothing good to jump on around, and Bentley certainly isn’t going to go in the water. Even if it’s shallow, which he highly doubts, it’s the nastiest water he’s seen since the last time he was in the sewers. If he fell in there, he’d have to buy a new shell—and probably build himself a new chair as well.

“All right, let’s see,” Bentley says. “I usually only use one grapple cam, but I have extras, and their explosion was much easier to enhance. What I need to do is throw a grapple cam, maneuver it into position where the chain meets each moving stick, then exit the screen and throw a new grapple cam. I can trigger them all at once when I’m out of here.”

And so begins the Grapple Cam trials. In normal game play, Bentley would throw a grapple cam and either make it self-destruct or go back into its viewfinder to continue moving it around. This time, once each grapple cam is placed, the game permits him to throw another and allows the player to maneuver that. Hitting a thin moving target in precise locations with a grappling hook is precise work... but not that difficult.

Well, I suppose it is. But it’s not like the player is actually on a time limit. Bentley, sure, Bentley feels pressure. If turtles could sweat, it would be rolling in his eyes. But there’s not a ticking clock... just the knowledge that his friends are probably in a bad situation and the sooner he finishes this, the sooner he can help them.

Because blowing up the thing keeping evil in the 1600’s totally isn’t helping.

He’s got four of them set up when Sly murmurs in his ear, “Ya know, Bentley, if you figure out how to get the mind control charm off these, I’d really like to sell them.”

“That would be rather profitable,” says Bentley, then pauses mid-sentence to take care of a tricky shot, “but I’m more concerned with how many of the guards we’ve seen may have been wearing these things. Have you been pickpocketing?”

“Not much,” Sly says. Bentley fires his next shot and misses. “You were so worried about the timeline.”

“Well, just something to keep in mind.” Bentley gets the last grapple cam on the last stick. “I’m just finishing up. How are you coming along?”

“Things are just fine here. I think—”

**REWIND**

“You are a female—weak,” says the rooster in gold armor advancing on Carmelita. “Emotional. You are destined to lose. Lose to the Black Magic of the FAMILY TSAO!”

“Ugh, a so-called tough guy,” Carmelita mutters, readying her shock pistol. “These guys always brag the hardest when they’re gonna lose, and lose hard.”

Of course, as anyone who had to fight General Tsao in Sly 3 knows, there’s a problem with Carmelita’s statement. You see, General Tsao does have access to some sort of black magic. While some of the spells he used to fight Sly in game 3 were keyed to the fighting grounds they were using, he still has plenty of tricks up his sleeve.
Which means he can't summon the hands of the undead to reach from under the ground and try to drag her down—at least not here, where they practice burial at sea—but he can give a loud crow call and summon every rock, shell, and coconut in the vicinity to pelt her at high speed.

Shooting him doesn't seem to stun him; in fact, nothing seems to work. Though Carmelita doesn't know it, all she has to do—all she can do, here and now—is run down the clock. General Tsao is angry. And he's acting on it. And yeah... he's pretty dang tough.

Carmelita's panting for breath when Tsao knocks her backwards with his shield, slamming her into the stone of the cliff, then pauses. He turns his back to her as she struggles to get up. “Who is messing with my tower?” he demands. “The alarms are disturbing my thoughts.”

“There are no alarms... you...” Carmelita gets to her feet. “What are you—”

General Tsao turns and runs for the tower.

“GET BACK HERE YOU CHICKEN!” Carmelita yells, but by the time she reaches the tower entrance the door is closed and locked before her.

MEANWHILE

Up where Sly is golfing, he's still talking to Bentley. “Things are fine here, I—”

CRASH.

Hello. There is a bird in the tower. Nice to make your acquaintance.

Oh, sorry. It's General Tsao. He just broke through the door. “We meet again, Sly Cooper. Have you come to try and make up for your pitiful lineage?”

“Heeey, Tsao, nice to see you buddy,” says Sly. “I was just enjoying some practice at golf. Would you care to join me for a round sometime?”

“So it is not enough that you must destroy my love life and force me to live among commoners. You must now destroy my chance at redemption?” Tsao still blocks the door. “This is an outrage!”

Sly steals a glance at the door to the balcony—closed and locked, of course, he can't get through there even if he wanted to leave the mind control jewelry behind—and smiles at Tsao. “Come on, all this stress can't be good for your blood pressure. And your love life? Really? Jing King was crying and begging for you to let her out.”

“She's a woman! Misguided, easily distracted... they are not to be trusted,” says Tsao. “And you? You are no better than a woman yourself. I will destroy you, Cooper; destroy you, in the name of the Family Tsao!”

Fighting General Tsao isn't easy for a variety of reasons. He's fast, he defends himself well, and he's very, very strong. But he's also enraged, and he's wearing two large gemstones, one on the back of each gauntlet, where they will be very hard to get to.

But there are a few things in the area Sly can use to his advantage. Namely, those large stones he still hasn't golfed into the bag. Their faceted surfaces reflect (refract? Redirect?) lasers, and each one is in a circle of lasers.

Granted, dodging an angry chicken to 'pickpocket' a gem the size of his fist from a pedestal and golf it into place is... difficult. As you can probably imagine. And the conversation doesn't help.
“Tsao went inside. The doors are all locked; I can't get in!” says Carmelita.

“I just finished up with the bombs. He's not here. Sly, you holding up okay?” says Bentley.

Sly knocks a gem into place, making the laser bounce across the room and straight into Tsao. One of the gems on his hands/wings shatters as Tsao howls in pain. “An exit would be nice, if you can make one.”

Yeah... Tsao doesn't stand a chance. I mean, Sly's pretty dang beaten up by the time the second gem on Tsao's hand shatters and Tsao slumps over unconscious, but Sly still won. He golfs the last gem into his bag.

“Door's open. Sly, come on!”

“I'm on my way.”

One paraglide down the center of a tower later, Sly jumps onto the beach. Bentley blows the bombs as soon as Sly shows his face.

“You're hurt!” Carmelita rushes up to him. “Sly, are you—”

“I'll be fine,” says Sly. “Let's get out of here before anyone else shows up.”
Fishing For Feathers: End

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

**SLY VOICE OVER**

We were on top of the cliff when the black orb went to work. It was like watching a tornado in slow motion: everything around us got sucked in, starting with the tower and the remains of the dock, and then even things behind us, with the huge gated wall being slurped like a strand of spaghetti, hole included. Tsao was nowhere to be seen, but even Carmelita wasn't cursing that.

Henriette joined us on shore for a farewell. Now that this was taken care of, she was planning on continuing her own adventures. I wanted to warn her about Clockwerk, but Bentley stopped me. Not that it matters much: Henriette is the only Cooper who wrote about encountering him in the Thievious Raccoonus. Apparently her missing eye kept him from hypnotizing her properly.

She also thanked Carmelita for sushi. I'm not quite sure what's going on there, but hey, they seemed pleased.

When we got back to the present, Carmelita found Tsao tied up and unconscious in her office. Not that she was complaining: she had more than enough evidence, and her report about the mind-control gems, submitted along with one of the broken ones on Tsao's gloves, got her a medal. It joined the others in her closet.

Tsao went back behind bars. He's going to be seeing Dr. Foxworthy there until he's actually 'cured' now. I'm not sure there is a cure for all his problems, but if they want to try, who am I to argue? At least in there, he can't make anyone else's life a misery.

The guys and I kidnapped Carmelita from her office and went to Vegas. She wasn't keen to join us gambling, though there were no rules against Bentley's card counting formula; I guess she figured thieves cheat. But the two of us caught every show available... and when we didn't, we found some time to talk.

Knowing not all my relatives were thieves doesn't really change things... but this is adding new aspects to our relationships. She may not do it herself, but she seems more comfortable with me skirting the edges of the law. But stealing at all is still a problem.

And if the past has shown me anything, it's that I can't give it up.

END OF AREA 2

Chapter End Notes

Okay everyone, here we are at the end of Area 2, so it's time for another update on how things are going.

Area 3 has been completed for a bit over a month now. I swore at it a number of times
and referred to it as 'the area that wouldn't end' because things got... a little out of hand. In a good 'Oh, if I do this it'll work so much better and be an even greater story!' way that gave me three more jobs than I intended. At one update a week, by the time area 3 is over, we'll have reached—or passed—this story's one-year anniversary. Which is good, because I need the time to write area 4.

I'm writing this author's note during an unexpected quiet moment on 9/28, when I should be doing a dozen other things, including sleep because it's 10:30 at night and I have to get up early tomorrow. I've done almost nothing for writing all September; my goal was to get through Area 4, job 4, but I just finished Job 2 an hour ago, I haven't planned out everyone's thiefnet items through the end of the 'game' as planned (I haven't even figured out what Sly's second one will be for area 4!), and my computer access has changed to 'uncomfortable laptop while in bed' or 'room with no real privacy'. I have a second job interview for a full-time position in a couple weeks, which would require moving again if I get it, and other applications out for a second part-time job if I don't.

Not McDonalds, though. I refuse to go back to McDonalds.

I do have area 4 outlined in its entirety, and November is always a great month for me, writing-wise; I should finish area 4 before it's over, and possibly start what comes after. I hope so. A (stupidly idealistic) goal is to have the entire game written out by the end of the year, then synopsize/outline things and send a much compacted version to both Sucker Punch and Sanzaru with a 'please please please make this into Sly 5 when you release your animation it'd be AWESOME' and see what happens.

Hope everyone reading this is enjoying it. Please leave a review just so I know who's reading—I like seeing them. Even if they're all from unique 'anonymous' people.
LIVING A DOUBLE LIFE WAS ACTUALLY KINDA FUN. INTERPOL STILL THOUGHT I WAS ONE OF CARMELITA'S INFORMANTS, WORKING TO INFILTRATE CRIMINAL GROUPS... SO NO ONE QUESTIONED ME APPEARING WITHOUT MY MASK AFTER SHE DID SOME BUSTS. NOTHING WITH TIME TRAVEL, THESE TIMES. JUST SOME OTHER SPICE LORDS (PICTURE OF SLY LOOKING BEMUSED AS CARMELITA'S CONGRATULATED BY SOME SNAKES), A FEW FORGERS (PICTURE OF SLY SMILING WINNINGLY AND TRYING TO BRIBE CARMELITA'S BOSS WITH A PILE OF OBVIOUSLY FORGED MONEY, BENTLEY AND MURRAY IN A BUSH NEARBY LOOKING AT EACH OTHER WITH CLEAR EXPRESSIONS OF CONFUSED RESIGNATION), THINGS LIKE THAT. CARMELITA AND I EVEN THRASHED OUT WHAT WAS AND WASN'T 'OKAY' FOR ME TO KEEP, IN HER EYES: I COULD HELP MYSELF TO THEIR GOLD IF I WANTED, BUT ANY PRICELESS TREASURES OR PAINTINGS THEY'D STOLEN HAD TO BE RETURNED TO THE ORIGINAL OWNERS.

THOUGH I WAS MAKING A CASE THAT THE COOPER VAULT IS ITS OWN FORM OF MUSEUM AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL MARVEL, AND I SHOULD BE PERMITTED TO ADD TO IT. I MAY CONVINCE HER YET. EITHER WAY, SHE'S TALKING ABOUT TAKING ME TO MEET HER FAMILY. I THINK THAT'S A GOOD SIGN.

BUT ALL OUR FUN ENDED WHEN PENELOE SENT US ANOTHER POSTCARD. THIS ONE, ONCE BENTLEY RAN IT THROUGH THE CARBON DATING MACHINE, WAS FROM A TIME AND PLACE MODERN ENOUGH THAT THEY ACTUALLY HAD POSTCARDS. ENGLAND, THE MID 1800'S. THE CARD ITSELF COULD SERVE AS THE FOCUS ITEM FOR BENTLEY'S TIME MACHINE.

CARMELITA SHOWED UP AND PULLED ON HER MASK WITHOUT EVEN COMPLAINING. INTERPOL THOUGHT SHE WAS GOING ON ANOTHER OF HER SECRET MISSIONS... AND SHE ALWAYS BROUGHT SOMEONE BACK FROM THOSE, WHETHER IT WAS WITH ME INVOLVED OR NOT.

SO THE FOUR OF US PACKED OUR EQUIPMENT AND GOT IN THE VAN. AND THIS TIME, I GAVE BENTLEY THE FRONT SEAT.

I DON'T KNOW WHAT THE FUTURE WILL BRING—OR THE PAST. (SLY SLIPS HIS ARM AROUND CARMELITA'S SHOULDERS, AND SHE LEANS AGAINST HIM.) I'M JUST GOING TO ENJOY THE PRESENT. WHenever THAT IS.

SLY COOPER

AND THE GANG

IN:

HEART, AND EAR, AND EYE
The safe-house appears to have been more than one room, once; the crumbled remains of walls can be seen around the characters. They sit around a table, in rickety chairs that have seen better days, sitting on cushions that must have been stolen from the van's seats. Gray light filters in through the boarded-over windows, and rain dribbles through one. An umbrella stand sits by the door. Carmelita has the chair closest to the leaky window, where she seems to be adding water protections to her shock pistol. Beside her, Bentley is going over the gadgets on his chair, testing that their waterproof seals are intact. Murray sits next to Bentley with a mixing bowl of hot soup in front of him. Sly jams his hat a little further down on his head and heads for the door. Carmelita offers him an umbrella, but he shakes his head and leaves without taking it.

The world outside is a dreary mess. Between the flat gray of the clouds and the rain coming in steady sheets, it's hard to say whether it's night or day. This area of town seems given over to the poor and downtrodden, with squat houses that lean against each other and boarded-up windows giving the look of a pirate gone to seed. Sly leaps to the roof of the safe-house and goes from roof to roof, avoiding the worst puddles and mud, and heads south, into town. Only a single wolf patrols the poor area where they've set their safe-house, his flashlight cutting through the dark; Sly avoids him.

The further Sly goes into the city, the higher the buildings get, into apartments three and four stories high. The quality of construction never changes from benign neglect. Owls patrol the top of one roof. He leaps from signs advertising a new theater, bounces off a box of tea, and climbs a slippery drainpipe to the top of an apartment building: the start of his first job.

Sly pulls out his binoc-u-com and looks around, pausing for a moment to zoom in on the new clocktower. Big Ben chimes the hour: nine. Thunder rumbles in the distance. “Is there a reason this can't wait until it's dry, Bentley?”

“Based on my knowledge of historical meteorology, this storm is going to last at least another few weeks.” Bentley adjusts his glasses. “None of us are going to like it. You could've worn a rain hat, you know.”

“No my style.” Sly may be wet, but nothing he wears is going to get in his way, blow off, or squeak. “So, what did you have in mind?”

“Recon photos,” says Bentley. “I looked up maps of this period, but a few things weren't on them. And there are others that definitely shouldn't be here.” Sly moves his binoc-u-com as Bentley speaks, focusing on a large fissure to the south. It cuts this edge of town off from the rest of London; it also can't be new, as there are lots of warning signs around it, and what looks like the beginnings of a bridge. “I also haven't found any indications of where our newest mark is hiding. Rajan and General
Tsao both had humongous towers as their base of operations, but the only thing that stands out here is the clock.”

“And we all know that's supposed to be here,” murmurs Sly. “I'll check it out.”

Sly tucks his binoc-u-com away and looks around. The fissure seems like a decent place to start. He looks around, checking the tops of the nearby buildings for patrolling owls and porcupines, then leaps. His paraglider catches the wind and he glides a fair way.

A building catches his eye, and he swerves to land on a nearby roof and take a picture. “A pawn shop?” asks Bentley. “Can't you go through one city without finding the pawn shop?”

“You didn't complain about it when I used them to fund your first laptop.”

Bentley sighs. “I just thought we'd moved past that point in our lives.”

“Past pawn shops? Never.” Sly continues on his way, grinning as Bentley groans.

One more long glide gets him to the fissure. He pulls out his binoc-u-com and takes a picture. “Interesting,” Bentley says. “If my calculations are correct, that fissure is exactly the same width as the one in Ancient Egypt.”

Sly walks along it, dodging around guards and picking pockets as he goes. The fissure turns a corner eventually, but never seems to get any less wide. He takes another picture. “West. West and south. Wait a minute... Sly, the fissure in Ancient Egypt went along the north and east. If you put it together with this one, you'd have a full-on moat!”

That's... actually an interesting fact, though why half a moat would go to Egypt and the other half to England is a thought for another day. Before leaving, Sly takes one more picture, of a building set up right on the corner of the two fissures: some sort of 1800's truck stop.

“Early buses are stored there for the night,” Bentley says in his ear. “Good to know we have some unobstrusive transport if we need it.”

Sly puts away the binoc-u-com and gets back on the roofs. The lightning rod at the top of one apartment glows red; Sly jumps to another roof before it can discharge the lightning strike and hurt him. After a moment, he stops to take a picture of the lightning rod, and the bakery it's on top of.

“Now that's fascinating,” says Bentley. “Sly, do you see that?”

“What, a lightning rod?” asks Sly. “I just thought you'd be relieved to know we have some protection.”

“Not the lightning rod, Sly, the wires.” Now that Bentley mentioned it, Sly zooms in: there do seem to be wires wrapped in a spiral around the rod, leading into the building itself. “That isn't a normal electrical discharge system. No, the lightning is being used to charge something. But what?”

“Beats me,” says Sly. “I wonder why this guy just doesn't go wireless.”

“Very funny. If you see any more of those, take a picture. It could be useful information.”

“Now that's a shock,” comments Sly. Bentley doesn't even dignify that with a groan.

Sly continues making his way around town, taking a picture of another lightning rod on another bakery as he goes. For lack of anything better to look at, he makes his way back towards the safe-
house. On the very edge of town, where the old shacks meet with the river, there's some sort of lightshow. Spotlights, torches, and lasers flicker on and off in dizzying patterns.

Sly takes out his binoc-u-com for a picture but stops before he can take it, mesmerized and unmoving for several moments. Only when another flash of lightning interrupts the pattern does he take the shot and turn away.

“Fascinating,” says Bentley. “I’d say it's an old form of optical illusion, except lasers don't belong in this time period. But why would they just have it up on the edge of town? Is there anything else around here you can look at, Sly?”

Sly jumps from the roof and looks at the ground. Almost unnoticed amongst all the lights is a large billboard advertising a play; Sly almost gets mesmerized again taking a picture of it. “This could be a problem,” he tells Bentley.

“Maybe you should get an eyepatch,” Bentley says. “Historically, it worked for Henriette.”

“Wrong time period,” says Sly, but he looks at the sky in any case. Clockwerk is still alive in this time period, and he could be anywhere: hovering amongst the clouds, peeking from an alley, or even looming at him from the top of Big Ben. “But I'll keep it in mind. Do you think this play is important?”

“Variations on The Spider and the Fly: An Ode to Moral Poetry,” reads Bentley. “See if you can find the theater it's at.”

Seems like a weird request, but hey, it's Bentley. Sly trudges back into town. On his way, he notices—and takes a picture of—an old-timey shooting gallery. “Really, Sly?” asks Bentley.

“Hey, if we have spare time, I'd love to enter Carmelita,” says Sly. “I bet she'd win something.”

He takes another picture of a wire-covered lightning rod, then pauses and zooms in close on the shop beneath it: a tea parlor. “We'll need to come back to this place,” Bentley says. “My scanners detect high levels of radio activity from inside that shop.”

“I'll make a note,” says Sly. He continues on his way.

Near the eastern border of the town is a tailor's shop, one of a nearly impenetrable line of buildings. He gets a shot of it. “People in this era did like their clothes,” Bentley comments.

So, not important, then.

It's not much later, when Sly takes a picture of a fourth lightning rod, that Bentley speaks. “These rods form a square around town. Can you see what's in the center of it, Sly?” A new waypoint pops up on his binoc-u-com.

“Nothing I'd like better,” Sly says, running across some ropes of laundry. Getting to the center of town takes only a moment.

And what's in the center of that square?

A very large theater, with advertisements for a play. Billboards cover it on three sides, each showing a variation. A spider and a fly. A fox and a mouse.

An owl and a raccoon.
“This is it, Sly,” says Bentley. “Whoever's messing with this time period, they're in that theater. And it appears there's an event going on.” Sly zooms in as a horseless carriage draws up: a pair of weasels get out, dressed to the nines. “We're going to have to investigate this.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

_Sly starts a victory pose, sneezes, and rings out his cap before plopping it back on his head._
Bentley:

This is an interesting situation. This time period is advanced enough to have electricity (picture of the spotlights) but not some of the technology of the area (picture of the lasers). Plus, there seem to be a few pieces of technology aimed directly at the people of this time period (picture of the light show on the edge of town, with the advertisement in the center). Something fishy is going on, and we're going to get to the bottom of it.

Sly and Carmelita, the two of you are going to have to get to work (Picture of those two looking at each other). Our best bet for more information is to get inside that theater (picture of the theater). Unfortunately, that's going to be difficult. Not only do they have a strict dress code (picture of Sly and Carmelita dancing in a tux and a fancy dress) but they also require you to show an invitation (picture of a ticket).

I've learned of a shooting gallery on the edge of town (Picture of the shooting gallery). They've been holding contests all week. Top prize at each event is your choice of a shiny new revolver (picture of a revolver) which would be nice for the historical value, or of one of those tickets. You're going to have to enter, and win, each contest to get a ticket for each of us.

Carmelita:

That won't be a problem.

Bentley:

I hope not. Just be on your guard: I have it on good authority that some of the games are rigged. (Picture of Bentley wearing massive headphones and holding a very obvious listening device.) Oh, and if you haven't already bought the Lob Shot ability, you'll need that, too.

While Carmelita's doing that, Sly, you're going to get the four of us some dress clothes. (Picture of Sly in a tuxedo). There are a few odd jobs around town—painting and the like—that can get us the money legally.

Sly:

Wait, what?
Carmelita:

You're doing this legally? Really?

Bentley:

Well, we're working with a cop, aren't we? *(Picture of Carmelita's badge)*. We can do legal when we have to. Once we've got the formal wear, the two of you will infiltrate the theater for some more intel.

That's all our assignments. Let's get to work!

*Thiefnet Computer.*

*Sly: Spin Attack*

*Bentley: Triple Hover Boost*

*Murray: Booming Chop. This powerful blow can take out any enemy and many obstacles... you just can't move while doing it.*

*Carmelita: Double high jump. Allows the use of Carmelita's super-high jump while in mid-air.*
HEE: Job 2

HEART, AND EAR, AND EYE

Job 2: Stealing the Shot

Sly makes his way across the rooftops to the job start location. He pulls out his binoc-u-com. "All right, Bentley, what are the odd jobs I have to do?" Sly sounds like doing legal work while on the job is as bad as trying to get Murray to eat broccoli.

"This section of the city still uses old fashioned lamps. Lamplighters go around lighting them at dusk. I've gotten you a temporary job doing so."

"Seriously?"

"No. But I had to get Carmelita out of our hair somehow. Now, pawn shops in this time period weren't picky about legality. As long as it wasn't easy to trace, they'd take almost anything."

"You had me worried for a minute, there." Sly twirls his cane hand over hand. "What do we have to sell?"

"In this environment, locating the energy signature from a charged laser weapon is easier than hot-wiring a car. I've located several guards who've visited the local jewelry shops; Victorian-era jewelry is very high quality, and would sell in our time for a sizable sum. Pickpocket them; you're sure to get some great, era-appropriate goods to pawn."

"Nice."

"Unfortunately, you're going to have some... difficulties... stealing from them.” Bentley adjusts his tie. “You're really going to have to be sneaky for this one.”

"Why?"

"Because they've all taken up stations patrolling the shooting gallery.”

Sly has to take a moment with that one. Bentley looks like he wants to pull right into his shell as he waits for Sly's response. “So, you're saying I have to steal under Carmelita's nose while she's in a shooting gallery?”

“I'm afraid so.” Bentley's tucked so far back into his shell only his glasses poke out. “I'll send you the coordinates.”

A new waypoint appears in Sly's binoc-u-com. Sly crosses a few lines of laundry and paraglides to a lower rooftop. From here, he can see a second-story window in the backside of the building, closed but not locked. It seems the owner was relying on the height to prevent thieves.

Sly's life is always easier when people are stupid.

Sly eases open the window and steps onto the windowsill, closing it behind him. Each station in the shooting gallery seems to be a tent, cloth roofs slanting down from boards he can walk on, wooden poles he can climb and ninja-spire jump to and from at the corners. Ropes with streamers and pennants with targets on them stretch from tent to tent and from the tents to the ceiling.
Wooden platforms stand at the front of each tent, giving each tent a roof over the playing area; guards stand there, watching what goes on below. Four others patrol the room, circling each tent. A last guard stands in the center, slowly turning clockwise in one place as he keeps an eye on everything.

One glance through the binoc-u-com confirms the five targets: two on the roofs—including the one standing closest to Sly, back facing him, an easy target—two patrolling the tents that don't have guards on the roofs, and of course the guard in the center.

And there, scanning the room, a polite smile on her face as she speaks with a rabbit, is Carmelita. She doesn't seem to be paying attention to the tops of the booths yet; she doesn't expect him to be here, after all. None of the guards are going to go for a paying customer, either, so she's safe enough that she holstered her shock pistol. No, she's just standing there, her left side towards him, talking to the rabbit. Probably asking the rules, making sure she won't break any.

Sly creeps forward on the booth he's on, headed for the guard in front of him, one eye on Carmelita. He picks that pocket in one move, retrieving a lovely pendant, then freezes as Carmelita turns in his direction. He hides behind the guard, knocking a balloon loose, and waits for her shriek of discovery. It doesn't come. Sly breathes again and glances around the guard. She is right there, only a few feet below him, focused on the game. It is very, very obvious that he can't knock any of the guards out here: she'd be on him in a heartbeat, and while those rubber balls may not be lethal, he doesn't want to be pelted with them. Or have to deal with the fallout after.

Sly locates the next closest guard, a ground one circling the next booth over. He glances between the guard and Carmelita repeatedly, waiting until the guard's out of her view before dropping to the ground and relieving him of a golden brooch, then waits for the guard circling that booth and the next one over to go by before climbing up a pole supporting the third booth. The guard up there is pacing back and forth, a bit smarter than the last one... or just reckless. The rapid-fire whamwhamwham of Carmelita hitting targets lets him know she's still occupied as he waits for the guard to turn his back, digs a few coins from his pocket, ducks out of sight, and repeats the process until he wrangles a bracelet.

He waits before going back to the floor for the fourth guard's pocket; Carmelita's changing booths. This one seems to involve getting the balls in buckets, or something; the first shot makes it in with a very defined ringing noise and the obsequious encouragement of the rabbit running the booth. Sly goes to the booth next to hers and deftly removes a coral necklace right off the neck of the guard there.

Only one left, the hard one: the one in the center of everything. In full view of any of the patrolling guards at times, the guards on the rooftops limiting Sly's movement, and of course, the ever-present threat of Carmelita, now moving to tackle the fourth shooting challenge. He climbs to a booth and uses the clotheslines of banners and balloons to get to a better position, the pennants beneath his feet showing no sign of his passing.

He stops right above the central guard and waits for his moment: all the patrolling guards out of sight, Carmelita shooting away, and drops down behind the circling guard. Two moves, fast and silent, and he has a beautiful pair of drop earrings.

The binoc-u-com's earpiece crackles a bit as Bentley says, “Perfect. I'll meet you outside the shooting gallery.”

Sly ducks out of the building and waits there for Bentley. “You sure you don't want me to sell these? I've done it before.”
“It makes more sense if it comes from a wheelchair-bound turtle,” says Bentley, rolling up. When he's not using his jetpacks, it's hard to tell his wheelchair is different from any other... save for the umbrella wedged in it, keeping him (mostly) dry. “And I know how to bargain for what we need. Besides, I thought you'd like to cheer Carmelita on.”

Sly grins and scratches his ear. Bentley does know him. “You have a point. All right. Just be careful; this place is thick with guards.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly strolls right off the victory screen and back into the shooting gallery, whistling.*
HEE: Job 3

HEART, AND EAR, AND EYE

Job 3: Shooting The Breeze

Carmelita stops on the roof of a squat building opposite the shooting gallery and pulls out her binoc-u-com. “Okay, Bentley. Why did you want me to stop here?”

“To give you a few warnings,” he says, adjusting his glasses. “There are four different shooting games in there, and the grand prize for each is a ticket to that theater. The score to beat in each game is high enough that only an expert marksman could reach it.”

“So?” Carmelita spins her shock pistol on one finger. “They don't call me 'crackshot' at Interpol for nothing. I've won our shooting competition—”

“Five years in a row, I am well aware. Murray wandered by there earlier and swapped out some of their rigged guns for proper ones. Make sure you always pick up the red gun, understand? With the aiming sight off, not even you'd have a hope of beating it.”

“Carnival tricks, huh?” Carmelita growls. “I'd write them a ticket, but I don't have that sort of authority here.”

“Besides that, be on the lookout for distractions. These people are notorious for trying to send their guards to distract anyone who seems to be doing well.”

“I can't turn my back on someone in trouble, Bentley,” Carmelita says. “If I hear a scream, then—“

“I'm sending Murray to watch the area around the shooting gallery for any major disasters,” says Bentley. “He'll shout if there's anything you'd want to care about.”

Carmelita actually smiles. “Thanks, shell boy.”

“Yes, well...” Bentley adjusts his glasses. “Just get with the shooting.”

Carmelita tucks the binoc-u-com away, holsters her gun, and walks into the shooting gallery.

The middle-aged rabbit running the thing has a potbelly and hearing aids. He beams at Carmelita and hops over to her. “Welcome, welcome! Another young lady proving her independence, I see.”

Carmelita hesitates, then shrugs. “I suppose that's one way to put it.”

“Couldn't say it better. You win one of my challenges, no husband of yours will be able to say you can't handle a gun. What better way to keep the children safe, after all?”

Carmelita laughs and looks around. There are four stations, each located in a corner of the oversized room; they seem to be wooden frames covered in cloths. Streamers dangle between the stalls, balloons struggle to escape one corner, and guards litter the area, one in the center keeping an eye on everything while others patrol the floor. "I don't think that will be a problem."

She heads for the nearest stall. Something catches her eye, and she glances up, but it's just an escaped balloon. "A dollar a play, ma'am," says the rabbit behind the counter, three guns—red, yellow, and blue—before him.
Carmelita smiles and puts down her money. The man hands her a fake blue pistol, but she hands it back. "Red is my lucky color," she says. "Would you mind?"

The man's grin widens. "Not a bit."

With that, Carmelita settles in to the business of shooting. The first game was very much like the one she'd played in the old west, with targets rising from behind 'bushes' and 'trees' or strolling along sideways. She has two minutes to get the score she needed.

Carmelita beats it in ninety seconds because of COURSE she does, it's Carmelita.

The rabbit behind the counter is a bit shocked, if his ears are anything to go by, but hands her the ticket with a flourish. "Wonderful shooting, ma'am, just wonderful."

Carmelita pockets the ticket with a smile. "One for me," she says, then moves clockwise around the room to the next stall.

The challenge here involves reflexes. The targets will only appear directly in front of her, no aiming needed, but only for a second or two each. She needs to hit some colors and avoid others. To a cop with years of practice in split-second decision making with a gun, it's child's play.

The rabbit hands her a ticket, and she pockets it with another smile. "This one is for... Murray," she decides out loud. Murray's a lot less likely to steal things on her watch than the other two, after all.

As she moves clockwise again, some of the pennants overhead flap. She looks up, one hand going for her holstered shock pistol, but it looks like it was just a blast of wind from the open window. She scans the roofs of all the stalls to be sure, then shrugs. This establishment is filled with security (and it's no wonder, with the prizes they're giving out!) so the odds of a thief getting in are unlikely. And Bentley even had Sly doing legal activity as part of the slideshow, so it's not like Sly was going to be breaking and entering to steal the prizes she's winning.

You can take the cop off the case, but you can't keep her from the chase.

On to the next challenge! This one, she discovers, involves the lob shot. The gun she's using shoots rubber balls, and she has to get them to land inside jars different distances away... and with barriers preventing straight shots. To get the shots to land, she has to judge the distance and arch almost perfectly, and to earn the ticket, she has to get her shots in nine of the ten different jars... an almost impossible feat when you only have ten shots.

"I must say, ma'am, I've never seen a perfect score before," says the rabbit who offers her the third ticket. The rabbit's smile is plastered on his face; if you ignore that, he looks downright irritated that she shot so well. "I am pleased to see it."

"Thank you," Carmelita says politely. She tries to take the ticket, but the rabbit won't let go; she has to pull it from his hand. "This one's for Bentley." He'll be harder to keep track of than Murray, with his gadgets and hacking skills, but unlikely to get into trouble.

On to the last challenge! This one is... it looks like the people in charge of the shooting gallery ran out of ideas and stole some from pool. Using her gun, she shoots rubber balls at other balls, trying to propel them down a table and through targets with various point values on the far end. Getting a good score requires bouncing balls off the walls, a study in angles she's unfamiliar with.

On her first attempt, she wins an oversized stuffed owl with hearts for eyes. Another three points, and she'd have gotten the ticket. She hands the aging, balding rabbit another dollar and tries again.
This time she succeeds. Just as the rabbit's handing her the ticket, Sly appears at her elbow, triggering a cutscene. “You already got one!” he says.

“What are you doing here?” she demands.

He leans on his cane and grins at her. “I finished with my job, so I came to cheer you on. What are you going to do next?”

“I'm all finished,” she says, pulling out the other tickets. “One for me, one for Murray, one for Bentley...”

“Oh, is there something for me, too?” he asks, looking at the newest ticket.

Carmelita shoves the owl at him; it stretches from Sly's waist to over his head. “Yeah. This. I don't trust you at a theater, ringtail.”

“...This guy is adorable.” Sly actually hugs the owl, then lowers it to peer at her. “Is it really for me?”

“I—uh, yes,” says Carmelita. “You act like you never got a prize before.”

“Not from a carnival, or something like this.” Sly starts towards the exit, and Carmelita follows him. “And no one ever gave me one. They didn't do that at the orphanage. I don't think I've had a stuffed animal since I was a kid.”

“Well, you've got one now,” Carmelita snaps.

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Carmelita doesn't bother with a victory pose, just walks—VERY quickly—out of the shooting gallery. Sly follows her, holding the stuffed animal and his cane, grinning.*
Sly stops on a roof across from the theater and pulls up his binoc-u-com. "How's Carmelita coming with her outfit?" he asks.

"She'll be along in a minute," says Bentley, adjusting his glasses. "You wouldn't believe how many skirts she has to wear to be fashionable! Have you set your own outfit to one of your trigger buttons?"

"I'll do that in a second. I just have to press select to bring up the gadget grid, then assign it to one of the buttons. Listen, Bentley, what are we looking for in here?" Sly zooms in on the entrance to the theater.

"Anything and everything." Bentley rubs his hands together and gestures as he talks. "I'm going to want pictures of all the technology that doesn't belong there, as well as anything else suspicious. And if you see anyone who seems a bit out of place for Victorian England, them too."

"Right." Sly twirls his cane a few times. "How will I get the photos? Bringing the binoc-u-com out in there will look a little suspicious."

"I've hooked the camera up to your monocle. You can take a picture by pulling on the chain."

"Handy." Sly uses the cane to scratch his back. "You've thought of everything."

"Don't I always? Anyway, Carmelita's left the safe-house and isn't listening, so pay attention. These tickets can be used to get into any of the parties and events at the theater, but once you see the play, it's gone. I'm working on forging some new ones, but the tickets are made out of special material. It's going to take me some time."

"So, if we need to see the play, we'll have to sneak in." Sly focuses down the street, where Carmelita's walking into view. "Woah..."

"Pay attention, Sly." Sly does no such thing, zooming in on the amazingly poofy dress Carmelita's wearing. Bentley waves his arms. "If we need to get to the theater, we'll arrange for a distraction with more of us in there. I haven't managed to sell Carmelita on the sneaking bits yet, so it'll have to be when she's not in the loop."

"She looks amazing, Bentley. Do you think we can take those clothes home with us?"

Bentley puts his head in his hands. "Maybe I should be telling this to Carmelita..."

Sly puts the binoc-u-com away and, in the blink of an eye, changes into his own formal wear; he even pulls a cloth over his cane, making it look like... well, like a cane you'd walk with. Mostly. He approaches Carmelita and offers her his arm. "May I just say you look lovely this evening."

"Can it, Ringtail," she says, but she smiles as she says it.

The two of them walk into the theater, and there is a _LOADING_ screen. When it fades, they're being ushered through the lobby and into a room upstairs, over the theater, where an elegant party awaits.
And what a party it is. The play, it seems, is 'Variations on The Spider and The Fly', and decorations showing those variations are all over the place. Glistening fake spiderwebs, with fake flies, hang from the corners; waiters offer trays of food and drink on web-styled trays to those who stand around talking. A band plays on one side of the room, in a small orchestra pit lined with statues of foxes tripping mice and trapping turtles; fake, bright orange fox-tails dangle from the fence around it, ensuring guests don't step there by mistake. Well-dressed couples dance across the floor that—Sly gulps—is directly below a gigantic stone owl, carved mid-dive, talons extended as it heads for an oblivious raccoon statue alone in the center of the floor.

Comforting. And life size, of course.

"This is fancier than any of the department affairs I've had to attend," murmurs Carmelita.

"I haven't seen a shindig like this since India," agrees Sly.

"If you two are done with your trip down memory lane, we need to get to work," Bentley says in their ears. Carmelita frowns and taps something in her hair; Sly, of course, has his speaker hooked on his monocle chain. "I need those photos. Carmelita, you stay nearby and keep anyone from thinking the two of you are suspicious. If you see anyone you recognize that we don't, or something worth taking a picture of, tell Sly. I couldn't fit your outfit with a cam, too."

Play resumes as Sly. Carmelita nods at him and shadows him as he moves, a few steps away, stopping to talk to people and intercepting waiters as he looks for interesting things. The first picture? That giant hanging owl, of course. "Interesting," says Bentley. "If that falls, it's sure to break into the theater below."

The next picture is of that raccoon. "Wait, is that..." Bentley sounds almost dumbfounded. "Sly, unless I'm seriously mistaken, that's a reference to Clockwerk! But who'd know about that? Be careful, buddy."

Sly doesn't bother to respond. Instead, he makes his way towards the orchestra pit. Something glowing catches his eye, and he takes a picture: a computer screen, tucked in the back of the pit. "Interesting," says Bentley, "if inconveniently placed. We'll either need an amazing distraction or to wait for this place to be deserted before I go in."

Someone moving through the crowd catches his eye; Carmelita comes close to elbow him and nod at the person. Sly takes a picture. It's not a picture of a person he's ever met; it's not a picture of a person Carmelita's ever seen.

But Thaddeus Winslow Cooper, the most gentlemanly thief in the Thievious Raccoonus, is hard to miss. All the black parts of his fur—his mask, his mustache, the stripes on his tail—are streaked with silver; he leans on his cane—the hook longer and narrower than Sly's—as though he actually needs it. I wouldn't have thought it possible, but he's dressed better than Sly.

And he's heading straight for them.

"Whatever you do, Sly, do not cause a scene here," says Bentley over the binoc-u-com. "We need to avoid drawing attention, and having someone freak out about time travel would be disastrous."

Sly doesn't have a chance to respond before Thaddeus reaches them and clasps his shoulder. "My dear nephew," he says. "Sly, wasn't it? I am most pleased you made it."

There's a moment when you realize something has happened that you never expected to happen, and when it does you just have to go with it. For Sly, that was the moment when he was recognized by a
relative he'd never met. "It's great to see you too, Thaddeus. Listen, I, uh—"

"Great-Grandmother wrote of you," he says, swirling his glass of sarsaparilla and holding it to the light. "Her pictures are surprisingly accurate. But I don't believe I've made the acquaintance of your wife, here."

"Listen here," hisses Carmelita. "I am not married to this jumped-up—"

"Fiance, then," interrupts Thaddeus, "since you wouldn't be here together without a chaperon otherwise. Propriety and all that." He winks at them.

Bentley sighs in their ears. "Great. We messed up time. Now everything is wrong."

"I don't know, Bentley," murmurs Sly. "Considering everything else that's going on, this might be to our advantage."

"You can rest assured of my utmost discretion," says Thaddeus, not batting an eye at the conversation with no one. "Now then, will you introduce us?"

"Of course," says Sly. "Thaddeus Winslow Cooper, this is Carmelita Fox. Carmelita, Thaddeus."

He extends his hand to Carmelita. When she takes it, he kisses her hand in a deep bow. "Marvelous. You know about the troubles, then, my dears? You'd never come just for a social call."

"The troubles?" asks Sly.

"If you don't, we can get into it later. Now, my boy, the owner of this fine establishment can be found down a secret corridor. There's a switch hidden in that spiderweb." Thaddeus gestures with his glass. "It leads backstage. I'm certain you'll want to see it, but getting there, with this many people around, will require some finesse."

"Oh, I'm all about finesse," says Sly.

"I don't know about this," says Carmelita. "This does not sound—"

"We're under cover, remember," says Sly. "Couldn't you just think of it as—"

"No," says Carmelita. "There are some lines I cannot cross, Ringtail."

"I admire conviction in a lady," says Thaddeus. He bows to her. "Would you care to dance? I assure you, I'm a sought-out partner. Sometimes, I even draw a crowd."

Carmelita smiles "I'd be delighted."

Time for some fun, everyone! Because if this were an actual game, here's where we'd need to do two things at once, in classic 'rewind' fashion. However, I have absolutely no skill or interest in writing out a dance between Thaddeus and Carmelita (she was awfully easy to convince, wasn't she?) when there are far more interesting things going on.

Namely, Sly taking advantage of Carmelita—and the crowd—being distracted by an excellent dance in order to investigate. Though he does stay to watch for the first minute.

Thaddeus is an even better dancer than Sly is.

"Sly, this is your chance," says Bentley in his ear. "Get to that spiderweb and see what Thaddeus thinks is important. You'll have to hurry; that song is only five minutes long."
Players, start your engines, because there's a timer on screen... one Sly feels, even if he can't see it, as he moves, edging behind the crowd of watching dancers to the corner Thaddeus indicated. The spiderweb isn't a mere switch: it spins and clicks like a combination lock. Sly has to feel for the moment the lock catches and spin it the other way, listening to the music rise and fall behind him, the rustle of clothes and muted coughs of the crowd.

A muffled click and one section of the wood paneling opens a tad. Sly eases his way inside, closing it behind him, making note of the button needed to open it again, the peephole set at eye height. He's at the top of a spiral stone staircase, electric lights—fluorescent and far too bright and modern for this theater—dangling overhead. His shadow precedes him, so he takes the stairs slow and quiet, listening, listening, listening, feeling the time tick away, knowing he must have enough.

The bottom of the staircase has a similar peephole and button. No one's on the other side of the door, the room beyond dark, so he opens it with care, checking to see how to reopen it—a simple button, no need for theatrics on this side—before closing it behind him. He seems to be at the back of a costume room, circular racks of clothes with all sorts of items on them around him: jester's costumes, antlers, webbed feet, suits in different types of faux fur. He creeps past them, looking, always looking.

There's a door at the far side of the room, hanging open, revealing a hallway. There are many other doors along it, which Sly would like to investigate, two on the right side of the hall with computers keeping them locked that he takes pictures of, two others on the left that are locked and barred so tight it'd take a bomb to get in, but he's running short on time and there's only one open door with a woman's voice trickling from it like water: “Ridiculous, to have our progress halted by the loss of such an insignificant stone.”

Sly knows that voice. But he doesn't want to believe it. In fact, he doesn't believe it, until he creeps into the doorway and takes a photo of the person side-on, from where she stands in the dim light, scowling into a phone.

The Contessa stands there, a phone to her ear, streaks of gray in her blue hair. She's wearing a yellow dress with a blue belt and a deep blue shawl. On the belt, holding the shawl closed, glowing faintly in the dim light, are matching blue gemstones.

“Not to worry,” she says into the phone. “Our current resources are enough for our present team. But if we wish to expand, we will need additional resources. I trust you will take care of such things?”

Sly creeps backwards along the hallway, out of her sight.

“Very well then. I'll be in touch.”

Sly is gone before she can discover him, escaping back into the party before the end of the song, one mystery solved. They know who's here.

Now they have to deal with her.

**JOB COMPLETE**

_Sly emerges into the party to applause as Thaddeus and Carmelita's dance ends._
Sly Voice-Over

(Thaddeus strolls out of the theater, an umbrella in one hand, Carmelita on his other arm, with Sly moping as he walks a few steps behind them) Thaddeus insisted on accompanying us back to the safe-house. Carmelita didn't mind. As for me, I was a little put out by the guy.

But that's nothing compared to how Bentley reacted. (Cue Bentley covering all the windows, shoving Thaddeus into a seat, and spinning in his wheelchair with huge, bloodshot eyes). He was freaking out about how we'd destroyed all of history and things would never be the same. Thaddeus... wasn't worried. (Shows Thaddeus pulling a small flask of liquid and pouring some for Bentley and the rest—sarsaparilla, possibly.)

Thaddeus had a tale to tell, but first he decided he needed to calm Bentley. (Shows Thaddeus pulling a small book from one pocket; the design is similar to the Thievious Raccoonus, but features a stylized drawing of what can only be the van. He flips it open, revealing the first page of Egyptian Hieroglyphics... and drawings of the four of them). It seems there had been a second book my ancestors had been passing down, all about the descendant from the future who'd been stealing from the sorts of criminals who'd destroy history to make their present better. It even included notes about us (shows Henriette's drawing of Bentley with the notes 'Ply the turtle with drink so he doesn't panic over this information'). He added that it was handed down unlike the Thievious Raccoonus, to adults instead of children, and that I should ask for it if I ever find myself in the same century I was born in.

Bentley actually seemed to calm down upon learning this. With that settled, we finally got to hear what was going on here.

According to Thaddeus, the theater had appeared overnight almost a month ago, and no one seemed to realize it was new; they were too busy being distracted by the fissures that had appeared around the same time. He'd taken it upon himself to investigate, only to find himself blocked at every turn. (Pictures of Thaddeus discovering laser fences, computerized security systems, and spotlights flash by). However, as he was known as one of London's upper crust, he'd resigned himself to a long-term infiltration, and had already made a few discoveries. (Shows Thaddeus offering them a handful of old-fashioned pictures.)

Bentley:

All right everyone, we have a situation here. The Contessa has come to England, and that's not good for anyone. (Picture of The Contessa, game 2, holding keys and looking menacing). Not only is she...
a former member of Interpol and an accomplished criminal mastermind (picture of The Contessa as prison warden), but she's also an accomplished hypnotist. And she's used her skills on us before. (Picture of Carmelita in game 2, tied down before the mindshuffler.)

**Carmelita:**

I still have to get her for that. (Shows Carmelita chasing her with the shock pistol).

**Murray:**

And I owe her a **PUNCH**! (shows Murray in game 2, on the prison wall, charging).

**Bentley:**

Yes, well, all that aside, we need to have a few different goals here. Before we can hope to take her out, we need to loosen her control on London. While she doesn't seem to have made a concentrated effort to take over any individuals here, her influence can't be overstated, and I'm worried about the upcoming play. (Picture of the various advertisements). Whatever plan she has, I'll bet my shell it's going down on opening night. It will also be when she's off her guard, giving us the best chance to deal with her. We need to pull off a few jobs to get set up. Here's the plan.

The Contessa uses two things to aid her hypnosis. One of those is illegal spice. (picture of the spice being manufactured). I analyzed the food you brought back from the party, and there's trace amounts of spice in it. Everyone who eats it is being dosed.

Carmelita, you're going to have to take this down. I know you're a law-abiding member of the gang, given your profession (picture of Carmelita's badge), but we can't afford to look for enough evidence that you feel a warrant would be, well, warranted.

**Sly:**

That pun was terrible.

**Bentley:**

Do I criticize your jokes? No.

**Sly:**

Actually—
Quiet, Sly. In addition to the theater, there are four locations around town the Contessa has put her mark on. Right now, we need to deal with three of them: two bakeries and a tea parlor. (Pictures of each scroll by). Judging by the prominent lightning rods on their roofs, the equipment within must be sensitive to electrical impulses. You're the only one who can deal with that, Carmelita.

Carmelita:

I... are you sure there's no way to do this legally?

Bentley:

Not unless we want hundreds more people to unknowingly eat spice. (Picture of Dimitri's nightclub). What's the worst that could happen from that?

Carmelita:

Fine. I'll do it. But don't make this a common event, Bentley, got it?

Bentley:

Believe me, if there were any other way I could think of to get this done, I'd do it in a heartbeat. Now. Sly, Thaddeus, the two of you will need to work together to take out the lightshows in locations across town. (Pictures of the spotlit advertisements and other spotlit locations show up on screen) . They're no doubt broadcasting hypnotic patterns, so I want you two together in order to keep an eye on each other. There's a good chance the spotlights will addle your thinking a bit (picture of Sly's swirlly-eyed walking in Sly 2's boss fight) and your odds of snapping out of it are better if there's someone else there to get you out of it.

Sly:

Sure. You okay with that, Thaddeus?

Thaddeus:

We will have fewer difficulties if we dress the part. I will stroll to my apartment and retrieve some outfits that may serve to our advantage.

Bentley:

Excellent. Make sure you pack those throwable wall hooks; you're going to need them.

Once they've done that, it'll be Murray's turn. You need to take care of the advertising across town.
The fewer people who show up to this play, the better. And whatever the play is, that'll be the best time for us to strike.

We also need more information about that theater. Based on Sly's photos, I'll need to be the one to do that investigation. *(Pictures of the various computers flash by)*. I'll also bug the theater; with luck, we'll get some important information.

We're going to have to time this carefully, so our jobs overlap. The Contessa will no doubt leave to investigate anything that goes wrong, and I'll need to take advantage of her absence. *(Picture of The Contessa on the stage)*. Having two or three jobs going at once will make everything significantly safer.

We've all got our assignments. Let's get to work.

*Thiefnet Computer:*

*Bentley*: *Mega Magnet. Pickpocket from further away.*

*Murray*: *Legs of Steal. Run while carrying an object.*
HEE: Job 5

Chapter Notes

Major snowstorm here, some places are losing power, and I already 'noped' out of work, so let's get this up early.

HEART, AND EAR, AND EYE

Job 5: It's Electric!

Carmelita leaves the safe-house and makes her way through town, only going to the rooftops when Bentley reminds her. Unlike the rest of them, sneaking still isn't in her first nature, or even her second or third; before she went to Egypt, she would've said it wasn't in any of her natures. She growls and shakes her head, clearing that thought, and reaches the roof across from the bakery.

She pulls up the binoc-u-com and focuses. “There's no way to do this legally?”

“Sure, we could spend a couple weeks gathering evidence,” says Bentley. “Tomorrow's opening night. It's act now and against the law or let The Contessa get away with whatever she's planning.”

Carmelita scowls, but she doesn't argue. “Fine. What's my objective?”

“The equipment in that bakery is involved in adding spice to the food,” says Bentley, “Use your shock pistol to render the entire operation useless. If you see anything particularly fragile, or something you can take as evidence, do so. And move fast. Once you've taken out the bakery, I'll head on my mission, and Sly will head out when you're done with the pastry parlor.”

“All right.”

With a burst of static, Sly cuts in. “You be careful in there, okay Carm?”

“You're one to talk.”

“I know, but... at least keep an eye out for The Contessa. We're gonna be making a mess, so if you see her, stay clear until she leaves for another target.”

“Already had that figured out, Sly. I'll see you back at the safe-house.”

Carmelita tucks away her binoc-u-com and studies the building in front of her. Squat. Two stories. Closed door.

How is she supposed to get in? If she had a no-knock warrant, kicking down the door would be one thing, but she doesn't want to attract attention from the street. Is there another door?

She circles the building once, studying it. There are a number of windows on the second floor, but they're all closed. And there aren't any other doors. What is she supposed to do, break something?
"Try checking to see if things are locked," says Bentley in her ear. "They don't have alarms in this era, so if something isn't latched, they won't be able to tell you're there if you're quiet."

Carmelita growls under her breath but does as instructed. One of the windows on the second floor slides open, and she slips inside, shutting it behind her.

Laser security greets her. Fences across the room, three of them, the lasers moving in three unique patterns.

Carmelita's first instinct is to call Interpol for back-up or for expert assistance, followed by the realization that she's not exactly within the rule of law now, and any assistance would rightfully arrest her. Her second instinct is to stop what illegal thing she's doing and leave, but that isn't an option here. It's not like she hasn't gone through security systems before, but this is different.

Only, how different is it, really? She has her shock pistol in hand, she's going to stop a crime, and she's going to catch a criminal. If she was willing to swallow her pride, she'd even have back-up; Sly or Bentley would be happy to come with her if she needed it. Which she does not.

All this she mutters to herself, argues to herself, as she studies the fences and times her dodges through them, avoiding the lasers and making her way to a staircase. She pauses at the top to listen before going down.

The bakery is unlike any bakery she's ever seen. Sure, there are ovens, and sure, there are bread ingredients. There are even lasers going around the edges of the walls, normal security (well, considering the lasers already there, anyway. Bit overkill for most bakeries, really.) But there's also this massive... dancing... mechanical... bread-making... octopus... thing. Kneading the bread, and stirring some bowls, and small containers of red spice dust in each of its arms, mixing it in as it goes about all of its tasks.

It's at this point that Carmelita wonders if she ate or drank some spice herself, because this must be a hallucination. "All right," she says, holding up her shock pistol. "Henriette had Sushi, but now, I'm gonna make me some metal Sashimi."

She shoots the thing's giant, bulbous 'head', where it doesn't seem to do any damage but attracts its attention. The thing turns to her, gears where its eyes should be. They spin as they see her, and it raises several of its tentacles in a threatening posture, revealing red targets flashing under their first joints.

It doesn't take a crackshot to figure out what needs to be done here. Carmelita ducks and dodges, jumping over swiping metallic tentacles and shooting whenever the targets appear. Its limbs flare bright red when shot, then stop working, hanging limp. When Carmelita shoots the last tentacle, it slumps over, exposing the top of its head and a last target.

"That was easy," comments Carmelita, lowering her pistol. The lasers on the edges of the room flicker off. She nudges the smoking husk of Sashimi with her boot. "Okay Bentley, I'm done in the first bakery."

"I just detected a wireless signal sent to the theater. That must be alerting the Contessa. I'm sure it'll lure her out."

"All according to plan, isn't that right?" asks Carmelita.

"It's perfect. I'll upload the pastry parlor into your binoc-u-com, then head out. But be careful. With The Contessa on the move, there's no telling where she could be, and we don't have enough people
to tail her right now."

With the flash of a loading screen, Carmelita exits the bakery. As she emerges onto the roof, Sly speaks into her ear. "Bentley's on his way to the theater. How you doing?"

"I'm just fine, Ringtail," she says, locating the next waypoint and leaping across the street to the next rooftop. A few quick shots with her shockpistol and the guard's unconscious. "You should keep an eye on Bentley."

"He hasn't made it to the theater yet," Sly says in her ear as she makes her way from rooftop to rooftop. It's not second nature for her, not like it is for him, and she takes to the streets far more often than she needs to; she's navigating more like Murray, only using the rooftops when necessary, even though she has several times his skill and could stay up there forever. "The Contessa's either on her way to the bakery you just dealt with or is going to check on her other things, like the tea shop or the pastry parlor you're heading for. And..."

Carmelita jumps to another rooftop. The pastry parlor's in sight. "And?"

"And I like watching you."

Carmelita doesn't have anything to say to that. Instead, she approaches the parlor. This time, the front door is unlocked; she just walks right in.

Cakes, cookies, and any number of other red-flecked desserts lay in cases awaiting purchase, though the shop has closed for the night; flour dusts the floor. Carmelita leaves footprints in it as she walks forward, looking around. Behind the counter is a staff-only door; she eases it open.

A staircase leading down and a wave of heat greets her, orange and red light flickering on the walls. It's obvious as the pistol in her hands that there will be ovens down there.

Almost as obvious is the second dancing mechanical octopus thing, only this one is making pies, not bread. "All right," Carmelita says, readying her shock pistol. "It's time to take down some Onigiri."

It's shorter, it's faster, it keeps trying to crush her in something that's either frosting or cement, but at least this one doesn't try to knead her, and the debris it drops as she shoots it stays where it is instead of spreading and going away like clouds of flour. She's got the thing electrocuted and broken for good very quickly.

"Nice work," says Sly. "I'll upload the coordinates of the tea shop, then Thaddeus and I will head out and leave Murray in charge of the binoc-u-com."

"That'll be fine," says Carmelita, holstering her pistol. "Oh. Once we're done in England, Sly, could we go back and see Rioichi?"

"You want to go to Feudal Japan?" Sly asked. "I mean... I think Bentley would object, but... what brought this on?"

"He's an ancestor of yours I haven't met yet," Carmelita says, making her way up the stairs. "He invented sushi, right?"

"Do you want to go to feudal Japan just to get sushi?" Sly asks, his voice tinged with laughter. "You know, there's this really good restaurant in Tokyo I haven't taken you to yet. If Bentley doesn't agree, why don't we go there? Or even if he does."

"It's not just for sushi." Carmelita makes her way to the roof. "And it's a date."
"Great. We can eat at Rioichi's and there, see how it measures up. I'll work on convincing Bentley later. Right now, I've got a job. You should have the next waypoint in sight."

Carmelita does indeed have another waypoint to get to. And of course, it's halfway across the city. Criminals never seem to put their labs doing evil and wicked things near each other, and even if they did, Bentley would never make you go after two places next to each other right in a row. Too easy for people to go from inspecting the place you just hit to the next place you're hitting.

Which is something Carmelita did several times, wait nearby only to hear an alert that a location clear across town had been robbed by the Cooper Gang, but it was just as likely she'd go in the wrong direction if she tried to anticipate them. Much as all this walking back and forth irritates her, she can appreciate what it's doing: if The Contessa is investigating the destroyed shops, she's unlikely to investigate the tea shop. And she's almost looking forward to dealing with Nigiri.

“Bentley's notes say to remind you about the rooftops, Carmelita,” says Murray. “I guess he thinks you can forget.”

Carmelita growls under her breath as she realizes she is not, in fact, on the rooftops. “I don't need to be reminded.”

“Well, okay. Bentley's fine, by the way,” he adds. “Hacking, so he can't talk much. Oh! I need to give Sly instructions now.”

Carmelita reaches the tea shop. The doors, front and back, are both locked; all the windows are closed and tightly barred. Carmelita growls under her breath and pulls out her binoc-u-com. “Hey Murray, you there?”

“Yeah,” he says.

“Do not tell Sly or Bentley, but I can't get in.” Her voice is barely above a growl.

“There's no smoke coming from the chimney. Did you try going down there? Places with really old chimneys and real chimneys sometimes even have enough room for me!”

The mental image makes Carmelita chuckle. “Just like Santa?”

“Yeah! Only, I'm not so good at getting out that way, like Sly can. I've been practicing, though.”

“You'd make a good Santa Claus,” she tells him. “You ever decide to give up this thief schtick, I bet you could make a living that way.”

“Right! Now I have to practice even harder!”

“Later, big guy. I'll go try the chimney now.”

Carmelita stows her binoc-u-com in her pocket and gets on the building's roof. Murray was right: the chimney is wide enough for her to slip down, and if she wanted, she could probably climb up it as well, though she'd probably strain a few muscles. She emerges at the bottom covered in soot and sneezing, and takes a moment to brush herself off and survey the room, looking for the tea shop's version of the dancing tentacled octopus that was at the last two locations.

Instead, she sees lasers barring the doors and windows in impenetrable barriers and a bare stone floor that slopes downward sharply, into the basement; water pours from a pump in the ceiling into it, making the whole area slick. Several troughs, filled with liquids of different colors—clear, red-flecked, gold, white—go down as well, disappearing from view.
Carmelita takes only a few steps before her feet go out from under her and she's going down a rather steep slide. She gets her bearings after a few moments—not enough to stop, but enough to jump over the laser security and pay attention to what's going on around her. Like targets she has to shoot to turn off impenetrable laser barriers and the troughs emptying around her, mixing together as the slide splits and she winds up in a juice (or milk, or tea, or Guru-knows-what) slide.

And you didn't hear this from me, but she may have started laughing part of the way down.

When she's deposited at the bottom, clean of soot and her uniform soaked through and dripping, she rings out her tail and looks around. All the liquid from the slide drips through drains and into casks and bottles, different types based on how it was mixed, and there's lots of delicate-looking equipment controlling it.

It only takes a few shots to handle the equipment. “No more spiced goods for The Contessa.”

“Swell,” says Murray. “But is there anything there without spice you can bring back? I'm kinda hungry.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

* Carmelita poses with her gun, grinning, then looks at the water-free but still damp slide and starts climbing her way back up.*
Bentley wheels himself through the city, using his hoverpack to jump between rooftops and occasionally putting guards to sleep. He's already in his disguise: in a very nice suit, wheelchair polished, all technology hidden (except the jet pack). He, of course, has the mustache on. He loves that mustache.

The mustache also appears to have gotten bigger since the last time he wore it.

He stops at the waypoint opposite the theater and pulls out his binoc-u-com. "All right Sly, I'm about to head inside."

"Okay Bentley. Look, I know we need that information and The Contessa's distracted, but be careful. If you see any sign of her, or there's even the slightest possibility you could get caught, get out of there."

"Don't worry about me, Sly," says Bentley. He zooms in on the theater's entrance. "If anything happens, Carmelita's in shouting distance, and once you and Thaddeus are in the field, you will be, too. Keep an eye on Carmelita instead. I'm still not sure she's going to get the 'thief' thing down without help."

"If you say so," says Sly.

Bentley puts the binoc-u-com away and wheels in front of the theater. Unlike earlier in the day, there's no posh fly waiting to check tickets. There are no parties right now, no bands, no performances. The only people who should be inside are the actors, rehearsing; the cleaning staff; and, if she hasn't already left, the Contessa. The door stands closed, solid and imposing.

Not solid enough to stand up to a trigger bomb, but hey, it's the thought that counts. One minor explosion later, and the door swings open, the lock broken but otherwise unharmed.

Bentley wheels himself into the theater as a LOADING screen rises and fades. Once inside, he makes his way to the same room Sly and Carmelita were in the previous evening, hopping up the stairs and peeking through the crack in the door.

The multitude of porcupines sweeping the floors is not encouraging, not when so many of them have been patrolling the streets or standing on rooftops outside. Getting to that computer in the orchestra pit will be impossible with that many people around. The spiderweb with the hidden switch, though... that's another story. It's in a rather shadowy corner, and it appears that area's already been cleaned. All he has to do is get there without being spotted.

For most wheelchair-bound turtles, getting through a fancy room crawling with prickly janitors unnoticed would be impossible. For Bentley, it's Tuesday. No one even blinks.

He has to pause a moment, in the corner with that shadowy spiderweb, to place his hand on the knob and open the door. Feeling for the fall of tumblers, the sound of janitors cleaning around him, is nerve-wracking. Still, he gets the door open and wheels inside with no one the wiser.

The hallway is dark at this time of day; the only sound is the muffled thumps of Bentley's wheels as
he descends. At the bottom door, he pauses to peek through the spyhole.

The dressing room on the other side is so well lit it hurts his eyes. But it is empty, and that matters more than Bentley's comfort. He slips out, into the room, and wheels himself silently forward. With the bright overhead lights, and several more on the walls, there are no shadows, no convenient hiding places. He'd have to duck into a pile of clothes and hope no one noticed him.

The door to the hall is already open. Bentley peeks through it, just to make sure. The hall isn't empty; he ducks behind the door as someone strolls past. "Dress rehearsal starts in five minutes," she says.

"We're doing a full run-through today, right?" asks another voice. "No stops or hesitations?"

"Probably three runthroughs," says the first again. Their voices fade as they continue down the hall. "Contessa still isn't happy with Pete's performance. What a buzzkill."

"As long as that isn't literal." The voices were definitely further away. Bentley peeked out again to see a reddish mouse tail and gray fox tail slip through the door to the theater. "Be gentle next time you have to 'catch' me, okay?"

The door closes behind them. Bentley wheels his way out, cracking his fingers before him. Based on their conversation, no one else should be coming this way; he has plenty of time.

His earpiece crackles to life. "How you doing, buddy?" asks Sly.

"Fine," says Bentley, wheeling himself to the nearest computer. "I'm about to start hacking. What's going on with Carmelita?"

"She found another octopus-style machine," Sly said. "Named this one Onigiri. I'll head out once she's dealt with it."

"Her obsession with foreign cuisine is absurd," Bentley mutters.

"I don't mind it," says Sly. "You sure you're okay there?"

"Perfect," says Bentley. "I'll call back once I've got this room open. It shouldn't take long."

And with that, Bentley starts to hack. It takes him absolutely no time to discover something he already suspected.

"Hello, Bentley."

Penelope had, yet again, programmed this system. And by Einstein's boots, did she choose to use big bots. Worse, in Bentley's opinion, were that the big bots laid smaller bots. Not only were the big bots nasty and shot in four directions, but the tiny ones laid bombs and got in his way, and they guarded encryption keys.

"Get out while you can, Bentley," says Penelope's mechanical voice.

Bentley snorts as he takes care of her firewalls. He's never leaving the gang.

"She's always watching," the computer whispers as he finishes. Bentley shakes his head. If his calculations are correct, The Contessa is out checking the grounds after Carmelita's mess right now.

Just to be sure, he pauses before opening the door. "How's everything going down there?" he asks over the earpiece.
“Carmelita just finished with onigiri,” says Sly. “I'm going to meet Thaddeus at the first lightshow. You holding up all right?”

“Everything here's going according to plan. I'm leaving a backdoor in these computers; now that I've opened it, any of us will be able to get inside.”

“Nice.”

With that, Bentley opens the door and wheels himself inside.

This room is a mess, no question about it. Spiderwebs lay in every corner, sticky and untouchable; piles of props and debris form unstable piles that Bentley absolutely cannot climb, not in his wheelchair. It's entirely possible to navigate the mess with his grapple-cam, though.

One good throw later, and Bentley's got his cam out and is navigating a mess of items. It seems safest to stay near the ceiling, though he has to go down through some weird angles as well. Once he's past the initial near-wall of clothes, he has to navigate precariously-balanced piles of paint, spider webbing, and of course, laser grids. “This is complicated,” Bentley mutters to himself. “I'd better activate the video feed and send this back to the safe-house. If there's anything important back here, we'll need Sly to come get it later.”

With the mess this place is in, I doubt there's anything worthwhile. But I'm not a genius like Bentley, because once he's navigated the maze of mess to its center, he discovers a hole in the floor and a sturdy rope made of braided spiderweb going down at an angle. By lowering his binoc-u-com down, avoiding the spiderweb as he traverses the sides of the hole, he gets almost to the bottom of it: close enough to see a familiar purple darkness that seems to absorb light. The same darkness found in the orbs in both Rajan's and Tsao's towers.

With that interesting little tidbit stored away, Bentley brings back his binoc-u-com and wheels out of the room. “I'd better blow up one of these other doors next,” he says, wheeling over to it. “That took a while; they may be ready to take a break pretty soon.”

His earpiece crackles to life with Murray saying, “You already got through one of the doors?”

“It wasn't a problem.” Bentley sets one of his trigger bombs right inside the door's keyhole. “How are the others?”

“Carmelita couldn't figure out how to get in—oh, I'm not supposed to tell you that,” Murray says. “But she made it in the last building. Sly and Thaddeus seem to be having fun.”

“I bet they are.” Bentley backs to a safe distance and presses the trigger; the bomb goes off with a muted whumph! and the door swings open. “We'll probably need him to come down here later; it looks like we've got another of those temporal anchors down here.”

“I'll tell him.”

Bentley wheels himself into the room, pushing the door closed behind him; with the lock blown, it won't stay closed all the way, but that's not a problem for this.

The laser wall that extends from the ceiling until a few inches above the floor means he has to stay where he is and deploy his RC car for this job. Hello, laser maze.

Besides the tight corridors and the occasional moving laser fences Bentley has to dodge through, this isn't too much of a challenge. He does have to shoot some things out of the way, though. Carefully.
The laser emitters will set off an alarm if they're broken, so he has to drive around them, but there's
plenty of space under here. If the lasers were disabled, Sly could get through without any issues.

Behind him, he can hear footsteps in the hall, quiet conversation, mumbling and grumbling about
The Contessa's tight schedule. Someone eats a fast snack; another guzzles from a bottle of water.
They're gone, back to rehearsal, before Bentley's finished.

At the end of the room is another hole, and more braided spiderweb going down it. Bentley can't see
all the way to the bottom, and there's no way his car can go down, but it seems obvious that this is
another anchor rope.

With that decided, Bentley brings his car back and listens at the door. It's quiet. A peek outside
shows that everyone is gone, back to rehearsal.

“How's Carmelita doing?” he asks over his earpiece as he wheels himself forward.

“The tea house had a basement. She's climbing her way out,” says Murray.

“Once she's back, hand the binoc-u-com controls over to her and head out yourself,” says Bentley.
He wheels over to the next metal door and puts another bomb in the lock.

“Okay. Are you sure you'll be okay?” Murray sounds like he's chewing something as he speaks. “No
one's seen The Contessa yet.”

“I'll be fine, Murray.” He blows this door's lock just as carefully as the last one. “Just keep your mind
on your mission.”

With that, Bentley wheels himself into the third room. Just like the last two times, the way forward is
blocked. Unlike the last two times, technology won't be needed to get through it. No, Bentley leaps
up a few piles of random crud, avoiding spotlights, to the top of a wall of... something vaguely web-
like... and bombs a wall he finds up there. It opens a corridor filled with platforms surrounded by
sheer drops, and lasers to dodge through, and moving spotlights. And, of course, more places to
bomb.

By the time Bentley's reached the far side of the room, he's almost getting tired. And, sure enough,
another braided strand of spiderweb can be seen there. Stretching taught from the ceiling down into
the floor. Now that he's close enough, he can examine it more carefully. "Interesting," he says aloud.

Carmelita's voice crackles in his ear. "Something I can use to make an arrest?"

"Not yet," says Bentley, "but I've found three of the four ropes for this area's temporal anchor. Her
spiderweb will stick to any blades that try to chop through it. We'll need to use fire to destroy them.
Perhaps the Contessa has a portable laser-emitter in the vicinity."

"I'll make a note. You almost done in there?"

"I have one more computer to hack in the downstairs hallway," Bentley says. He starts making his
way back out of the room. "Once I've examined that room, I need to see about getting to the one in
the orchestra pit."

"All right. Sly and Thaddeus are nearly done with their bit, and Murray's moving fast."

"Understood. I'll be quick." Bentley wheels his way into the hallway. "I'll contact you again once I'm
done with the fourth room. If you need me, I may not reply if I'm hacking; it requires intense
concentration."
"Don't I know it. I learned early on to never disturb one of the Interpol techs. Specialist Brown threatened to bite me."

That seems to be the end of the conversation. Bentley cracks his knuckles and settles in to the second computer.

"Stop it, Bentley," the computer—Penelope—whispers in greeting. “You don't want to go in there.”

Bentley ignores it. Great, another bot-laying bot. Only this one lays tiny bots that shoot instead of laying bombs. Bentley has to pay attention to this one.

“Come inside, and you can join me.” Bentley shudders as he hears that. No, thank you! “They all know I'm the smarter of us two.”

Bentley laughs when he hears that, and it almost makes him spoil the hack job. Nope, not happening. With just another few key strokes, he's conquered the computer.

He finishes by installing a backdoor, making it so this computer—like the previous one—will open when someone with a binoc-u-com tries it. Then he opens the door and wheels himself inside.

“Hey Bentley, you still hacking in there?” asks Carmelita. “Sly's on his way back to the safe-house, but he can swing by the theater if you need a hand.”
Sly meets Thaddeus where the old shacks meet the river, close to one of the light shows around an advertisement. He deliberately keeps his back to the light show as he laughs at Thaddeus. “Really?”

“Does it not suit me?” the older raccoon asks. He spreads his arms in a good-natured shrug. His bright orange vest catches the lights behind them, making Sly feel like everyone is watching them; the helmet on Thaddeus’s head is similarly bright. His belt is covered in tools—hammer, wrench, pliers. “Manual labor is beneath no one, after all.”

“It suits you almost too well.” Sly snickers. “Isn't it a little bright?”

“That is precisely why it works, Sly.” Thaddeus leans on his cane, which he's put cloth over so it looks like one of the wolves' oversized flashlights. “I know I wrote about using people's expectations against them in the Thievious. Or were you incapable of fully understanding such matters?”

“Well I, uh, that is...” Sly pulls out his binoc-u-com and contacts Murray. “Okay, big guy, what do Bentley's notes have me doing?”

“At least you have some skill at changing the subject.” Thaddeus takes out his own binoc-u-com to listen.

“Well, it says there are three of these hypnotic light-shows around town,” Murray says. “They're really bad news, Sly.”

“I hear ya. What do we have to do?”

“Bentley's notes say the controls for each of them are locked down tight. You're going to have to pickpocket the keys from guards in each of the areas—he hasn't got the guards marked with waypoints, but they're all wearing special goggles to keep from going spinny-eyed.” Sly zooms in on one of the two guards by the spotlights: sure enough, they're wearing goggles that look like they belong in a Matrix movie. “Then you'll have to climb up to, uh, wherever the spotlights are coming from and turn them off.”

“This shan't be a problem,” Thaddeus says; the camera refocuses upwards, past some iron girders and rickety walls, past where the spotlights are mounted, to a small gray building at the top of the unstable structure. “Will there be guards in the spotlight control station?”

“Yeah,” says Murray. “And Bentley's notes say you can't beat those guys up without setting off an alarm. You'll have to figure out some other way to get rid of them.”

“That won't be a problem,” says Sly. “Keep an eye on Carmelita for me, okay?”

“I don't think she'd want me to,” says Murray.

“Not like I do,” Sly corrects. “Just check up on her. Bentley, too. Thaddeus and I will be fine.”

“Indeed,” says Thaddeus, “I will endeavor to keep my descendant out of trouble.”
“Okay,” says Murray.

They put their binoc-u-com's away. Sly turns to Thaddeus. "So, why are you wearing that get-up?"

"This is what the workers wear when making repairs," Thaddeus says. "We will be able to climb the scaffolding and convince the guards at the top to allow us to, ah, 'fix' things in these outfits." He reaches under his hat and pulls out a matching outfit for Sly. "Although, they may still use passwords to see if we were really sent by the spider woman."

"What are these passwords?"

"There are two," says Thaddeus, handing Sly a piece of paper. "The ground password is square triangle circle x; the rooftop password is x circle triangle square. Can you remember that?"

Sly thinks to himself, What is the ground password? Square triangle circle x. What is the rooftop password? x circle triangle square. Not quite as easy as having Bentley in his ear telling him everything, but Bentley's busy. "I think I can manage."

"If you need assistance, you can always check the passwords in your gadget menu." Thaddeus tips his hat at Sly, a motion more suited to his top hat than the hard hat he's wearing now. "Put that on, and then we can relieve the guards of their keys."

"What, in this?" Sly asks, shaking out the clothes. "It's bright, it's noisy... they'd spot me a while away."

Thaddeus raises an eyebrow, looking distinctly unimpressed. "Can you at least climb in a less than perfect outfit?" he asks, with an air of extreme patience. "Because I will have no problems relieving them of their keys in this 'bright' 'noisy' get-up, but crossing those ropes in this weather makes my bones ache."

Sly opens his mouth, then closes it wordlessly; no one's been disappointed in him like this since he was seven. At least, not in a way he cared about. "I'm sure I can," he says instead. "I'll just... watch, and make sure you're safe until you can get me the keys."

Thaddeus does not roll his eyes; that wouldn't suit his dignity. But he turns away with an air of grave disappointment and irritation... only to stop, facing the spotlights, and remain unmoving.

"Thaddeus?" asks Sly, but there's no response. A glance at Thaddeus's face shows swirly-eyes.

Sly hooks Thaddeus with his cane and turns the other man around. "You okay? Bentley said the lights would be mesmerizing."

Bentley shakes his head. "I believe I know why we are to work together," Thaddeus says. "We will not be able to look at the lights while doing this. I must keep my back to the spotlights."

"Okay," says Sly. "I'll stand on the tower and let you know what's going on behind you. You'll have to walk forwards, backwards, or sideways."

Play resumes as Thaddeus; Sly takes off behind him and climbs the spotlights. Taking some experimental steps causes a problem for the player: the camera is fixed. To avoid the guards and pickpocket these keys, you have to rely on Sly's directions. The two guards have their back to the light show, one to the right, the other to the left, looking in every direction except behind them.

Sly's directions are clear in his ear. "There's no one behind you, Thaddeus," he says, as Thaddeus moves forward. "No one near sight or approaching on either side." Thaddeus continues forward,
slipping the key from the guard's pockets. "Nice. Back up now, you're clear."

Thaddeus does so, then shifts sideways, ready for the next guard. "Patrol on your left, coming closer. Looks like it's circling the nearest building. Don't get any closer." Thaddeus waits until Sly gives him the all clear before continuing sideways, retrieving the second key with ease. He backs up until he reaches Sly, already waiting to run across a rope. "Here," he says, handing Sly the keys. "You may continue."

"How ya doing, buddy?" asks Murray in his ear.

"Pretty good," says Sly as he climbs. "How are the others?"

"Carmelita's just finished in the tea shop, but it'll take her a while to get out again," says Murray. "I think she'll need a shower when she gets back."

Sly stares at a length of sheer wall and pulls out a one-use wall hook "Can't she just use the rain? Or is it that bad?"

"I think her fur changed color."

Sly winces. "How's Bentley?"

"He's found spiderweb ropes holding another of those creepy black light things," Murray says. "He can't get close enough to destroy them; says you'll have to later."

"Great." Sly does a neat ninja-spire landing and balances there while he throws another wall-hook, scowls, and aims the next one higher. "I am so excited for that."

"I bet. Oh, you're almost at the top! You know what to say to the guards, right?"

"Of course, I'll just answer their password and tell them I need to fiddle with the equipment."

"Right, that's what Bentley's notes say."

"And just to make sure they don't suspect anything," Sly reaches the top landing by the guard station, "I'm-a gonna use my Ita'lian ac-acent!"

Murray groans, but that's all the time they have for communication, because Sly's already knocking on the door to the guard station. An angry looking porcupine with an alarm button in hand approaches the door. "What is the rooftop password?"

Oh, Sly remembers this. "Ec-su, circul, tri-angle, squwahe."

The guard squints at him. "Why are you using a fake accent?"

"I-uh just-uh transfehed ovuh," Sly says. "I've-uh always sounded like-uh dis!"

The porcupine bristles, but nods. "Need to do some adjustments to the light show? That's the third time this week. The switch is on the roof."

And with that, Sly's allowed past. He jumps to the roof, unlocks the controls, and adjusts them: the lights turn off.

"Righteous!" says Murray. "You nailed that switch! I'll send you the coordinates for your next job."

"I'm on my way."
Sly makes his way back down the tower and meets Thaddeus. Together, the two thieves make their way across town, passing one light show to go to the further one away; the closer light show isn't over any advertisements, and it's better to clear Murray's path for destroying them than to be efficient. “I cannot believe a mere change in outfit is enough to prevent you from working,” says Thaddeus. “Did the previous Cooper teach you nothing?”

If Sly blushes, it can't be seen through his fur. "My dad... when I was eight years old, Bentley and Murray and I stole cookies from the head of the orphanage."

Thaddeus doesn't say another word until they reach the next waypoint: an elegant circular fountain with four jets of water around its edges, aiming for the center. Each jet is lit, flashing and blinking in mesmerizing patterns. A guard platform with a security hut and several locked-down switches hovers above it, supported only by ropes tying it to the tops of nearby buildings, which keeps the fountain itself out of the rain. Two guards, wearing special goggles, circle it in different directions.

Sly doesn't realize he's staring at it, unmoving, until Thaddeus claps a hand to his shoulder and turns him away. "For one who only had the Thievious to teach him, you have done quite well," says Thaddeus. "I never would have guessed."

Sly tosses his cane from hand to hand. "Thanks."

"There is much that hasn't been put in the book over the years." Thaddeus removes his hand from Sly's shoulder. "You are young, still; you have time to learn. When you have finished with these fiends from the future, come visit me. I would love to share what I know."

"That... you would... thanks," Sly says. "Ready for the next set?"

Play resumes as Thaddeus, with Sly scampering off... somewhere... to direct him around the fountain. This is trickier, with the guards moving in opposite directions and him always needing to keep his back to the fountain, but Sly is very good at giving directions. It takes a bit of time, and a bit of ducking under benches, but Thaddeus gets the job done.

Sly meets him on top of a building nearby, where they do the key hand-off. Sly's just pocketed the key when he hears Carmelita in his ear. "Everything going well on your end?"

“Things here are set.” Sly throws a couple wall-hooks and gets to the top of the highest building. From here, he can look down on the spotlights—and the guard station. “Did you see Murray off?"

“He's on his way to the waypoint Bentley set for the start of his job. I'll set the other ones based on whether or not the spotlights near them are still active.”

“Nice.” Sly removes his outfit and paraglides down to land on one of the ropes holding the platform over the fountain. He does not look down. “And Bentley?”

“We're going to need fire to destroy the spiderweb ropes. He told me he's going to hack and might not respond if he's midway through a computer system.”

“Of course.” Sly makes it to the platform and puts his outfit back on. He walks up to the nearest guard.

“Halt!” says the owl, brandishing his crossbow.

“I'm-uh haltin.”

“What is the ground password?”
“Squawuh, triangle, cuhcul, ec-su.”

The guard stares at him. “Are you an idiot?”

“I'm a new-uh.” Sly tips his hard hat. “Only been in town a month-uh.”

The guard sighs. “What, are you trying to sound like Tony? You're doing a really bad job of it. Do you know Tony?”

“I-uh haven't met-uh him yet.”

“I'll see that you do,” says the owl, scratching behind his ear with one arrow. “You would be fast friends.”

Sly doesn't know what to make of that, but the guard lets him past anyway.

“That was horrendous,” says Carmelita in his ear.

“Everyone always hates on the accent.” Sly slips the key in the lock and turns off all the spotlights. “Ready to give me the next waypoint?”

“Fine.”

Sly's made his way back to Thaddeus before Carmelita speaks again, “I just wish there was some way to do this without stealing.”

“Miss Fox,” says Thaddeus, looking around as though attempting to face her as he speaks, even though she isn't there, “are you aware of what my day job was, for the last thirty years?”

“You were a thief,” she says.

Thaddeus tuts in disappointment. “I am a thief, Miss Fox, and have been my entire life, but that is not what I am known for. To my neighbors, old colleagues, society at large, I am a private detective. I worked side by side with many distinguished officers of the law, and am still consulted on difficult cases.”

"You're joking," Sly and Carmelita say together.

Thaddeus laughs. "I noticed earlier that the two of you are having problems reconciling the public and private portions of your lives." He jumps off the building he'd been standing on and makes his way down the street, hands in his pockets; Sly paraglides after him. "Neither of you willing to accept the consistencies between them."

"Well, yeah," says Sly. "There's nothing similar about breaking the law and enforcing it."

"The rule of law is meant to protect the innocent from those who would take advantage," says Thaddeus. "Tell me, Sly, those you steal from, what happens after?"

Sly laughs. "By the time we're through, Interpol's gotten enough evidence on them that they go to jail. Murderers, traffickers, spice dealers... they do a lot worse than us."

"And by ensuring they are caught and penalized for their crimes, are you not behaving as law enforcement?"

Sly stops in his tracks. Carmelita laughs over the earpiece. "Please, he breaks too many rules for that."
"And tell me, Miss Fox," Thaddeus says, climbing to another rooftop as he speaks, "The rules you follow, that prevent you from going places and doing things, what purpose do they serve?"

"They keep cops honest, of course," snaps Carmelita. "If we didn't have checks on our power, we'd be no better than the criminals ourselves."

"Even when following those same rules prevents you from doing your own job, and adequately punishing those who'd harm others?" Thaddeus shakes his head in disapproval. "Independent agents like myself, who do no harm to the innocent but do not obey the rules, are needed to handle what law cannot touch. How we pay ourselves is our business."

There's silence from everyone until Thaddeus and Sly reach the final set of spotlights. Then Carmelita speaks. "I'm going to talk with Murray."

Thaddeus tips his hat to no one and turns to Sly. "Had you not made that connection yourself?"

"Not in so many words," Sly says. "I'm still getting used to the idea that Coopers can get along with the law."

Thaddeus sighs heavily. "Honestly. Well, we can discuss this another time. Attend!"

"Right. One more light show, and the city is safe." Sly moves into a good spot to give Thaddeus directions, leaving him alone on the rooftop.

This set of advertisements seem to be taking place in a public park of some kind, a large stretch of grass and trees. The spotlights shimmer through the trees, reflecting off the puddles and making spots dance in Thaddeus's vision even though he's not directly facing the statues the light show is centered around. There are three guards who have keys he needs this time, one in the woods, one by the fence surrounding the park, and one weaving between the three statues. Pickpocketing them all is an exercise in letting Sly tell him what to do and obeying.

If Sly weren't so very good at what he does, it would be impossible. How Sly himself isn't getting hypnotized in all this is hard to believe. But Thaddeus has to pickpocket with his eyes closed, listening for when the guard before him stops moving as he circles around the statues, Sly telling him when to stop moving or if he needs to turn left or right and when he's close enough to perform the pick, and he's been doing this so long he doesn't need to see to steal.

That's a point he probably shouldn't make with Carmelita.

Once Sly's guided him out again, he climbs a building and hands Sly the keys. "This may be difficult," says Thaddeus. "You will need to climb to the top of the statue to reach the control booth."

"If I need to, I'll close my eyes and let you guide me," says Sly. "It shouldn't be a problem if I'm fast enough."

In fact, for players' convenience, when Sly enters the zone lit by spotlights a 60-second timer appears on the screen. Getting to the top of the statues in that amount of time is a challenge, but doable; anyone but Sly would find it difficult, if not impossible. The control booth is closed, no doubt with a guard inside: Sly knocks on the door.

The guard that opens it is... not who Sly was expecting. "Wha'd'ya want-uh?" asks the large muscled Italian dog with a flashlight.

"I'm-uh here for repairs-uh," says Sly, trying to shake the feeling that he's seen this guy before.
“What-uh's the ground-uh passaword?”

“Squaw-uh, triangle, circul, x,” says Sly.

“All right-uh, tough guy, you may-uh know the pass-uh word, but what's my nick-uh name?”

Sly's jaw drops. “The Killer B?!”

Tony 'The Killer' B laughs. “I thought it was-uh you. I haven't seen-uh you since that time in Venezia! Did-uh you put on that accent to see if-uh I'd remember? You needuh to stop.”

Sly closes his mouth. “I thought it was good.”

“It's not-uh. I thought it was a gooduh try, when you were just getting into Octavio's ganguh, but I've gone legit now.” Tony struts in place. “Workin fur a re-enactament company! Things areuh looking up!”

Sly doesn't have the heart to tell him. “Yeah. They are. May I, uh, see the spotlight controls?”

“Sure-uh. You can do whatevuh you want, so-a long as you ditch the ac-acent.”

Sly enters the little hut for the spotlight controls, the lights turn off, and he emerges moments later. “I'll be-uh seein you,” says Tony B., shutting the door after Sly.

His earpiece crackles to life as Sly climbs down the statue. “What was that?” asks Carmelita.

“I don't think you'd believe me,” says Sly.

“Cute.”

“No, really.” Sly jumps back to the ground and looks around for Thaddeus, spotting him on a nearby rooftop. “I'm not sure I believe what just happened. Can we forget about it?”

“If it gets you to ditch the accent, then fine. For now. Listen, Sly, Thaddeus,” she says, “Bentley's not answering. He told me he wouldn't, if he were really into his hacking, but I think he'd feel better if he had backup.”

“I know I would,” says Sly.

“We shall ensure it is taken care of,” says Thaddeus.

Play continues as Sly, running from rooftop to rooftop and jumping along as normal... until the theater comes into sight.

Every window is barred. Every door is closed. Lasers gleam in the cracks of the shutters, in dizzying patterns on the roof. Spotlights, dozens of them, sweep the ground in random patterns on all sides; even so, guards stand alert at the perimeter. There's a freaking tank circling it!

Sly whips out his binoc-u-com. “Bentley?” he tries, hoping, praying he can get in contact with the turtle. “Bentley!?”

“He's not responding,” says Carmelita, taking over the line. “What's it like on your end?”

“I do not think there is any doubt that the turtle has been discovered,” says Thaddeus.

Sly shoves his binoc-u-com away. “I'm going in.”
“You will do him no good if you get captured as well.” Thaddeus grabs Sly by the arm and restrains him. “We need to take a moment, calm down, regroup. We need a plan.”

Sly glares at Thaddeus. “I am not leaving him there.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

_Thaddeus clubs Sly over the head with his own cane, hoists Sly over his shoulder, and leaves the Job Complete screen at a run._
HEE: Job 8

Chapter Notes

I apologize for a bit of Spanish; I believe it's grammatically correct, but not absolutely certain, and I couldn't think of another way to express some things.

HEART, AND EAR, AND EYE

Job 8: Demolition Murray

Murray leaves the safe-house and makes his way through the city, dodging patrols and hearing the occasional mutter in his ear as Carmelita fights with the binoc-u-com controls. It seems that the controls are winning: she can't actually put anything on the guards Sly and Thaddeus have to pickpocket. Well, if anyone can go without waypoints, it's those two.

It isn't long before Murray arrives at his own destination: a small house near the corner of the fissure, across the street from the bus depot. “Okay Carmelita,” says Murray. “I'm where Bentley said I should be.”

“One second... hang on... oh, forget it,” Carmelita mutters. There's a noise of shuffling and crinkling papers. “Let's see. It says that you're standing across the street from—you know how to hotwire those?!”

“I get to hotwire an old bus?” Murray actually claps his hands. “This is gonna be awesome!”

“No you don't get to—this is highly illegal!”

“Then why did you bring it up?” asks Murray. “The Murray is going to find a vehicle and hot its wires!”

The noise of exasperation Carmelita makes is rather entertaining. Murray tucks his binoc-u-com away and makes his way to the building, full of old-fashioned (well, not for this time period, but, you know) horseless carriages. He has to bust down a section of the fence before he can look around. None of the ones parked in the yard outside seem to suit him, so he climbs through a conveniently large open window (nearly getting his belt stuck) and looks in their garage.

Well hello there, modern day tank. Fancy seeing you here. What the dancing Dimitri are you doing here?

“This is gonna be AWESOME! I haven't driven a tank since Prague!”

As Murray pries open the hatch on the tank, Carmelita pipes up again. “I guess this is better than just stealing some 1800's car... this is conclusive evidence that this place has some connection to our time, and so also The Contessa, after all. Do you remember how to drive a tank, Murray?”

“Of course! I use the left and right sticks. I push them both up to go ahead, both down to go away, and opposite ways to turn.” Murray starts the tank as he talks, giving the player time to experiment.

“Right. Hey, those were bigger words than I usually hear you use.”
“Bentley uses them a lot. Oh! And I can shoot with the R1 button, which is how I'll get out of this building!”

Carmelita may be saying something else, but the exact words can't be heard over the sound of tank treads and explosions; just her irritation. Boy, is she mad. Not mad enough to be heard over a tank shooting down a door and driving over a fence, mind you, but still mad.

When he's driving the tank down the road, some of her words become audible: "—can't believe this, all that worry and fuss over doing things the legal way with Sly, all so I could have Murray steal a tank—"

"Okay Carmelita, what am I supposed to do?"

There's a moment of silence over the binoc-u-com line. "I'm not sure I should tell you. I just assisted in breaking so many laws I may never show my face at Interpol again, I can't make it worse."

"Well, is the tank here legally?"

"Of course not!" she snaps.

"And is The Contessa doing legal things?"

"Not by a long shot."

"And is there another way to stop her?"

Carmelita goes quiet.

"Is there?" asks Murray.

I didn't know it was possible to hear someone grinding their teeth through a microphone, Bentley's equipment must be amazing. "There must be," she says, "but we can't do it by tomorrow, and I—I refuse to let that horrible, eight-legged cow do to an entire city what she tried to do to me."

"Or what she did to me!" pipes in The Murray. "I want to floss my teeth with HER SPINE!"

Carmelita actually laughs. "Easy, big guy. You get to start by taking out all the advertisement for tomorrow's play. That's when she'll be vulnerable."

"Righteous! Advertisements, prepare to be TAKEN OUT by... The Murray."

With that, Murray starts driving his tank towards the first waypoint: the spotlight area where Sly and Thaddeus shut down the first set of lights. Almost all of the advertisements are street-level billboards in range of the tank's turret, but once he's taken those out, he has to park it down a side alley, bounce to a rooftop off a box of tea, and tear down a few posters by hand. And get rid of another advertisement by throwing some investigating guards at it.

When the last advertisement shatters, something falls from it: a beautiful bracelet, sparkling as it catches the dim light. It lands by his feet, and he picks it up, then sways on his feet. "Uh, Carmelita? Are you there?"

There's no response. Murray tucks the jewelry into a pocket and gets back in his tank. His next stop is the fountain where Sly and Thaddeus just finished dealing with the second set of spotlights. He's only halfway there when he hears Carmelita. "How you doing, Murray?"
Murray runs over a guard with his tank. Some others bolt. "I am having the time of My LIFE! This is AWESOME!"

Carmelita chuckles. "Glad you approve. Sly and Thaddeus are on their last set of spotlights. Bentley's too busy hacking to talk. Try not to destroy anything from this time."

"Okay," says Murray. "Oh! When I destroyed the last stuff, something weird came out."

"Weird how?" asks Carmelita.

"I don't think jewelry is supposed to come out of billboards," says Murray. "And it made me dizzy when I held it."

Carmelita mutters some indistinct but unhappy Spanish under her breath. "Hang onto it, and any others you find. Bentley brought along his scanner thing, that he used on the gems we found with Tsao; we can see if there's any connection."

"Okay," says Murray.

Then he's arrived at the fountain, where there are more guards who are... decidedly less happy to see him. All the ones who can flee to the rooftops and wait. And they know what they're waiting for, of course. Because after Murray has shot, blasted, run over, and otherwise destroyed all the advertisements that needed a tank to destroy them, he has to get out of the tank again and jump up on the rooftops to handle the ads the tank can't reach.

Those poor, poor owls and porcupines, with their hatchets and bows and arrows and waterproof fireworks. They get punched, stomped, and thrown through a good dozen different signs, and Murray tears down several posters while he's at it. The glass (plastic?) on one sign shatters, revealing several gemstones in the center, strung into a necklace through the sign. Murray pulls it out and puts it in his pouch, where he doesn't have to touch it, shaking his head.

Then it's back in the tank he goes. "Okay, Carmelita, where to next?"

"Umm... sorry, Murray. Bentley isn't responding—he's too busy hacking—so I'm sending Sly and Thaddeus after him."

“Oh. That'll be fun.”

“Yeah. In any case, none of the other ads have spotlights on them. They're scattered throughout this part of the city. There should... there.” About a dozen waypoints blink into being on Murray's screen, showing all sorts of locations. “You shouldn't have to leave the tank to get rid of these ones.”

“This is gonna be AWESOME! I bet I can do this in ten, no, five minutes!”

Carmelita actually chuckles. “Go for it, big guy.”

So Murray does. Boy, does he. He goes all over town at max speed, taking out signs and balloons as soon as they come into range, going from one side of town to the other, in a happy haze of destruction.

Until he's gotten the last advertisement and Carmelita contacts him again. “Tienes que traer a Sly aquí ahora mismo!”

Murray blinks. “Is that Spanish? Sly says you only speak Spanish when you're upset. Where's Sly? What do I need to do?”
“Thaddeus lo tiene a él. Hay un tanque dando vueltas al teatro; sácalo, luego vuelve aquí. Ahora!”

“A tank at the theater? It will be no match for THE MURRAY.”

Yep. There's a tank going around and around the theater. As if you didn't know. And Murray, well, Murray doesn't question it.

He just hunts down that tank. And destroys it.

**JOB COMPLETE**

_(Murray pops out of the tank just long enough to flex, then ducks back in and drives back towards the safe-house)._
Chapter 47

Chapter Notes

I'm a little sorry that this is what you're getting today... but oh well. It can't get much worse, can it?

Merry Christmas, everyone.

HEART, AND EAR, AND EYE

Slideshow 3

The opening screen of a slideshow comes up, with the typical Sly Cooper logo Bentley uses, then wavers, as though the powerpoint is as unsteady as a real slideshow. The pictures change sporadically throughout, with no real logic or reason behind them, showing various images from game 2, areas 4 and 5, as well as numerous shots of Bentley through the years, from pictures that must have been taken when he was growing up at the orphanage to recent ones of him analyzing postcards and posing in his Victorian-era finery.

Carmelita:
Okay, everyone here? Ready to listen?

Sly:
What are we just standing around for? Bentley's IN THERE.

Carmelita:
The theater's locked down tight. Nothing short of a tank's getting through those walls, Ringtail—

Murray:
But we have a tank!

Carmelita:
—and using one will get all the police in the city down on us. The Cooper gang avoids that, don't they? And it'd bring even more people into The Contessa's web. But we are going to get Bentley back, and then I'll string that witch up with my own two hands.
Sly:
So what are we waiting for?

Thaddeus:
Patience, Sly. I spoke with Miss Fox while you were napping—

Sly:
Napping?! You clocked me!

Thaddeus:
Let us not sweat the details. Our opportunity will come with dusk.

Carmelita:
Thaddeus is right. We need to be ready at dusk. They'll open the doors for opening night. That's when we'll go in and take her down. She had me for weeks and didn't break me, she had Murray hopped up on spice for over a week to break him, Bentley will be fine. But there are a few things that need to be dealt with before then, and we know The Contessa's on to us. No one goes on a job alone.

Murray:
You got it, Carmelita! If I see that spider, I'm going to tie her legs in a **GORDON KNOT**.

Sly:
That's 'Gordian', big guy. Okay, Carm, what do we need to do?

Carmelita:
First off. When we get in there, we're going to take out her whole operation, and that means we have to get rid of that black glowing thing. Before Bentley vanished, he said the ropes would have to be burned to be taken out.

I already took care of three places with lightning rods, but there's one more, a lampmaker's shop. It
must have something to do with the lights and her hypnosis. If it's anything like the last two, I'll probably have to go in there, but Thaddeus'll come with me.

Sly:

You know, I could—

Carmelita:

It's in case there's something from this time period he has to deal with.

Thaddeus:

Do not worry, young Sly. I will take good care of your young lady, if by any chance she needs it.

Carmelita:

Call me Sly's 'young lady' again and I'll feed you your own tail.

Thaddeus:

I'll take care not to do so.

Carmelita:

Good. Now. When Murray destroyed the advertisements, jewelry fell out of it—period appropriate, to make it worse. Bentley's machine confirmed that The Contessa's got some milder version of that brainwashing stone in there. Thaddeus told me he'd seen identical jewelry in the pawn shop. Sly, Murray, you two get to go there.

Sly:

Wait, the pawn shop? Really?

Carmelita:

Is that going to be a problem, Sly?

Sly:
No, no problem. None at all. Nope, no problems here.

Carmelita:

*Good*. We're going to have to be in constant contact here; no mistakes, no hesitation. Murray, during Thaddeus and my mission you will be manning the com station and Sly will be roaming the streets for anything out of the ordinary. Thaddeus, you'll be on the streets when Sly and Murray are occupied. If you see anything that could even remotely in your wildest dreams be a piece of that spider, get in contact with someone.

Thaddeus:

This appears to cover all the bases.

Sly:

Yeah, but... we have to do it without Bentley.

Murray:

Don't worry, buddy. We'll get him out.

Sly:

But what if this doesn't work?

Carmelita:

Then we'll forget the subtlety and break down the theater walls with the tank, because I am *not* leaving *anyone* in that spider's clutches. We've got a lot of ground to cover, so let's *move*, people!

*Thiefnet Computer:*

*Sly: Disguised Pickpocket. Steal other's valuables no matter WHAT you're wearing!*
Carmelita: Grenade Shot. Damages all enemies in the vicinity, but fires slower than other shots.
Murray follows Sly onto the streets, bouncing to the rooftops behind him and always keeping the raccoon in sight. Sly doesn't blame him: every few minutes, Carmelita comes over the binoc-u-com, reminding them to keep an eye on each other and not do anything stupid. He's pretty sure trying to rescue Bentley right now would qualify. But he can't blame Carmelita. And his grip on his cane is so tight, he's surprised the wood hasn't splintered. Nerves. Anger.

He'd trade places with Bentley in a heartbeat, even knowing what went on in that prison of hers. Especially knowing.

So he keeps an eye on Murray, on the streets more often than not, warning him when guard patrols are nearby and making sure both of them stay out of sight, out of mind. The Contessa has Bentley, which means she's on her guard.

When they reach the pawn shop, Sly somersaults to the street and turns to Murray. “Carmelita talked to you just before we left. What's the plan?”

“She gave me all this,” he says, holding up a bag of cash. “Said she won it in shooting contests last night, and I'm to use it to buy the jewelry.”

Sly nods, then pauses and flips his microphone off for a second. He motions for Murray to do the same. “Are we buying back the same jewelry Bentley sold earlier?”

“Yes,” says Murray.

“Does Carmelita know we sold it here earlier?”

“Nope.”

“Let's keep it that way.” Sly holds out his hand, and Murray gives him a fist-bump. “We're going to get him out.”

“Of course!” says Murray. “Now come on. You do the talking; you're better at this.”

Sly nods, and they turn to the door of the pawn shop, flipping their earpieces back on. Sly reaches for the door and pulls. Pushes.

Locked.


Murray knocks. The entire building shakes. There's no response.

Sly groans and pulls out his binoc-u-com. “Carmelita, we may have to do this the hard way.”

“You mean breaking and entering?” she asks, sounding irritated.

“Yes,” says Sly. He focuses on a window over the door. “I can enter there, then let Murray in. We won't be separated long. Then we can find the owner and get out.”
Carmelita mulls it over. “I don't like it... but okay. Though... maybe don't find the owner. He may not take kindly to trespassers. Just find the jewelry, take it, and leave twice the asking price.”

“You're joking.” Sly can't keep the disbelief out of his voice.

“No, I'm not.”

“Carm, pawn shops aren't much better than thieves themselves, they jack the price up through the roof to begin with!”

“We're paying it, Sly,” says Carmelita. Her tone leaves no room for arguments. “If we can't be proper citizens, at least we can pay double as an apology for the scare. And leave your microphone on the whole time you're in there; if anything happens, we're breaking down the door.”

Sly sighs and puts away his binoc-u-com. “See you in a few,” he says to Murray.

Murray grins. “Don't worry,” he says, then drops his voice to a whisper. “What she doesn't know won't hurt her.”

“You mind reader,” says Sly.

“Totally! The Guru kept trying to teach me, and I've been trying to get that right for months!”

Sly stares at him for a few seconds. “...Right. I'll see you in a few minutes.”

With that, Sly climbs up to the window, slides it all the way open, and climbs in. A neat ninja-spire landing gets him on a rafter, which lets him look around before anyone spots him.

This floor of the pawn shop is empty. The neat rows of shelves are bare, except the ones by the door and cash register; dust coats every surface. From his position, he can even see the tell-tale seams of a trapdoor behind the counter, and grimaces. He hasn't seen such an obvious front for illegal activity since he was a teenager.

Still, there's no one here now, and the door is locked by a simple latch. A drop to the floor, a flick of the wrist, and Murray's inside. “Think you can take care of a trap door for me?” asks Sly, nodding behind the counter. “Bet you anything our gems are inside their most hidden safe.”

Play switches to Murray. There are many breakables in this shop, but nothing gives more than a coin; dust rises with every step, making Sly—and sometimes Murray—sneeze. When he makes his way to the trapdoor and picks it up, it reveals a steep stairway down.

One steep descent later, and Sly is impressed. “Boy,” he says, surveying the room, “this guy just proves that lasers are unnecessary.”

No kidding. Between the pressure plates on the floor that'll trigger spikes (very nice, classic, too bad they're as obvious as Dimitri's fashion sense); the floor-to-ceiling iron gates, secured with spinning combination locks, without even enough space for Sly to fit his cane through the bars; the deep, water-filled 'moats' before each gate; there are even swinging axes and other death traps that would make Khamen feel right at home.

Good thing the pawn shop owner is also sloppy. Piles of dirt and stone from his renovations litter the edges of the path; it also doubles back on itself, and in some places the soft earth looks thin enough to tunnel through. Barrels, too sturdy to break but perfect to pick up, lay all over the place; wooden crates are piled haphazardly by the sides of the path. Sly pries one open and glances inside, then does a double-take. He reaches for his binoc-u-com out of habit and says, "Bentley, this guy's got robot
"Bentley's not here," says Carmelita, and wow if that isn't enough to make Sly wince. "Robots? That's *not* Victorian-era technology."

"But everything else here *is,*" says Sly zooming in on Murray; he reaches inside another box and pulls out a metal egg, over a foot tall and bigger around than either of their heads. "So what's going on?"

Carmelita pauses. "Is this a new pawn shop?"

With a crackle of static, Thaddeus cuts in. "It is not. The owner, a Monsieur Belette, has run it for years. He has been known to grease the palms of those officers who look closely at his operation, and *not* look closely at where any of his acquisitions come from. Or whom they go to."

Sly grimaces. He knows those kinds of people are useful, even necessary, in a world with cops and thieves in it; in fact, he made great use of a few when he was younger, first selling to them and then following people who used them to steal from. But that doesn't make their job now easy.

"Thaddeus," says Carmelita, "if you've known about him for so long, and you're a detective, then why is he still in business?"

"Because there's always *someone* taking advantage of selling the underworld's goods, and by knowing who does we can keep him from doing any *real* harm." Thaddeus sounds almost offended. "Honestly, don't they teach you *anything* in your future police academy? If you let a few low-lifes go free, you can use them to lead you to the *real* problems."

Carmelita actually growls.

Sly clears his throat before this can escalate any further. "In any case, that means The Contessa has made this guy her contact in this time period," says Sly. "And since his whole shop is a front, we can assume none of this has been sold. So let's just... leave it."

"Fine." Carmelita's glare could peel paint.

Sly puts his binoc-u-com away and looks at Murray. "Boy, here I'd think knowing Thaddeus was a detective would make things easier."

"What would be the fun in that?" asks Murray.

Sly grins back. "You have a point there, big guy. Okay, let's get to work."

Play for this room swaps between Sly and Murray regularly. Murray stomps to pick up items—barrels, crates, assorted debris—and throws them into the deep, water-filled moats to create platforms he and Sly can use to jump on; he uses his phenomenal punching power to break through the thin wall in places the path doubles back on itself; and he stands on pressure plates to disable floor spikes so Sly can get by them. Sly, in turn, opens every combination lock, climbs the shafts of the swinging axes to disable them from the top, and climbs, crawls, or jumps to find the switches that disable the floor spikes entirely.

At the very end of the long 'death corridor' is an imposing safe. Sly kneels and undoes the combination lock, then eases the door open.

A foot big mechanical owl with glowing red eyes swoops out and straight for Sly's throat. Sly *shrieks* and dives to the floor on instinct as Murray punches it into oblivion—and the other three that
come out of the safe. “You okay, buddy?”

Sly's breathing hard as he gets back up. “That was new,” he says. “Thanks.”

“No problem.” Murray reaches in with one gloved hand and pulls out some jewelry. “This must be it; it's making me dizzy.”

“Then let's get out of here.” Sly turns around to survey the room they just crossed. “This place gives me the creeps.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Murray and Sly high-five each other, then start their trudge back out of the pawn death shop.*
Carmelita makes her way through the city with the sort of care she's only ever used when trying to track the Cooper Gang. She looks behind her often, turning in a slow circle to check in all directions; she jumps sideways or backtracks every few hundred yards, keeping her movements unpredictable. She keeps to the streets, mostly. Thaddeus has the rooftops; every so often she'll dart in an alley below the house he's on, or he'll leap from one house to another over her. They're never more than a street away from each other, never further than a yell for help. Having him with her is every bit as good as having Constable Cooper partnering with her as they go after spice dealers and forgers. Almost. Though Carmelita will never bring herself to say so, the way Thaddeus stays calm and quiet beside her is almost unnerving, and she finds herself missing Sly's never ending stream of flirty chit-chat.

Ugh.

Carmelita doesn't take to a rooftop until she's across the street from the lamp maker's shop. Thaddeus joins her there. "Are you ready, Miss Fox?"

"It's Inspector," she tells him. "Inspector Fox."

He tips his hat to her. "Forgive me if I don't use your title just yet; I would rather 'Miss Fox' come to my lips faster than your proper name if an enemy is around."

Carmelita's been undercover enough to see the sense of this. "Fine," she says, looking across the street. The lamp maker's is an elegant two-story brick building, the shutters closed and lights off for the night. "Is the shop on both stories?"

"That is unlikely," Thaddeus says. "Were this a normal shop, I'd say the family lives above it; beds, a kitchen, perhaps a parlor up top. Given what we have seen so far, however, I'm more inclined to believe there is some traps and treachery up there. I have my disguises with me, in case they are needed."

Carmelita nods, her gaze on the building. "But first we have to get in."

Play resumes as Thaddeus, with Carmelita on the roof beside him. She has her shock pistol out and is standing at attention, alert and aware, keeping an eye on him. Murray talks to them through their earpieces: "Bentley was looking at the skem—the shine—the blue design things for this place," he says. "I don't know what you'll find inside, but the best way to get in is through the chimney." A way-point appears over the chimney of a neighboring building, then vanishes to reappear over Carmelita's head. "Sorry." That one vanishes, too, to appear over the proper building's chimney at last.

It doesn't take long for Thaddeus to scale the building: a bit of climbing, a few ninja-spire jumps, and he's reached the roof. A few moments later and he's through the chimney, emerging on the other side with soot on his hat. He removes it and dusts it off. He's in an entryway on the first floor of the building, the front door in sight, a hallway stretching into the unknown to his left. There's a second hallway, a set of stairs, and a door, but those are shut tight and blocked by lasers.
Thaddeus shakes his head and opens the front door, letting Carmelita in. He closes it behind her and waits while she rings out her tail, her eyes flicking to the lasers. “I don't know how to turn those off.”

“That won't be a problem, Miss Fox,” says Thaddeus. He nods towards the one place they can go. “I'm certain we will find something, or someone, of use down there. I can change into my bright orange worker disguise when the R1 button is pressed; I have a second disguise, which I modeled after the guards' outfits, assigned to the L1 button. I can use my guard's disguise to keep people out of the room you're working in and my worker disguise to talk to people. If I need the passwords and have forgotten them, they are still written in the gadget menu.”

Play resumes as Thaddeus makes his way down the hall. He emerges at the end into a kitchen. On one wall is an oversized switch. Three guards stand in front of it.

Thaddeus changes into his workman's disguise and approaches them. "Halt!" cries one. "What is the ground password?"

"Square triangle circle x," replies Thaddeus, very smoothly. "I'm surprised you guards are taking passwords even in here. That is excellent work. You should be commended."

The wolf puffs up his chest, while the owl preens. The porcupine slicks back her quills and says, "Just doing our duty, sir."

“But not every guard would,” he says, still in a tone of obsequious flattery. “They'd think, why, I'm in here, so they may not need to password check me. You are very good at your jobs.”

If it's possible, they all swell more. “It's a duty, and an honor,” says the owl. “Did you come here on a break, or for some purpose?”

“I'm helping modernize this building,” he says, with the air of one who's mildly embarrassed. “To be perfectly honest, I don't understand everything our esteemed madam has asked me to do... but I know I need that switch pulled to do it.”

“Our boss lady is the smartest spider alive,” says the wolf. “Why, I bet she's a hundred years ahead of the times—more than that! I'll help you out, buddy.” He pulls the switch.

Play switches back to Carmelita in the main room as the laser grid in front of the stairs switches off. “I'm going upstairs, Thaddeus,” she says, and doesn't wait another moment before ascending.

Upstairs is a single landing: no hallways, no solid dividing walls, and altogether too large to actually fit inside the building. A single room, the door cracked, lays tantalizingly close to where Carmelita stands. The spotlights, laser-covered floor, laser grid walls and almost nonexistent places to stand safely will make getting there difficult, if not impossible.

Murray's voice crackles into her ear. "Oh! Oh! I know what Bentley would say if he saw this. He'd tell you to look at the ceiling!" A way-point flickers into view in the far corner, a place seemingly as impossible to get to as the other room. There's a hole in the ceiling there, or something.

Getting there requires several well-timed leaps over, through, and under moving lasers while landing on the few bare patches of floor there are available. Thaddeus climbs the stairs while Carmelita crosses, but waits at the top of the stairs, unmoving, calling encouragement through the binoc-u-com. Carmelita lands the last jump, directly below the hole, when she hears Sly's voice in her ear: "Something's going on."

"What is it?" asks Murray; Carmelita wrestles her binoc-u-com out and switches the feed to show Sly's view. The Contessa emerges from the tea shop, her umbrella failing to protect her from the rain.
Sly found her.

"I could take her," Sly says.

Carmelita can't let that stand. "Don't, Sly," she says, before Murray can. "Bentley's not with her."

"She must be keeping the turtle in the theater," Thaddeus adds through his own microphone. A guard retinue surrounds The Contessa as he speaks. "We must wait for the opportune moment."

"Fine," grumbles Sly, and her screen switches off; Sly must've put his binoc-u-com away.

Carmelita peers at the ceiling and finds a switch up there. One shot later, the lasers flicker out. "There are probably guards in there," says Carmelita, indicating the now-accessible room. "Your turn, Thaddeus."

"Indeed." Play switches to Thaddeus once more. As he crosses the room, he asks, "Do you think Sly returned to the safe-house?"

"Much as I wish he did, there's not a chance in the world," mutters Carmelita. "I'd bet anything you want that he's following her to make sure she doesn't come here, and see if he can find Bentley now."

Thaddeus chuckles. "You may be right."

That's the extent of their conversation before Thaddeus reaches out and pushes the door open. The three owls in there jump, one spilling his coffee; they fumble with their weapons as they turn towards him. "Halt!" cries one. "What's the rooftop password?"

"X circle triangle square," Thaddeus replies.

"Yup, that'll do it," he says.

Another guard gives him a gentle shove. "Of course he knows the passwords. He's here, isn't he?"

"You should still be praised for sticking to your task," says Thaddeus. He shrugs, the light glinting off his construction uniform. "Not every guard would be so diligent, and that's how intruders get through. You are to be commended."

The owl who asked the password smirks at his companions. "I'm well aware not every guard would, but you don't have to worry about us. We're good guards. Now what do you need?"

"I have to access an area behind the barrier wall," Thaddeus said. "Could you please—"

"But of course." The guard moves to the wall and presses a button. "Queen knows we need repairs down there."

This time, Carmelita is waiting for Thaddeus as he leaves the room. "You are—or were—a detective. An officer of the law. Doesn't this bother you?"

"Should it?" asks Thaddeus. He leads the way to the stairs. "Everyone does what they must to survive. For some, that means doing things others view as wrong, hence their illegality. But while they may be on the wrong side of the law, they themselves are doing the best they can, being the best they can be, in a bad situation."

Carmelita snorts as they get to the bottom of the stairs. The lasers in front of the second hallway are gone, and the hallway itself empty, save for a door at the far end. "They're still criminals."
“Miss Fox, if they were working for your organization, would their behavior—checking for clearance even of those who are already inside—be admirable?”

“Of course, but—“

“Many in this area of the city must turn to crime if they are to feed their families, or even to protect themselves.” Thaddeus reaches the door first. “They do not deserve your anger or derision; aim it at those who take advantage of their weakness. I shall enter first, in case guards lie within.”

He does, but there are no guards in the room—just lasers. Thaddeus holds the door for Carmelita.

Carmelita doesn't reply to Thaddeus, just looks around the room. Like before, there's a spot on the ceiling that seems suspicious; unlike before, there's no second room, just a switch on the wall, completely covered in lasers. Carmelita's going to have to do even tougher jumps than before to reach the switch on the ceiling.

As the lasers power off, Thaddeus says, “I notice you haven't replied.”

Carmelita hmmphs. “You know you and Sly are both criminal masterminds.”

“But we don't take advantage of others' weakness,” Thaddeus waits by the door as Carmelita pulls the switch. “Therein lies the difference. The law protects as much as it cripples. Sometimes, one must be a thief to catch a thief.”

Carmelita scowls so hard that play switches back to Thaddeus. He leads the way back to the main room, where the final door is, at last, unlocked. He enters first to check for guards.

A pair of porcupines sit at a table within, mugs of tea at their elbow and cards in their hands; several closed drawers line the wall behind them. One glances at Thaddeus and raises an eyebrow. “Whad'a'ya want?” he demands. “The boss spider has the key for tunnel access; you'll have to ask her if you want to continue the job down there.”

Thaddeus straightens his back and glares them down. “What is the ground password?”

“Uh....”

“Wrong answer,” Thaddeus snarls, thwacking the guard with his cane. “How am I to know if you are supposed to be here if you can't answer such things? You! The rooftop password!”

“X circle triangle square,” she stutters out. “And who do you think you are, a lowly workman, asking us passwords? All you're supposed to do here is repair the plumbing and deliver the goods to The Contessa, and we just finished the second one. You're right on time.”

His earpiece crackles. “Uh, what?” asks Murray.

“Darned if I know,” says Carmelita, “but there's nowhere else to look in this building. We may as well take this thing with us.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

_Thaddeus exits the room, holding what looks like a horseshoe magnet in one hand; he tosses it to Carmelita. She catches it, looks it over, and grins._
Sly's on his third round of the city when he sees a commotion outside of the tea shop Carmelita took out yesterday. Pulling out his binoc-u-com, he contacts Murray. "Something's going on."

"What is it?" asks Murray, but his question's answered before Sly can say a word. The Contessa emerges from the tea shop, lips pursed in anger, eyes like fire. The gems she wears glisten brighter as the rain falls on them; her pocket shimmers in a familiar way, signaling something valuable within.

Sly's grip tightens on his cane. "I could take her."

Carmelita cuts in, "Don't, Sly." With a burst of static, it shows Sly her picture instead of Murray's, her back to some sort of laser grid. "Bentley's not with her."

"She must be keeping the turtle in the theater," adds Thaddeus, though his picture doesn't come up. Guards—five of them, three flashlight-bearing wolves but also a porcupine and an owl—approach The Contessa, an escort. "We must wait for the opportune moment."

"Fine," grumbles Sly.

With a burst of static, Murray reappears in the bottom screen. "Okay Sly, so you need to come back to the safe-house—"

"No." says Sly.

"No?" asks Murray.

"I'm going to follow her. I've done this a million times," he adds, zooming in as the group starts to walk. "They'll never know I'm here."

"But, Sly—"

"If I don't, and she goes to the lamp shop, we're sunk. Isn't this why I'm on the streets?"

"Okay," says Murray. "But be careful."

"Don't worry, big guy. I won't jump her unless I actually see Bentley."

And that has to be enough, because Sly puts his binoc-u-com away and starts tailing the group. This is something Sly has done a hundred, a thousand, a million times. He did it before Bentley was hurt, back in Paris and Canada; he did it in Venice, taking pictures all the while. He even did it back in the Caribbean, not much more than a month ago. There should be absolutely nothing to worry about.

Except there is. As The Contessa makes her way through the rain-splattered streets, her umbrella keeping her hair dry but little else, her guards stay nearby. Whenever they approach an intersection, one wolf will stay behind her, keeping The Contessa safely in sight, while the other two will go down two separate streets to check ahead; only when it's clear does The Contessa choose her path, and the one she didn't follow catches up. Their pace is a sedate stroll of suspicion. On more than one occasion, The Contessa stops and, with wide arm motions, sends the porcupine and owl up to check
the rooftops, and the three flashlight-bearing wolves to check further behind her and up ahead, leaving her guardless for ten or twenty seconds as they check to ensure her safety.

Sly keeps a chimney between him and them when this happens, or ducks in a barrel, or poses as a statue. If he was unsure before, this settles it. Something is up. Something besides whatever's going on with spice and the play.

She walks past the theater without entering it (and Sly has to skirt the whole area; too many other guards around, too many spotlights, even without the tank, he just keeps her on the edges of his vision). She strolls through the derelict section of town. She stubs one foot on the steps to their safehouse, and stops to curse it and send her guards for an additional check (Sly forgets to breathe while she does this, and doesn't start again until she's continued on once more). She makes her way to the fissure, and makes her way along it.

At the corner where the western and southern fissures meet, The Contessa stops and sends her guards for another check in all directions... but doesn't look up, where Sly is perched on a street lamp. When she's satisfied there's no one around, she uses a spiderweb to lower herself into the fissure.

Sly jumps to a rope, runs to a building, and clings to a drain-pipe to get a better view. He can't see what The Contessa is doing, but he can see her back end sticking out: there's a cave, or maybe a tunnel, down there. Too low for Carmelita to get out of by jumping, even with her super jump; too dark to notice unless you know exactly where it is. Getting out of there would require the disposable wall-hooks Sly's grown so fond of, and more than a little ingenuity.

And all five of her guards are waiting around the edge of the fissure, looking out. Guarding her while she's down there.

Sly pulls out his binoc-u-com. “What's going on by your end?” he asks Murray.

“Carmelita and Thaddeus are just finished,” Murray says. “They're on their way back to the safehouse. Where are you?”

“The Contessa has something in a cave in the fissure,” Sly murmurs, focusing on her. She moves further into the cave, disappearing entirely. “It's got to be important; she was secretive enough about it. Maybe that's where she's keeping Bentley.”

“Don't do it, Sly,” says Murray. “You said—“

“I know what I said,” Sly interrupts. The Contessa comes back into view, red eyes steely. Sly jerks back instinctively. “But we have to check this out. And unlike when we were doing all the jobs earlier, we know where she is.”

“I think it's a good idea,” says Thaddeus.

“You can't go down there alone,” protests Carmelita, louder than Murray. “I'm on my way over.”

“No,” says Sly. The Contessa uses another spiderweb to pull herself out of the fissure, back into her circle of guards. “You can't get out of there. Watch The Contessa for me.”

“I shall watch that villain,” says Thaddeus. “Miss Fox can prevent any others from inspecting that cave while you are down there.”

“All right,” says Sly. “I'll wait for your arrival.”
“Be careful, you guys,” says Murray.

Sly puts the binoc-u-com away and climbs to the nearest roof, watching. The Contessa is still in sight when Carmelita leaps to a nearby roof, Thaddeus another roof away. He waves at them.

Thaddeus removes his hat in a bow, waves it, and turns towards The Contessa. Carmelita jumps the street separating them to speak to him. “If you need back-up, Sly, say anything and I'm there,” she says. She scowls at the ground. “Or don't say anything. I'm going to check up on you every few minutes, and if you don't respond, I'm coming in.”

Sly puts a hand on her shoulder and squeezes. “I'll respond,” he says. “And I'll be right back. I promise.”

She puts her hand over his. The two of them stay there for a moment, unmoving, before she shakes herself and steps back, removing his hand from her shoulder. “You'd better be.”

Sly jumps from the rooftop to the ground by the fissure and throws in several wall-hooks, just in case, then jumps in. He uses the hooks and his paraglider to go down slowly, and finds the cave without any trouble. “Take pictures of anything you find down there,” says Carmelita's voice in his ear. “I. Want. Evidence.”

“Yes, Inspector,” Sly says, pulling out his binoc-u-com. The first picture he snaps is of an imposing iron door with a spiderweb, not a laser grid, standing in the cliff face. “If I touch that, I'm going to be stuck here until she returns,” Sly says. “Bentley said the other webs could be destroyed with fire; are there any torches you can grab for me?”

“I can do one better; get up here,” Carmelita orders. Sly uses his wall-hooks to scale back to the street.

Carmelita digs in her pocket and pulls out a small device that looks like a cross between a horseshoe magnet and a lighter. “Portable laser generator,” she says, pressing one end of it; a laser gleams into existence, bright enough that looking at it hurts, going between the points. It vanishes when she releases the button. “We found it in the lampmaker's.”

“This'll work,” Sly says, taking it from her and putting it in his leg pouch. “Thanks.”

Then it's back down the cliff side, to face that door. “Be careful how you cut the web,” Carmelita says in his ear. “You don't want it to fall on you.”

One brief minigame involving decisions about what to laser cut and what to leave alone, Sly can reach the door. It's closed with a spinning combination lock that Sly undoes in moments; with a push, the door opens.

The area within is dark enough to justify the old depth optimizer goggles that broke during the vault job. He pauses a moment to wait for his eyes to adjust. The first picture he takes is simply of the hallway he's found himself in, stone walls and floor, stalactites dangling from the ceiling. Red fairy lights, like those seen during winter holidays, glisten on spiderwebs strung between them; otherwise, the room is dark. “Sly, do you read me? What's going on in there?”

“Nothing yet, Carm.”

“Be careful down there. Red light can mess with your depth perception; make it hard to see things like bumps in the path, or tripwires, or judge distances.”

“I'll be careful.”
Without another thought, he continues down the hall. It's flat, a bare path; as he continues, it narrows, the walls the same distance apart but water creeping in along the edges. The light stays the same, dim and flickering, unnerving him as he continues.

The path narrows even further, then vanishes completely. Water remains, deep and still, with isolated islands well outside of Sly's jumping distance. Stalagmites poke out in spots but the water and dim light have them reflected two or even three times, seeming to be on the walls and many places at once. Sly slaps at one with his cane and the water ripples, making the false ones shimmer. He plans his course while on land, separating the real from the fake, and makes his way to the first island before repeating the process. “What's going on, Sly?”

“Nothing dangerous, Carm.”

The path ends in a three-way split of sorts. Straight ahead it continues unblocked for maybe a dozen feet before stopping, the hall's end as abrupt as though it were cut with scissors. To the right is a heavy iron door with a large lock; even Murray could not force it open, and it would easily withstand some of Bentley's bombs. There's a barred opening on it; Sly can see through it. “The theater's through here,” he says. “If we can get this door open, we've got another way inside.”

Carmelita's quiet for a moment. “Would that involve stealing?”

“Most likely.”

As Sly turns away from the door, Carmelita says, “Let me think about it first.”

Even here, that makes Sly smile. Carmelita's actually thinking about stealing? That's a first. But he takes a picture of the door, and the unfinished tunnel. The last direction, to the left, is covered by another spiderweb. “An unfinished tunnel, huh?” says Carmelita in his ear, as Sly photographs the last direction. “Wonder what she's doing down here.”

“It doesn't look unfinished,” Sly points out. “It just doesn't go anywhere.”

“Same thing,” Carmelita says, and though Sly shakes his head he doesn't correct her out loud. There is a difference, a very real one, but he's not going to poke at it for secret passages now. Instead, he turns his attention to the spiderweb.

One somewhat more complicated web-cutting minigame later, the hall is clear. Sly steps down it, towards light.

The light turns out to be lights set into the walls at regular intervals further down the hall, each below a large framed picture. Each light illuminates the picture, the placard above it, and two pages of laminated information below; the water at the base of the walls catches bits of the light and glistens like a trapped nightmare.

Sly looks at the first picture and stops where he is. “Carm?”

“I'm coming down there.”

“No, don't!” Sly says at once. He takes out his binoc-u-com and snaps a picture of the picture.

A squint-eyed frog with uneven yellow teeth looks back at Sly through the binoc-u-com. His prison outfit doesn't look good on him; neither do his glazed eyes. If there was any doubt as to his identity, the placard over the picture removes it: in bold capital letters, it proclaims SIR RALEIGH THE FROG for everyone to see.
The information below Sly takes in at a glance. “The left is his history of piracy and how he came to be in The Contessa's prison,” he murmurs. “The right...” Sly gulps audibly. “How much spice was used per treatment session. The flashing light patterns he responded best to. How much gold she got from his fortunes.”

Carmelita says something that sounds very, very rude in Spanish. “Take another picture.”

Sly does, zooming in. Even at the greatest zoom, the player cannot make out most of the text. However, two things are undeniable. Each sheet has a title, stating what's on it, large enough to be read. And of course, the signatures of those in charge of Raleigh's 'treatment'. *Psychologist G. Contessa*, written on the left.

And a second signature, completely illegible, on the right.

“She's not working alone,” says Carmelita.

“That's not Penelope's handwriting,” adds Sly. “Believe me, between Bentley's old blueprints and plans he made with her, the ones I stole so he wouldn't burn anyway, and all those postcards, I've seen it enough to know.” He moves further down the hall, photographing the next picture and information beneath it. Mizz Ruby, this time. Another member of the Fiendish Five; another of the group that took down Sly's father. Muggshott's picture after hers.

“But I recognize it,” says Carmelita. “I can't remember where, but I know I've seen that signature before.”

“She worked with these criminals back when she was still a double agent at Interpol, right?” asks Sly, snapping a photo of a photo of Rajan.

“I suppose that's possible,” Carmelita admits. “I'll check our records. Though that doesn't hold up anymore,” she adds, as Sly sends her a picture of a picture of General Tsao. “He went to jail long after she was gone.”

Sly photographs The Grizz's display and continues down. He's almost at the end of the hall; only two displays left.

The next picture is of Penelope. She's in her yellow jumpsuit, her goggles perched back on her head. “Says here that Penelope invented the time machine with Bentley's help, when it's the opposite,” Sly murmurs. “And that, even with regular treatments, she can't be made to turn against him. Do you think she—“

“Worry about it later, Sly,” says Carmelita.

Sly nods and moves onto the last picture.

Bentley.

He's not in his chair.

There is no placard over his picture, no description of his past. All that appears is a single note: *Proper treatment for this subject has yet to be determined.*

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly stares at the picture, his whole body tense with anger, then tears it off the wall and tosses it into the water below.*
Rather than a slideshow, the camera shows the table the four are sitting around. Four pairs of hands—brown gloves, blue gloves, orange gloves, and spotless white gloves—move around the table as the four talk.

Carmelita:

Okay everyone, synchronize your watches because this is going to get tight. (Every set of hands reveals some sort of timepiece, ranging from Sly's watch, hidden under his gloves, to the pocket watch Thaddeus produces). Bentley’s somewhere in that theater, and the doors open in an hour. We have two goals. The first and most important: locate Bentley and make sure he's safe.

Sly:

That includes his chair, his glasses, and everything else of his. (Sly clenches his hands.) We could get him new glasses, and he could build a new chair, but the only thing we're going to leave The Contessa with is a beating.

Murray:

You got it, chum! (Murray punches one fist into the other hand.) I want to deliver this one myself.

Thaddeus:

(Thaddeus covers Murray's hands with his own.) Hold. We must handle this carefully.

Carmelita:

Stop interrupting, all of you. Our second objective is to destroy The Contessa and everything she came here with, but we can't just barge in. (She brandishes a rolled up piece of paper; the others move their hands out of the way as she slaps it on the table and unrolls it, revealing a rough map of the area.) She knows Bentley's here, so she knows Sly and Murray are; you two come with him. I don't. So only Thaddeus and I can go in the front door.

Sly:

But—
Carmelita:

Quiet down and listen. Thaddeus is known and recognized and expected on opening night.

Thaddeus:

I also always bring a guest, usually a younger person who requires a chaperon to be out of the house. (Thaddeus picks up a fountain pen and sketches Carmelita, adding details to the basic fox image.) Different clothing, a touch of make-up, and a wig; Miss Fox will be a total stranger, no more.

Sly:

You're sure she'll be okay? (He motions wildly with his hands.) The Contessa won't, I don't know, try to hypnotize her or something?

Thaddeus:

(Thaddeus catches one of Sly's hands and holds it.) I swear, she will be safe. Worry more for your own sake.

Carmelita:

I can take care of myself, Sly. Are you two finished?!

Sly and Thaddeus:

(Their hands spring apart) Yes ma'am.

Carmelita:

Good. In any case, security is going to be tighter than anything we've ever seen, but The Contessa will be standing outside to greet incoming guests. (Carmelita circles the theater's entrance with broad strokes of a pen, then draws in rough figures as she continues to talk.) Tanks and guards of all sorts will be around. Sly, Thaddeus and I will distract her and lure her to a spot where you can pickpocket that tunnel key.

Sly:

Wait a second. (Sly makes a time-out signal.) You're going to help me pickpocket someone?
Carmelita:

Don't get used to it, Ringtail. (*Carmelita points at him with the pen.*) This is an emergency situation, remember? Once you've got the key, get back to that secret tunnel. Murray will be waiting for you; if you can't get through that locked door with the key, get back up, and you'll have to find another way in. Murray, once Sly is inside—one way or another—you'll need to grab that tank again and wait; we'll need it for the getaway.

Murray:

Awesome! I am going to **use that tank to make a getaway like no one HAS GET AWAYED BEFORE!** (*He slams his hands on the table, shaking it.*)

Sly:

(*Sly covers Murray's hand with his own.*) Easy there, big guy.

Carmelita:

Once we're inside, the three of us will have different objectives. We'll be in constant radio contact, understand? Sly, you're going to go to the rooms where Bentley was exploring before he vanished. (*Carmelita draws four squares on the map, rough rooms, around that section of the theater.*) Three of them have anchors for that black ball, maybe all four of them; cut the first three you find, but leave the fourth, understand? We have to find Bentley before we sock it to that witch.

Sly:

With **pleasure.**

Carmelita:

Thaddeus, with your disguise skills, you get to go to the party room; that's where everyone's meeting before hand and the actors and musicians will be warming up. Pose as anyone you want—stage hand, costume designer, clothes rack, I don't know and I don't care, it's your specialty. She may have Bentley hiding in plain sight among the actors. (*Carmelita sketches out a drawing of Bentley wearing a fake mustache.*) If he's on enough Spice, he may not be coherent enough to draw attention to himself or get help from the actors. Stay on your toes.

Thaddeus:

If he is there, I will find him.
Carmelita:

I'll take the theater itself. He may be hidden among the audience, watching in a seat with all the others. I have a second job; actually, all of us do. (Carmelita's hands hesitate on the pen, then draw a few stars and a cloud of dust.) We need to scare off the crowd before things get hairy. The Contessa is dangerous, and we don't know what will happen to those people if the theater disappears with them inside it. Destroy seats, break lighting—

Thaddeus:

May I suggest setting fire to the curtain? (He picks up his fountain pen and draws the curtain going up in flames.)

Carmelita:

Only if you can be sure it won't hurt anyone.

Sly:

Holy smokes, you're okay with arson?!

Carmelita:

Shut it, Ringtail! Once we've found Bentley, we'll cut that last spiderweb and get out of there, and I don't care if the whole place goes up in smoke. It'll ruin whatever she's trying to do. Murray, you're on standby. Everyone, keep your binoc-u-com mikes on at all times, and sing out if you find anything or need any help. Everyone ready? (Carmelita puts her hand, palm down, in the center of the table.)

Murray:

Right! (Murray slaps his hand down on top of hers.)

Thaddeus:

Indeed. (Thaddeus places his hand on Murray's).

Sly:

Let's do this. (Sly places his hand on top of the pile.) For Bentley.
HEE: Heist

HEART, AND EAR, AND EYE

Operation: Turtle Rescue

Sly makes his way through the city, from rooftop to rooftop, avoiding every guard and patrol. Below him, arm in arm, travel Carmelita and Thaddeus. Thaddeus uses his cane to walk, leaning as though he needs it for assistance instead of combat; Carmelita holds the umbrella. Every now and then, she fusses with her wig: long, blonde, and so curly it doesn't all fit under their umbrella.

Impeccably dressed flies and mice greet those arriving at the theater. The Contessa herself waits by the door, chatting briefly with particularly famous or rich guests. Carmelita runs a hand through her wig again, then speaks through the binoc-u-com: “You ready, Sly?”

“I'm ready,” Sly says, jumping the street and catching a drainpipe. He settles in position on a small pole holding the name of the play, just below the roof, a place unnoticed by the guards. There are two on the main roof, and several on the ground, all looking out; they must think no one would, or could, stand where he is now.

And under normal circumstances, they may be right: it's 1875, so Tennessee may not have invented the Rail Walk and Rail Slide yet.

Still, that's no reason to be complacent. “You two be careful,” he says, watching as they approach the theater entrance. “We don't know what you're going to find inside.”

“We will be fine, Sly,” Thaddeus assures him. “The two of us will both be in the building; with her jumping skills, and my own maneuverability, should anything go wrong we will reach each other in moments.”

Sly nods, not that they can see him. “Murray, are you in position?”

“I've got the tank!” Murray replies—which both is and isn't an answer. “I'm driving it over now.”

That's all they have time for before Thaddeus and Carmelita reach The Contessa. “My dear lady, you have done wonders.” Thaddeus releases Carmelita's elbow to reach for The Contessa's hand. He kisses it. “Transforming this old building into such a place—truly, your coming was a blessing to the arts.”

The Contessa smiles and takes a step towards Thaddeus, away from the building. “Do I know you?” she asks. “You look... familiar to me.”

Thaddeus releases her hand and straightens. “I'm retired now, madam, but perhaps you know my nephew? He lives in the colonies—I beg your pardon, in the states, in Tennessee. Or, no, you're said to come from further East; my sister moved to Germany a dozen years back.” Thaddeus shakes his head. “If you do know them, I do beg your pardon; I'm something of the white sheep of my family. Unless they've changed in the past few years, their manners are far from desirable.”

The Contessa takes another step towards them, giving Sly room. He drops from his perch and lands soundlessly behind her and relieves her of her wallet. “Do you have a name, then, sir?”

“Thaddeus, madam,” he says, sweeping off his hat. “Thaddeus Cooper. Thirty years as a private detective.”
Sly digs deeper, coming up with a gleaming skeleton key. He makes his way back up a drainpipe as The Contessa says, “Cooper? Yes, I do believe I am... acquainted... with your family. It's nice to know one of you follows a proper order to the world.”

Thaddeus puts his hat back on his head. “Someone has to.”

Sly watches as Thaddeus and Carmelita make their way inside. “Nice work, pal!” says Murray in his head. “Now get over here; I want to know what's down that tunnel.”

“You and me both, buddy,” Sly says, and makes his way off the roof and back through town.

I could describe his journey through the city streets, how Murray pops out of the tank to give Sly a fist bump when he gets to the rift, could tell you all about Sly's second perilous journey through the tunnel of red light and water-filled pits that make stalagmites appear where they're not. But instead, I'm going to tell you all about what Murray's doing while Sly makes his way through the tunnel.

It isn't guard duty, like he's supposed to. As Murray settles in to watch, there's an ominous grinding noise from the direction of the carriage shop. "Hey, Sly?" he asks.

"Yeah, Murray?"

"Will you be okay if I go check something out?"

"Sure," Sly says; there's the faint noise of splashing in the background. "Just keep me updated."

With that, Murray starts driving his tank through the city streets. They're all deserted, not even any guards for him to run over, which is... rather unnerving. No sound but the crunch of the tank's treads on the street, no movement anywhere.

Until he turns the corner to the carriage depot and sees the line of tanks starting to peel out. "Uh, Sly? This could be a problem. The Murray is good, but even he can't take out that many tanks."

"If you destroy the building, no more tanks can come out," says Sly over the binoc-u-com. "Then you can track down the tanks that got out before they can make our lives a misery later."

"Righteous! Building, say your prayers, cause The Murray's got a TANK!"

With that begins, you guessed it, a whole lot of tank fun. Murray takes out the building fast; after the first few shots, cannons appear on top of it and start shooting at him, but dodging them isn't that difficult, and the tanks themselves don't shoot. By the time he's finished, only five tanks have left, all but one of them out of sight.

Tracking down the tanks and taking them down, without getting his own tank destroyed, takes a while. He only has two tanks left when, over his binoc-u-com, he hears Carmelita ask, “Bentley?” After a pause, “Rescuing you. I found Bentley.”

"You did? Awesome!" shouts Murray.

"How is he?" asks Sly, voice full of concern.

"He doesn't look hurt," Carmelita says. "He should be fine once he's away from the lights." There's another pause, long enough for Murray to destroy another tank, before Carmelita continues talking. "Don't worry about it, shell boy. I'll carry you out, since your chair isn't here. Can you hold on to my back?"
"One of us can find his chair," says Sly. "Just take care of him, we'll do the rest!"

"I'll pick him up in my tank as soon as you're clear!" adds Murray, locating the last tank. He destroys it with glee, then turns around to head for the theater and pick-up.

Well, that removes a lot of the mystery of Bentley, but we still have to **REWIND** and jump back to Carmelita and Thaddeus.

Thaddeus stops not far into the main room, where the earlier ball was held and where the orchestra sits now, warming up for the evening. "I do hope Sly will forgive me for this," he remarks to Carmelita, and digs in a pocket. “Go to the theater and begin your search; return here when you are finished. I will intercept as many people as possible and,” he produces a battered, worn, and obviously legitimate police badge, “inform them that they need to leave at the earliest opportunity.”

Carmelita's eyes widen. “Where did you get that?”

“It's mine, my dear,” he says, smiling. “And I may have discussed some inconsequential things with some old friends of mine, who are also in the vicinity. You needn't worry about it.”

Carmelita's jaw drops. "We're doing this legally?!"

"I'm afraid so," he says, with the air of someone admitting a great shame. "Do forgive me; you have all been operating with such secrecy that I was unsure how you'd accept outsiders to this investigation."

A grin breaks out across Carmelita's face. "You're not really retired, are you?"

"A detective's work is never finished," he assures her. "I am not retired, but it serves me well to have people believe it. As it serves my friends to believe you and the others are undercover agents from abroad, and that this woman is wanted abroad for charges that include kidnapping and extortion." Thaddeus’s tail gives an amused whisk. "I didn't even really lie."

"I can't wait to tell Sly about this," Carmelita says, and leaves to head for the seating area.

Play resumes as Thaddeus. He takes in the whole room with a long look, his gaze going from various party goers, to the nearly empty dance floor, to the various statues and decorations. "I need to do something that will cause a large number of people to leave at once," he says, looking around at the various statues and other decorations. And at the orchestra, a dozen people with musical instruments, talking with each other as they warm up. At irregular intervals, one or more of them will stand up to leave and use the bathroom or something, leaving their instruments behind.

Perfect.

Many minor acts of mischief and several silent apologies later, all the strings on the violins have snapped, the trumpeter and saxophonist have started a brawl, and the drummer is trying to explain that he thought the flutes were his drumsticks (they don't appear to believe him). With every moment the orchestra spends in a disastrous musical disarray, more well-dressed dogs and minks and badgers sniff and trail from the room. Only a small portion of them have actually seen Thaddeus's badge.

The room is almost empty when, over the binoc-u-com, Carmelita says, “Rescuing you,” to no one, followed by, “I found Bentley.”

Thaddeus smiles and continues ushering the last people out.

**REWIND**
Carmelita makes her way to a large auditorium, finding the lights already dimmed and the stage lit, though the curtains are still closed. The spotlights aimed at the stage are different colors and move in odd patterns: blue and pink and yellow, squiggles and circles and figure eights that make Carmelita dizzy to watch. She shakes her head and turns her attention to the seats.

The floor slopes so those further away are higher up, but that's where the similarities between this theater and most others end. This one isn't laid out with aisles in set places. Instead, the gaps in the chairs are random: missing chairs for five rows in the center, leading to a solid mass of chairs; the right side, near the center, is missing a row and two columns of chairs in a deformed U shape; a diagonal of missing chairs zigzags up on the left; and other places entirely at random. The balcony sprouts out of the back of the theater, rather than having its own entrance; and there's something about each and every chair that just seems... off.

None of the seats on the ground floor are occupied. From where Carmelita stands, she can't see into the seats on the balcony. She'll have to move to the back of the room to search there.

She's only gotten through a few rows of chairs when the lights go out entirely; she can only see by the glow of the ethereal spotlights on the stage. "The play will now begin," says a voice over the intercom. The door Carmelita came through slams shut on its own.

Carmelita grits her teeth and continues through the rows of chairs, jumping for the clear areas, spots dancing in her vision as she ignores what's going on behind her. Or, mostly ignores; she risks a glance, at one point, to see a very poshly dressed spider, unmistakably of the upper class, and a fly in workman's clothes step out. Their lines echo throughout the room; the live orchestra doesn't seem to be playing. The rich man appears to be offering the fly a job beyond her wildest dreams, riches like she could never imagine doing what she loved, a chance to make things right for her lover at last.

But the very cadence of the words suggests that there's a catch, that if she accepts, she'll never see her lover again. 'Variations on The Spider and the Fly' indeed.

Carmelita's missed her jump twice (and bruised both knees) by the time she makes it to the balcony. There she stops to take in the area. There's laser security up here, dull red and moving; that wouldn't be a problem if the spotlights weren't already making it hard to see. But there's a turtle sitting in the balcony, front and center, staring straight ahead and not moving no matter how much noise Carmelita makes getting there.

By the time she's made it to the row of seats, the first act is finished, the curtains closed once more. Carmelita grabs the turtle and turns them towards her. "Bentley?"

"It's Bentley, all right. He's tied to the chair, missing his glasses "Carmelita? What are you doing here?"

Carmelita growls under her breath and starts undoing the knots holding his arms to the armrests. "Rescuing you," she says, then adds over the binoc-u-com, "I found Bentley."

"You did? Awesome!" shouts Murray.

"How is he?" asks Sly, voice full of concern.

"He doesn't look hurt," Carmelita says, watching him rub his eyes. "He should be fine once he's away from the lights."

"I should've known why you'd be here," Bentley grumbles, rubbing his head. "It's hard to think straight."
"Don't worry about it, shell boy," Carmelita says. "I'll carry you out, since your chair isn't here. Can you hold on to my back?"

"One of us can find his chair," says Sly. "Just take care of him, we'll do the rest!"

"I'll pick him up in my tank as soon as you're clear!" adds Murray.

As Carmelita bends down to help Bentley get on her shoulders, there's an announcement from the stage. "Act Two," the voice purrs. "The owl and the raccoon."

The curtains open.

A dozen tiny metal owls swoop out, red eyes gleaming, and dive for Carmelita.

Carmelita abandons the 'shoulders' plan, grabs Bentley around the shell, and dives sideways, just avoiding the first wave. She stands back up just in time to see a laser wall go up between the front of the balcony and the stage, preventing her from taking Bentley to the door by just jumping down. She's going to have to make her way back the hard way, dodging—and shooting—tiny, bloodthirsty owls with glowing red eyes.

Bentley pops into his shell. "I can't come out," he says, his voice miserable. "Every time those things stare at me my head fuzzes over."

"Don't worry about it," Carmelita says, picking him up. "I can carry you."

She can, but she can't do her mega-jumps while carrying Bentley, and the auto-aim doesn't work when she's shooting one-handed. Time and again, she finds herself setting Bentley down on a nearby chair to do a flurry of shots before picking him up again to struggle through the sprawling chairs and so-called 'corridors' of the room. Over her frantic shots and the mechanical hiss of diving owls come the words of the play.

The words of an owl tricking a raccoon into becoming its next meal, and the raccoon, knowing what the owl is doing, tricking the owl in turn.

The second act of the play must be nearing its end when she reaches the door at last. She sets Bentley down, grabs the handle, and pulls.

Locked.

And it doesn't respond to being shot or kicked.

"Guys, I'm trapped in here," Carmelita says, turning to face the room and the owls once more. The actors on stage have eyes even swirlier than Bentley's; she ignores them as she shoots down owl after owl. "The doors won't open."

REWIND

Sly takes a moment to peer through the bars on the door at the end of the dark stalactite corridor, then slides the key into the keyhole and turns it. The door whispers open; Sly tucks the key back in his leg pouch, then creepes up the slight stairwell, finds the door, and opens it.

It opens into a large, empty room—easily the size of the ballroom where Carmelita and Thaddeus danced—and the walls are patterned in spiderweb motif and hung with orange pennants tipped in white, like the rest of the theater. The area is empty, not even a sound creeping through, but unnerving nonetheless. Light bulbs litter the room's edges, spotlights lay aimed at every wall,
flickering on and off sporadically, just to the outside of a huge hexagonal rug, orange with white corners and a white spiderweb pattern on it. A spiderweb rope goes through it and the floor in the very center, angled downwards. The only places in the room without spotlights or other decorations are the door he just came out of and the door across from it, which is ajar ever so slightly.

“I’d better not touch that spiderweb yet.” Sly mutters to himself. “If I have to leave one untouched until we’ve got Bentley out of here, it's better if it's one that's easy to access.” He pads over to the door and peers through it.

He looks out into a recognizable hallway, with a computer by his door and one other and two metal doors swinging open slightly, scorch marks from Bentley's bombs visible by the handles. The other doors—the one to the costume room and the one to the theater Carmelita's searching—are closed. Sly slips out of the room and to the closest of the metal doors.

The room is filled with piles of junk: torn costumes, broken props, all creating a sort of maze. Sly climbs the piles with ease, finding even more junk on top, including a rather charred area that Bentley must have bombed his way through once. He works his way through the rubble, jumping from one pile of junk to the next with no more effort than Murray would eat a pizza, and finds himself through the room almost at once, looking at a spiderweb cord stretching down through the floor.

Sly reaches in his leg pouch and pulls out the portable laser generator. He flicks it on, then spends precious seconds burning through the rope. When it's cut, it snaps like a whip; he has to leap back to avoid being hit.

One down. And no sign of Bentley yet.

Sly makes his way out of the room and through the second metal door. Lasers, from the ceiling almost to the floor, block his path. Sly drops to the floor and belly-crawls beneath them, but it's safe to stand almost at once. There are more laser grids to low to crawl under, but with spots that he can ninja-spire jump across; moving laser grids that he jumps through, avoiding the lines of light with the ease of long practice; laser walls making laser corridors with occasional moving lines of lasers through them that he slips through, his actions unthinking as breathing. He has to duck and crawl a few more times, but he reaches the second spider rope at last.

As he burns it, tensing for this one to snap, he hears Carmelita over the binoc-u-com. “Bentley?”

Sly sucks in a sharp breath, but keeps his attention on the rope.

"Rescuing you," Carmelita says, then, louder, "I found Bentley."

"You did? Awesome!" shouts Murray.

The rope snaps; Sly jumps back. “How is he?”

"He doesn't look hurt," Carmelita says. "He should be fine once he's away from the lights."

Sly breathes a sigh of relief and starts making his way back through the laser maze. Bentley's safe; now all they need to do is deal with The Contessa.

"Don't worry about it, shell boy," Carmelita says in his ear again. "I'll carry you out, since your chair isn't here. Can you hold on to my back?"

"One of us can find his chair," says Sly, slipping through some moving lasers. "Just take care of him, we'll do the rest!"
"I'll pick him up in my tank as soon as you're clear!" adds Murray.

Carmelita goes quiet again. Sly doesn't blame her: carrying Bentley, and possibly going through guards and security systems, would take a fair amount of concentration. "You have no idea how much better I feel now that Carmelita has Bentley," he remarks to no one.

Thaddeus replies anyway. "I believe I have some inclination," he says. "The last 'guests' are leaving; the only ones remaining in the building are the actors and ourselves."

Sly smiles as he leaves the room and turns to the one locked by a computer. A couple key presses, a trick Bentley taught him before they stole the Fire Stone of India, and the door opens with an audible 'click'. "Good to hear. Any sign of Bentley's chair where you are?"

"None as of yet," says Thaddeus. "I will continue to search."

Sly slips in and finds this room even messier than the last, but the junk is a lot worse: he makes a face and throws wall-hooks onto it to get to the top. "Don't bother," he says when he reaches the top of the first pile. He pulls out his binoc-u-com and zooms in on the spider rope, and a a wheelchair further beyond it, just a little more difficult to reach. "I think I've found it."

With that, Sly makes his way through a spectacular mess. Getting from the door to the spider rope involves jumping and railwalking and wallhooking and even some ninja-spire jumps, but he makes it to the rope, and past it, to the wheelchair. "Looks like everything's still here," Sly says, checking it over; he folds it up and ties it to his back. Then it's back to the spider rope to cut that.

Just as the rope snaps, he hears Carmelita again. "Guys, I'm trapped in here."

Sly's blood runs cold.

"The doors won't open."

"I'm on my way," Sly says. "Just hang on; I may be able to pry open the door backstage."

"I believe I may have a method as well," says Thaddeus, but Sly ignores him. He makes it through the room twice as fast as before, running when he can and taking risks he wouldn't try otherwise, and bursts into the hallway. He races to the stage door, jerks it open, and bounds up the steps.

There's a spiderweb wall between Sly and the stage, keeping him from Carmelita and the owls. The Contessa stands there, facing him, arms folded as she stares him down.

REWIND

"Guys, I'm trapped in here," Carmelita says over the binoc-u-com. "The doors won't open."

Thaddeus turns from the door, where he stood watching the orchestra members leave, to survey the room. His eyes light on the giant owl hanging over the dance floor: huge, heavy, and supported only by rope.

"I'm on my way," Sly says. "Just hang on; I may be able to pry open the door backstage."

"I believe I may have a method as well," says Thaddeus, and for the player's convenience, the ropes supporting the owl gain waypoints. "If I cut those ropes the falling owl should break through the floor--the ceiling of the theater Miss Fox is in."

Without a second thought, Thaddeus gets to work. The floor itself is empty, bare of anything, but
there are pillars supporting the ceiling, each one strung with all sorts of decorations that provide nice handholds to climb his way up. Chandeliers and other items hang from the ceiling, providing a way to the furthest wall, where he should be able to sidle along, back pressed to the wall, to the first rope.

When he cuts that, the statue sways, but doesn't fall. There are two more ropes; two more pillars to climb. Sly speaks in the background, a conversation with someone who isn't here, but Thaddeus pays no attention to the words. They're garbled, indistinct. Most important, they have nothing to do with Carmelita and Bentley.

The next two are cut in much the same way as the first, but the statue still doesn't fall. There's one last rope, directly over the owl, tying it to the ceiling.

A fair bit of acrobatics later, and Thaddeus reaches the owl. Stands on its back. And cuts the rope.

Thaddeus rides that owl as it falls like a daredevil rider at a circus: standing, bent over, waiting for the moment of impact to jolt and adjusting his footing as it breaks through the floor and then through the balcony, wood flying everywhere. When it stops, he stands up straight, turns to Carmelita, removes his hat, and bows, paying absolutely no attention to the diving robot birds after their blood. "I believe it is time for our exit," he says, indicating where a few broken boards have formed a convenient walkway back to the dance room. "If you would please follow me?"

"Now that's how you make an entrance," Carmelita says to Bentley as she makes her way towards him.

"Uh-huh," Bentley says. "Get me to a computer; if that door was locked, Sly may be locked in as well. I can hack the doors open remotely."

"REWRIND"

Sly stares at the Contessa, legs braced, cane at the ready. At last, The Contessa speaks. "I see you have not yet been cured of your criminal tendencies."

Sly twirls his cane in his grip. "My criminal tendencies? And what do you think this is?"

"A way of enriching the arts," she says, "my contribution to history. Come, Cooper, you cannot believe your family alone is deserving of its reputation?"

Sly grits his teeth. "Look, Contessa, we both know who'll win this," he says. "I don't know what Penelope promised you—"

And The Contessa starts to laugh.

"What?" Sly asks, staring at her, relaxing his guard in the face of her complete abandonment to laughter. "What?"

"Oh, my dear boy, you are sorely mistaken," says The Contessa. "Have you paid no attention to my play? The spider and the fly, with the fly so eager to help the spider, their courtship a masterpiece—only to crumble and die, not long after their wedding. Of course, when I did it, it wasn't a fly who was eager."

"You're a monster," Sly growls.

"A monster, am I?" The Contessa asks. "And what are you..." She raises her arms, revealing a pair of knives, "but a fly!"
With that, The Contessa charges at Sly, who dodges and whacks her with his cane. It doesn't do any damage, to his shock; he beat her to a pulp in Prague...

...but then he realizes she's wearing gems, just like Rajan, just like Tsao. One around her neck, and one on her belt. He hasn't been able to destroy them by hand in the past, but he has a hand-held laser...

It takes a while for Sly to trap The Contessa in one of her own webs, but when he does, out comes the laser emitter. And away goes her necklace, shattering like glass under the force of it.

The Contessa leaps up, in a daze, and runs for the hallway. Sly's about to follow when there's a tremendous CRASH from the other side of the curtain. "I believe it is time for our exit," says Thaddeus. "Would you please follow me?"

Sly smiles—Carmelita and Bentley will be all right—and goes after that spider.

She's waiting for him in the hallway. "Come to hear more about the play?" she asks

Sly growls. "Look, Contessa, it's the gems making you do this. If I just—"

"The owl and the raccoon, and what a tribute to your family that is! I even altered the ending, in reward of your, let's say, your chance, lucky encounter."

"Chance?" Sly snarls. "Lucky?!" All thoughts about trying to talk her down and get more information vanish. Sly leaps at her with a snarl. The hallway is more difficult to fight in—their less space to dodge the webs she throws, or her charges with the waving knives—but he traps her in her own webs at last, and destroys the gems on her belt.

The Contessa flees to the room with the web rope Sly hasn't cut yet. Sly follows, furious, though the flickering spotlights make the room a mystery. "Why are you doing this?" he demands, facing off with The Contessa across from the rope (which is jerking as though something on the other end is trying to escape).

"And of course, the mouse and the fox," The Contessa says, taking a step towards him, "where the mouse is tricked into service... and then goes willingly, to protect her lover."

"I don't care about your stupid play," Sly snarls.

"It was futile, like in every other act," The Contessa says. "After all, I got Bentley anyway, and sent copies of his technology to my associate."

Sly goes cold. "What?"

"It's easy to turn someone against a person they haven't seen in months," The Contessa says, "and even to get them to cooperate with us, the poor fool. But did you really think someone with a mind as strong as mine was being controlled? No, my poor naive fool." The Contessa's voice turns even nastier, if that's possible. "I use the gems for strength, for grounding, and for an easy contact point with my partner."

"A partner who's stranded you in time?" Sly scoffs. "Le Paradox is in jail—"

"And you honestly think a peon like that could mastermind something like this?" The Contessa shakes her head. "He was a mere distraction, a tool that worked."

"But, we beat him," Sly points out.
The Contessa growls. "Enough talk, insect! I base all my tales in truth, and soon, I will have a new cautionary tale about you."

The final stage of the fight is harder than the last two; the flickering spotlights on the edges of the room make it difficult to judge where things are. The Contessa is shooting web like you're begging her to do it, and flailing wildly with her knives.

But she doesn't have the gems anymore, so all Sly has to do is whack her at every opportunity.

His maskpiece crackles. "Sly?" asks Bentley. "Sly, are you there?"

"It's good to hear you, Wizard," says Sly.

"Good to hear from you, too. The cops are storming the building," Bentley says. "You'll need to leave through that tunnel you came in by. But you'd better hurry. We'll rendezvous above the tunnel entrance. And cut that rope before you leave!"

"I'm on it," says Sly, hitting the Contessa hard. She barrels against the wall and collapses in a heap.

With that, Sly pulls out the portable laser thing and cuts the rope, then starts a mad dash out of there. Down the stairs, with pulsing waves of black light following him. Down the water-logged hall, with the red fairy lights pulling from their anchors, being sucked down towards the theater. Out into the canyon as a blast of wind sucks everything around him into it, so he's hard-pressed to throw his wall hooks. And when he reaches the ground and stands with his gang, the canyon also disappears.

But Thaddeus is holding out an umbrella, and Bentley is in Murray's arms, and for a moment he just stands there, breathing in deep, gasping breaths, before turning to walk into Carmelita's arms.
Heart, and Ear, and Eye: End

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

(SLY VOICE-OVER)

The four of us retreated back to the safe-house while Thaddeus went to reassure the local cops. Even though several of them had been inside the building when it disappeared, they were all standing on bare ground, in the proper time, after. (Image of Thaddeus shaking the hands of several confused police dogs and badgers). No one seemed to be quite sure what happened, but they accepted it without too much trouble.

My gang and I didn't bother worrying about that. (Sly sets down Bentley's wheelchair and Murray places him in it; Bentley buckles his seat-belt and does a few joyful wheelies.) We were back together again, and that counted for more than any number of police. Even Carmelita seemed to agree. (Carmelita gives Bentley a friendly clasp on the shoulder.) We spent the next day in our safe-house in Victorian England, talking and recovering. (Image of Thaddeus brewing them all tea.) Bentley was back, but he wasn't quite put together yet. He kept getting dazed by bright colors or flashing lights, which made using his laptop a challenge. (Bentley stares into his laptop and starts going swirly-eyed before Murray yanks it out of his hands.) Once he'd recovered enough to run the time machine, we headed back to our time. Thaddeus made us promise to come visit. He even took Carmelita aside for a private talk, though neither of them will tell me what they talked about. (Carmelita climbs into the van with a very smug expression before snuggling up to Sly in the back.)

Carmelita and I returned to Interpol to find Dr. Foxworthy waiting outside Carmelita's office, his head in his hands. (Image of Sly looking shocked while Carmelita guides the older fox to a chair in her office.) He spent the entire time torn between complimenting Inspector Fox on breaking up The Contessa's fledgling spice ring and babbling about how his rehabilitation methods had worked for years and made hundreds of criminals into upstanding citizens; how was he failing now? I ducked out pretty quickly. (Sly closes the door behind him and leans against it, looking at the ceiling.) The Contessa, Rajan, and General Tsao were all among those he rehabilitated, but they were also among our toughest foes. Dr. Foxworthy's methods must not have been enough for them.

Once Bentley fully recovered, we regrouped for a strategy meeting. (Sly, Bentley, Murray, and Carmelita are shown in the safe-house; Sly's binoc-u-com is hooked to Bentley's computer.) The Contessa's words were more than troubling: they were downright scary. If they're true, then whoever's behind this was also funding Le Paradox's attack on my ancestors. And thinking back, The Contessa wasn't the only one good with mind control. (Memories of Miss Decibel float over their heads as they talk.) But whether it's true or not, even the idea that Penelope may not have been in control of her actions has Bentley almost as depressed as when she betrayed us. (Bentley clicks off his laptop and ducks back in his shell.) Whatever's going on, with those gems, time travel, and our old enemies, we need to get to the bottom of it. Before anything else comes back to haunt us.

END OF HEART, AND EAR, AND EYE.
Chapter End Notes

Three areas down, so it's time for another status update.

Area three was the level that ran away from me. I started knowing The Contessa would be there, and then got the idea about Bentley being kidnapped (which would make anything I planned more entertaining), and from there it just continually got... out of hand. Eleven jobs and eighteen total chapters is overwhelming, and I fully admit, I kept calling things the job that wouldn't end. Jobs 6, 7, 9, and 11 all had the honor of going on longer than I thought they would, and longer than I wanted to be writing one job, because things kept happening. I don't think anyone minds.

With that said, don't expect area four to be this long. Granted, I put in a similar 'Oh, this'd be fun!' idea in there, but things there actually went how I planned them. Thank lork.

Some of you may remember my previous author's note, where I gleefully laid out plans to be finished writing this story by the end of the year. Unfortunately, I wrote eight tons during November, and a bit amidst December's craziness, and then January hit and my brain went on vacation. Lots of stress, a sledgehammer of irritation at the job market (I can't tell you how many applications I've sent out at this point, I lost count) and various other Irritating Factors took me mentally out of commission.

It's Feb. 3, I sporadically wrote 381 words today, and that's more than I got all last month, and I am so, so happy.

I've also run out of job titles, so while everything else is done, the next-to-last area doesn't have a heist name. And I have six completed untitled 'jobs' in the final area—well, written, anyway. Not formatted or spellchecked. Including the ones already posted, that's about 100 chapters. Open Office says it's 138,000 words. Sly says something sarcastic. I say this is a freaking book, and a long one, at that.

Thanks for reading. I hope you're enjoying yourself as much as (or more than!) I am. Drop a review to let me know. We'll start area 4 next week.
Now that The Contessa's out of the picture, we need more information. Not just on her, but on her mysterious 'partner'. And the best way we could accomplish that was by splitting up. (Picture of the four of them piling their hands in a circle in a show of solidarity, then going in different directions.)

Murray did another few rounds in demolition derby and the wrestling circuits. (Pictures flash by of Murray driving, wrestling, and eating ice-cream cones five times bigger than his head). With his clean passport and his flawless—and true—excuse for traveling, Murray didn't have any problems getting around. He used that time to find some old friends and see if they had any clue where Penelope might be. (Pictures of Murray meditating with The Guru and in a wrestling match with Panda King). He also visited several of our old haunts (pictures of safe-houses from games 2 and 3 flash by) with no information.

Bentley took his research digital. (Shows Bentley typing away at the computer, data streaming by). The Contessa's Interpol profile was picked apart, her work record pre-Interpol was dissected... and he did the same for both Rajan and Tsao (Data-streams in their images scroll by), looking for any clues about who was behind this. He found a lot of interesting (picture of Rajan running prison bingo) and disturbing things (picture of General Tsao in a tye-dye shirt at a peace march), but nothing that could lead to who was behind this.

Carmelita and I tackled Interpol itself. While she scoured through mountains of old files (picture), took to the streets looking for new evidence (picture), and subtly questioned everyone who'd worked with The Contessa (picture shows several uncomfortable-looking cops eating lunch with Carmelita, who has one hand on her shock pistol)... I spent time with Dr. Foxworthy. (Picture of Sly in a suit, leaning across a desk from Dr. Foxworthy, smiling while Dr. Foxworthy leans back and laughs). Dr. Foxworthy's a graying red fox who's been at Interpol for over thirty years, with thousands of successful rehabilitations; the guy was beside himself that several of his more recent successes had relapsed, and considering retirement. But the guy was also Carmelita's uncle, and half the reason she became a cop in the first place.

Carm and I didn't find anything either, but I have Dr, Foxworthy's approval, so at least something good happened. (Carmelita kisses him on the cheek).

Murray’d just gotten home when the next postcard arrived. (Murray walks in the door, Hawaiian lei on his neck, holding a postcard.) It featured an item of clothing Bentley identified as a Scottish Brat, worn by a cloak and held shut with a pin during the 1400’s. We couldn’t get our hands on clothing from that time without ruining it, but the Museum of London had a number of pins on display... which they wouldn't let Carmelita even look at without a warrant. (Three stern-faced birds shut the door in Carmelita's face as Sly nonchalantly slips something in his pocket.)

She didn't even ask where I got the pin from. (Carmelita pulls on her mask and walks over to Bentley, pointing right at his chest and scowling.) She just informed us that if Bentley got within a mile of a theater without back-up, she'd pull off his shell and beat him with it. I think everything might be getting to her.

But we'll discuss it later. Right now, we have to go back to 1450's Scotland. (Bentley sits in the front seat, doing dozens of calculations with a torn picture of Penelope in front of him; Murray drives;
Carmelita and Sly sit in the back, Carmelita asleep with her head in his lap, Sly with the Thievious Raccoonus open in his hands as he stares out the window.) Maybe this time, we'll finally find out what's going on.

SLY COOPER

And The Gang

In:

FIENDS FROM THE PAST
Fiends From The Past Job 1

FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Job 1: An Island Tour

1450 AD

An Island in Scotland

Shadowy figures move around a dark room. A large, round shape that could only be Murray walks towards one side and pulls open the back door of the van; a small square figure, Bentley, jumps inside. After a moment of irritated mumbling, light pours out the van's back doors and all its windows, so bright Murray jumps backwards, and there's a cry of shock from inside the van: Sly sounds like someone pulled his tail. Bentley wheels himself back out, carrying two fluorescent lamps; one he hooks to the back of the van, the other he carries over to a small table across the room. Carmelita sits there, a steaming mug at her elbow, a shock pistol cleaning kit spread out amidst complex blueprints, a plate full of sandwiches, and a handful of crayons. Sly's cane leans on the chair next to hers, his hat perched on it. By the light of the lamps, it seems there are no windows, the floor is bare boards, and the domed walls and ceiling appear to be dirt. The sound of rushing water fills the whole area, though the room is snug and dry.

Sly emerges from the van, his hat missing, his tail rumpled, rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. He grabs a sandwich and bites into it, sliding into the seat by Carmelita and glaring at Bentley, who rolls his eyes and shoves another mug over to Sly, then turns back to his blueprints. Murray offers the sandwich plate to Bentley, who shakes his head, then Murray eats the rest of the sandwiches.

When Sly's finished with his meal, he pulls on his hat, picks up his cane, and heads out the door. There's a hanging lip over the door, and a steady stream of water—not quite a waterfall, but close—streams down it, keeping Sly from seeing through to the other side, though he could just step through it. He takes a sharp right and squeezes through a gap in the water. From there, it looks like he just walked out of the side of a small hill, one of ten or fifteen scattered around this section of the island; each hill has water streaming out of it somewhere, whether from the top or partway down, cascading over one or three sections before reaching the ground and heading downhill to the beach. If you can call the thing to the left a beach. It would be just as accurate to call it a rocky boulder-strewn cliff that just happens to slope to the water.

Sly climbs to the top of the hill the safehouse is in, avoiding water and a red-eyed terrier who stops his patrolling to scratch. Getting to the top of the hill requires bouncing on a large mushroom near one of the water spouts; from the top of the hill, he has a full view of the area. Several other hills have exposed pipes here and there. In addition to the gentle rise and muddy, water-covered ground in the vicinity, there's a small mountain on the far side of the island, a steep slope reminiscent of the Black Baron's hill but twice as tall, the slope itself covered with spotlights, guards—too far away to make out their species—and so much security that even Sly would hesitate trying to climb it. At the top of that mountain is a tower.

Sly pulls out his binoc-u-com. "Okay, there's gotta be someone from our time here," he says. "Just look at all this!"
"I am, and I find it infinitely fascinating," Bentley says. "We're really gonna have our work cut out for us here, Sly. Even without an in-depth analysis, I can guarantee that, at some point, you're going to have to swim."

Sly focuses his binoc-u-com on one of several clear pools littered around the island. "Ugh, really?"

"Let's not worry about that yet," Bentley says. "Right now, I need recon photos, and lots of them."

"What do you have in mind?"

"Let's start with the area around here," Bentley says. "Don't try for the death hill until you've got a number of photos of the main area, including some of the guards. Once you've done that, make your way up to that tower, and get pictures of all the security in the area."

"Sounds good; I'll get started." Sly tucks away his binoc-u-com and looks around. It may be best to start by the rocky beach and work his way up, literally and figuratively: it's the only way to the water that doesn't involve a cliff. A few flashlight guards wander the beach, going around the larger boulders or strolling along the coast; Sly's jaw drops when he finally sees one clearly. "You have got to be kidding me," he mutters, wall-hooking his way up a boulder so he can take a picture in safety. His reaction is echoed by Bentley. "Is that zombie unicorn wielding a PULSE LASER RIFLE?!"

Sly rubs his ear. "Volume, Bentley! And, see, I was still caught up in the whole 'zombie unicorn' bit." Sly zooms in on the unicorn, who's removed his horn to use it as a back scratcher.

"Oh, well, that's not entirely unexpected. The unicorn is Scotland's national animal, even if it has been extinct for a few hundred years, and summoning zombies won't be illegal until the 1900's." Bentley adjusts his glasses; the unicorn shoves his horn back in his head. "They're not the problem. But pulse laser rifles shoot twice as fast, twice as far, and they really pack a punch. Even Murray'll have a problem with those guys."

"Just what I wanted to hear," Sly mutters, putting his binoc-u-com away. He makes sure to stay well away from all the zombie unicorn guards (ugh, when does anyone ever want to hear that phrase?) as he makes his way past them and to the beach.

A gleam of metal catches his eye along the coast. Sly checks for guards before taking another picture: a small island with some sort of generator sticking out of it. "That shouldn't be in this time period," Bentley confirms. "Carmelita may be able to jump there and check it for us."

The only other thing of note, the whole of the beach, is some conical rocks sticking out of the water near the edges of it; Sly may be able to jump on those to get on the seaside of the cliffs around the island. Or reach those messages in bottles some silly people sent, for Bentley-knows what purpose.

With that done, Sly turns his attention to the rest of the island. Once he's off the rocky beach and back on the grassy slope, feet squishing with all the extra water, he takes a picture of one of the many grassy mounds with water streaming out the top. "Interesting," Bentley says. "They seem to have covered all the buildings with dirt and grass. No windows, so they can't see us, but we'll have to be careful. There's no telling how many guards will come rushing out if we get in a fight."

"Don't you have any good news?" Sly quips, zooming in on another mound and taking a picture of the pipe.

"Interesting," Bentley says. "Based on that water's chemical composition, it's definitely sea water. But there isn't any salt in it. They must be pumping the water up from the sea, and using a desalination process before pumping it back out. But why?"
Sly figures that question doesn't need an answer. He uses some salt blocks as a stairway to get to a 'rooftop' and takes a picture of a red-eyed kilted terrier. "Sly, that guard isn't giving off a heat signature. And he's got fangs! With the Zombie Unicorns running around already, I think it's safe to say the dogs are vampires."

"I haven't dealt with those since Tsao," says Sly, putting away his binoc-u-com.

"Indeed. Keep an eye open for their crypt; we may be able to lower the number of guards around if we destroy it."

Sly tried not to grumble as he kept moving. They hadn't even done anything yet, and already they were looking at a capital-s situation. With italics. And underlined. Though not bolded; that'd be too much. Situation.

With that accomplished, Sly keeps moving, exploring the gently sloping grassy area before the trail of spotlights and security. Right at the base of it, before the grass turns to bare dirt and stone and the rise steepens to doom trail, is an unusually large watery hill, easily twice the size of any other. Two zombie unicorns stand at the entrance. Sly takes a picture of it.

"Sly, my X-ray scanner says that that building is used for some sort of training ground. If we can sneak inside, we may be able to find some useful information."

All right, that may be useful later.

Sly scales the side of that massive thing, jumping off blocks of salt and bouncing off mushrooms, to snap one more picture: the 'path' up the mountain. "That looks more like a death trap than anything else," Bentley confirms. "Not even you can go up that unless we disable some of the security. See if you can find a way around."

That sounds like a plan. Finding a way around takes a while, though. The only real way to do it involves wall-hooking and spire-jumping around the edges of the island, the sea mercilessly churning far below as he skirts the cliffs. Some rough paths seem to be in the cliffside, none going anywhere in particular, each patrolled by vampire terriers. When Sly is behind the island—sheer cliff before him, sea at his back, and way above, the tower—he stops to take a picture. "These cliffs are covered in caves and tunnels," Bentley says. "I'm detecting radio signals, but I can't tell which ones they're coming from. We'll have to investigate them later."

That sounds fun. Sly eyes the cliffs. Right now, he's probably the only one who could reach them. Well, maybe Carmelita, if one of those paths is in jumping reach. Maybe he should teach her to spire jump.

An image rises in his mind, unbidden, of Inspector Fox chasing him down and knowing exactly how to get across the gaps she couldn't jump over, those times he'd had to use them to get away. Sly gulps. Maybe not.

A bit of a scramble up the cliff later, Sly's reached the top of the mountain and base of the tower. This area is patrolled, too, with zombie unicorns swinging their lanterns and terriers trotting here and there and... Sly's jaw drops. "Seriously?" he asks no one, pulling out his binoc-u-com. "It's like they dropped a bad Halloween movie in here." With that, he snaps a picture.

The ghost of a pine marten vanishes when he does so. "Ghosts, too?" asks Bentley. "This person's pulling out all the paranormal security."

"Bentley, does my binoc-u-com still have that special lens we used in Prague?" Sly asks, giving his a
shake.

"The ghost capturing one? Of course; it's a standard feature. Probably the safest way to deal with them, since they resist physical attacks. Cameras or natural forces—fire, water, electricity—will be more effective."

"But, what do we do with them?" Sly holds his binoc-u-com at arm's length and examines it. "It doesn't seem safe, or right, to leave them trapped in these things forever."

"Oh, each binoc-u-com could store a thousand ghosts for weeks, no problem. We'll properly exorcise them later, but I'll show you how to extract the ghost storage compartment when you get back, in case you find a chimney to throw it down."

Sly sighs, but ends the discussion. He dodges through and around the guards, looking for a good vantage point. He finally finds one on top of one of the massive spotlights aimed at death hill. He takes a picture of another spotlight, while he's at it. "Those spotlights make it impossible for any living creature to come up that path undetected," Bentley declares. "But they don't look particularly sturdy."

That's useful to know. With that done, Sly takes two shots of the tower. The first, the area around the tower: the water dripping from this tower seems to have collected in a moat, still and deep and clear enough to see the bottom. "We'll have to cross that to get inside," Bentley confirms.

The second is of the tower itself. It stands straight and tall to the sky, as Rajan's and Tsao's did, but while the height is the same, the outside decorations are largely different. Giant protruding platforms, like a giant's spiral staircase, circle the tower; each is held upright by a single sturdy pillar, as though they may tilt without it. Decorative ropes, covered in orange pennants with white tips—the same ones found in the last two towers—connect stair to stair, struggling to free themselves in the stiff wind.

"That's all the pictures I need," says Bentley. "Head back to the safehouse, and we can start working on a plan."

**JOB COMPLETE**

_Sly spins his cane and poses with it dramatically balanced on one finger, until it wobbles and falls, nearly conking him on the head._
Bentley:

This is a unique situation, made more difficult by the army of the undead. (Pictures of the three types of guards flash by.) There are a lot of things we need to do here, but before anything else, we're going to need some more information.

Carmelita, you're the only one who can reach the smaller islands surrounding this place. (Picture of the island with the strange machinery). There are several of them, each one further out to sea than the last. You should be able to jump from one to the other. I need you to investigate the machinery on it.

Carmelita:

Just tell me what you need to know, and I'll get it done, Bentley.

Sly:

What, no protests?

Carmelita:

This isn't exactly breaking and entering, Ringtail. (Picture of Carmelita breaking and entering in area 3.)

Bentley:

Can we stop the comments? Anyway, while Carmelita's doing that, Sly and Murray will work together to steal a disguise and sneak inside the guard's training ground. (Picture of the largest watery hill). Once inside, Murray, I need you to strike up a conversation with the guards. I wanna ask them a few questions. (Picture of Bentley looking pensive.)

Murray:

Oh, yeah! I am ON IT, chum!
Bentley:

Once we've got some more information, Sly will make his way to the tower. (Picture of the tower.) If you can get across that moat (picture), you should be able to scale the outside until the door midway up. We need to know who, and what, we're up against.

If everything goes well, we'll have a plan for the heist in a few hours.

Thiefnet Computer.

Sly: Smoke Bomb.

Bentley: RC Bombs. Allows all RC equipment, such as cars and helicopters, to drop bombs with the L1 button.

Murray: Aboriginal Ball Form. Sometimes, it takes money to remember things you forgot.

Carmelita: Heat-Seeking Ammo. Just remember, some animals are cold-blooded.
FftP Job 2

FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Job 2: Island Hopping

Carmelita leaves the safe-house and jumps straight onto its roof so she can look around. Nearby areas have terriers and ghosts on them; a lone unicorn circles the safe-house and three other dwellings, moving in an irregular figure-eight pattern. The waypoint she has to reach is a fair bit away, near the edge of the beach. Carmelita takes her time getting there: the 'rooftops' are more like hills, and the constantly rushing water makes it difficult to hear approaching guards.

Getting to the beach makes it easier; the relative flatness makes it easy to see the guard's flashlights from a fair distance away. She stops at one point, noticing Sly from the corner of her eye; she can't ignore the instinct to follow the thief, and watches as he, well, pickpockets the horn right off a unicorn.

But she doesn't stop it, or try to arrest anyone.

Interesting.

In any case, she reaches the spot on the beach without any trouble and pulls out her binoc-u-com. "I already know what I'm doing, Bentley," she says before he can open his mouth. "I'm jumping to those islands and investigating the machinery on it, because it's not supposed to be here."

"Right," says Bentley. "Look Carmelita, we don't know what those things are, or if they're dangerous. Get some pictures and keep your distance."

Carmelita rolls her eyes. "Bentley, I'm an inspector at Interpol. I think I can handle whatever this turns out to be."

"Uh-huh." Bentley adjusts his glasses. "You have been adapting well to working with our gang, but you have your limits. Just think of me as one of your IT guys or those specialists you need to call in."

“What,” asks Carmelita, “Don't you trust me?”

“I don't trust anyone who's had so much training in law enforcement that they reference it or fall back on it whenever they're in a new situation.” Bentley leans forward. “Especially when they're working with thieves. You, personally, I trust not to turn us in, provided we don't commit any modern-day crimes you know about, but that's about it.”

There's a brief moment of silence where Carmelita opens her mouth to respond then closes it, silent.

“In any case, unless you explicitly recognize those machines—which I doubt will happen, but stranger things have occurred—you shouldn't deal with them until we've got more information. And that's why I'm the one in the safe-house. Can you accept that?”

Ears flat to her head, Carmelita mutters, “Yes, Bentley,” then tucks the binoc-u-com away.

The closest small island doesn't have any machinery on it; she leaps to that one, landing with a bounce, and looks around. It's barely more than a rock poking out of the ocean, and she can only take a few steps in any direction. The next island out, with a single stubborn tree growing out of it, looks more promising. With a jump and a flip, she makes it.
And is promptly accosted by ghosts.

Her first instinct, with such close-range targets, is to beat them off her, but that does almost nothing. Shooting them makes them vanish at once, though. These things cannot handle electricity. Or any of her pistol's settings, really.

"Can you get a good picture yet?" asks Bentley in her ear.

Carmelita shakes her head. "Sorry, Bentley, but I'm still way too far away. I'll have to get closer."

The next island is far enough away that Carmelita needs a second high jump... or a bit of height. She leaps up the tree, branch by branch, until she reaches the top. She makes her jump from there.

More ghosts. And, hidden among the rocks, a large switch. There's no other machinery here, no clues as to what it does. She could leave it alone or put down her shock pistol to pull it with both hands.

Or she could roundhouse-kick it, a method she uses to full effect. With a groan of machinery, a narrow metal walkway ratchets out from somewhere under the rocks, seamlessly connecting this island to shore.

Carmelita tries not to think about how it got there. But that's the start of a pattern: as she continues island hopping getting further out to sea, she's continually accosted by ghosts. And every three or four stops, she finds a lever, which creates another path, resulting in a perfect path back to the mainland.

And a lot of ghosts.

But three switches later, she's arrived at the island with the machinery, and the ghosts don't stop. Carmelita has to take the picture of it in between shooting ghosts off of her. Up close, it looks like an old-fashioned mausoleum with gears on it. And a computer by what may be a (closed) entrance.

“Gadzooks!” says Bentley. “That's a ghost generator.”

Carmelita actually laughs. It throws off her aim for a few seconds. “Never would have guessed that, Bentley.”

“It's too tough to destroy from the outside,” Bentley says. “Murray and I will have to come over here later. Head on back to the safe-house. And don't lead any ghosts here, sheesh!

JOB COMPLETE

Carmelita is too busy shooting off ghosts to do a victory pose, and she heads back along the path to shore at a run.
FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Job 3: Who You Calling A Horse?

Sly travels around the island to the place where he first saw a guard. Sure enough, another unicorn is in view, on his rotting patrol route. Sly pulls out his binoc-u-com and focuses on the unicorn. “So, run this by me again,” he says.

“The large grassy hill, er, building is an area where the Unicorn guards go when they're off-shift,” Bentley says, adjusting his glasses. “In addition to chatting and joking with each other, the energy readings indicate there are one or more underground competitions going on. Given their original status as uni equus ferus hornski, and our information needs, our best bet is to disguise Murray as one of them and send him in to participate in a few... hornfights.”

“Horn fights?” Sly asks, zooming in on the unicorn's head. “Wouldn't I be better at that?”

“You're not big enough to pull off the costume,” Bentley says, “and Murray's actually pretty decent; he and... he took lessons from, uh, P-penelope when he wasn't doing demolition derby.”

“And we know she took out Lefwee, and he'd been doing sword fights across the seas for years,” Sly murmurs. "Did he ever win?"

"I don't recall, but he certainly came close. Look Sly, for this to work we need to make the disguise as authentic as possible." Bentley leans in close to the camera. "Murray's using some of our spare costumes to put together a reasonable horse disguise, but you're going to have to get us some items unique to these unicorns."

Sly twirls his cane a couple times. "Okay, what do I need to steal?"

"I'm going to need a jacket, the pants, one of those pulse laser rifles, and a horn."

Sly takes a moment to process this. "When was the last time Murray fit into pants?"

"Focus, Sly."

"Right," Sly says. "I'll have those for you in a jiffy."

With that, Sly puts his binoc-u-com away and looks back at the unicorn guard wandering around. This one seems to have its horn more firmly attached than most, so he works on its pants instead, first clearing them of any coins or valuables like his... horn sharpener?... and then working on the pants themselves. Reaching around without touching the tail and undoing the belt is a tad bit tricky, as is lowering the zipper, but the guy just walks straight out of them after that, leaving Sly with an enormous pair of pants to gather up.

It breaks the laws of physics, but he puts them in his leg pouch. I... I don't even know how to explain that.

With that done, he continues, moving down the beach until he spots another unicorn, this one idly playing with his horn. Sly makes a face. It just seems wrong, to see someone taking their horn out like that in public. And there's so much rotting flesh on this one's head that he can't put it back up there; it dances disturbingly when the guard tries. So the guard sticks his horn in his pocket, where it
wobbles as he walks. Sly has to pickpocket carefully, as the dehorned unicorn keeps taking it out to play with it, rubbing it between his front hooves and muttering about how no one will know he's a unicorn if it doesn't get reattached, about how being hornless diminishes him.

Yeesh.

Sly grabs it and then makes sure to get far, far away. Which is... probably for the best, really. He puts the horn in his thigh pouch, too.

Though not before holding it up to his forehead and snickering to himself.

His next target is circling the safe-house. This zombie unicorn is wearing his jacket open, sparing Sly the trouble. It still takes a few minutes of work to get his jacket off. The thing is so big, Sly could use it as a blanket.

And he puts that in his thigh pouch, too, because what do we need realism for?

He locates the last guard he has to steal from circling the large grassy mound-building they need the disguise to enter. Before Sly gets down to taking the rifle, where it's slung loosely over the unicorn's shoulder, he stops to take out his binoc-u-com and just look at Murray.

Murray's standing on top of the building. It looks like the first step of his disguise was painting himself white; his shirt, belt, and gloves stand out like lasers in the dark. His mask still covers his eyes, but strapped to it is a white snout (calling it a horse's nose would be generous, it looks more like it came off a white pig). A sparkly white feather boa is safety-pinned to the back of his belt for a tail.

All told, it's already a more convincing disguise than the one he used on Rajan. It still drives Sly to shake his head. If anyone but Bentley were telling them it'd work, he'd say they were out of their mind. But... well, it was Bentley. And Bentley isn't wrong very often.

So Sly paces behind that last unicorn until he's distracted, then disconnects one end of the strap. The rifle drops to the ground, strap slithering behind it; the unicorn doesn't notice a thing. Sly picks it up; the gun's so long it stretches from his shoulders to his knees. So of COURSE he puts it in his thigh pouch. That thing is like the TARDIS, I swear.

Still, now that that's taken care of, Sly climbs up to Murray and pulls the disguise out of his pouch. Murray takes it and puts everything on, adjusting his belt to hold up the pants, then frowning. "This feels weird," he says.

"It looks weird," Sly says, studying him. "$I$ can't remember the last time you wore pants."

"These are the first that fit since I was a teenager," Murray says. "$Maybe they'll help my belt stay up." Murray adjusts his mask to make the horn more secure.

Sly... decides not to comment on the whole belt thing. "Do you need me to do anything else? Sneak in after you, or eavesdrop for passwords?"

"Nah. Bentley said the zombies don't have the brains for a password."

Sly laughs. "$I$ guess they wouldn't. See you around, big guy."

Sly runs off, and Murray leaps from the roof. He enters the building and, with the flash of a loading screen, he's inside. And I'm just going to stop there for a minute, because this place is huge.
Around the edges of the building are a variety of restaurants and places for guards to sit and relax; several of them are doing so, mostly unicorns, with the few vampire dogs that can be seen serving at the restaurants. Ramps, leading to a higher level, are evenly spaced around the walls in four locations. The center of the area is a few feet lower, with some sort of... course built in. Unicorns are crowded around the sides, cheering wildly as small teams of unicorns and terriers in matching vests try to steal from each other without being stolen from.

“That looks like fun,” says Murray.

“I bet it is, but you're only one person, Murray. If you want someone to talk to, we'll need to impress them first. Try going upstairs.”

“But there aren't any stairs.”

Bentley's sigh echoes through the maskpiece. “It's a figure of speech. Just go up, Murray.”

“Righteous!”

Murray heads for the nearest ramp, and walks up it. The pants chafe a little, and he adjusts them as he walks. Paint peels off him in places as he walks, giving him a more zombie-like appearance. If rotting flesh were pink, anyway.

Up here is more like it. There are sarsaparilla stands up here, and a few lemonade bars. But there were also several sword fighting rings, with lots of betting going on, and a Unicorn surrounded by a small crowd loudly proclaiming, “I'm the best there is, I am. I can beat anybeast at any fight, horn, sword, or teeth. No one out there can challenge me, that's for sure.”

“Oh yeah?” Murray bursts in, elbowing his way through the crowd. “And what if someone does, huh?”

“Oh, I've got a challenger, do I? Never seen you around here before. If you lose to me, fresh meat, you'll owe me a hundred coins, is that a bargain?”

“It sure enough is!” yells Murray. “And when you lose, you've gotta tell me everything about everything here.”

The crowd chuckles; apparently it's common for newcomers not to know much.

“All right, but I hope you're ready to lose,” says the other unicorn.

Murray gets a quick warm-up round, which familiarizes him with the controls: square is still attack and X is still jump, but the circle button lets him jab straight ahead, and the triangle button lets him guard. The winner is whoever's struck their opponent the most after three minute-long rounds... or whoever beats the other one into submission first.

It takes Murray two rounds.

“I ain't a sore loser, chum,” says the unicorn after, coming over to Murray. “Let me buy you a drink. What'd you like to know, new guy?”

“Well,” says Murray, “what can you tell me about those caves in back of the islands?”

“Not as much as I'd like, I wager,” says the unicorn, walking beside him, tail swinging. “One o'ems where the vampires live, but I don't know which. Can't get close enough to 'em to check. But one o'ems, I'll point it out to you, is where our boss keeps the captives.”
Murray and his new friend share a trough of Sarsaparilla together.
FftP Job 4

FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Job 4: Solid Stop

Sly makes his way back around the island and to the cliffs. There are all sorts of interesting things there: bottles, sparkly items that could be trash or treasure, caves upon caves that could be explored. He avoids a few caves that seem so infested with ghosts an invisible mouse couldn't squeak by undetected, and clambers to the top, pausing there to scan the area for vampires and other equally improbable guards before continuing forward. His stopping point is a rock, not far from the tower, where Bentley's way-point waits for him.

Sly pulls out his binoc-u-com and looks at the waiting tower. “So, I get to climb up that thing?” he asks, inspecting the sturdy wooden pillars holding each platform. “That seems more a job for Murray; he could easily turn that staircase into a ramp.”

“Yes, well...” Bentley straightens his tie. “Unfortunately, there's no current way for Murray to get up there. But there are ways for you to climb.”

Sly refocuses his binoc-u-com on the streamers surrounding the tower, connecting each massive step with orange pennants tipped in white. “I feel like I've seen those before.”

“Identical pennants were in Egypt and the Caribbean,” Bentley says. “The Contessa had a rug with white corners, in a similar pattern. Our enemy has a calling card.”

“It's nowhere near as stylish as mine,” Sly says.

“But significantly more sophisticated.” Bentley grins. “Seeing it emblazons what he already has, rather than announcing what he's taken?”

“Hey...”

“Your objective is to sneak inside the tower and find our enemy. I want to know who's in charge here. If you can, see if you can locate the black-light bomb serving as an anchor. Past experience says it will be in the basement, but it wouldn't hurt to be sure.”

“Oh, I'll check that out.”

“You'll have to swim to get past that moat, Sly. I know you bought not-drowning from Thiefnet; give it a try. And if you can, lower the drawbridge so the rest of us can get in later.”

“All right, I'm on it.”

Sly puts away his binoc-u-com and swims across, then studies the tower a moment more. He can't climb those steps: the gap between each one is taller than he is. But he can climb the gutters along the wall in some places. And ninja-spire jump on some of the tower’s rough edges. And even walk along the ropes the pennants hang from, although they're so steep it keeps making him railslide back down when he's not careful.

All the more fun.

Just like the other two towers, there's a landing halfway up that goes all the way around; there's a
door on it. Just like Tsao's tower, the door is locked down tight. A computer sits next to it, screen
glowing, waiting for a password.

“Hey Bentley, you up for some hacking?”

“Sure, I could use a diversion.”

Or just waiting for Bentley. He'll work just as well, I suppose; all Sly has to do is slap one of his
remote devices on it and Bentley goes to town.

“Hello, Bentley.”

This time, when Bentley hears that electronic voice, he frowns. This was programmed by Penelope,
sure enough, but...did that mean anything? Before now, before England, before The Contessa said
what she did, Bentley would have said no. He would've said Penelope was nothing but trouble, her
words and actions serving only to taunt him and the others.

But now? Now that The Contessa all but told him Penelope was being subjected to spice and
hypnosis and mind-control stones? Now that Penelope is still sending postcards?

Call it a 'maybe'.

“Stay out of the tower, Bentley,” Penelope's mechanical voice whispers as he switches to a speeder
code to hit switches. “She's expecting you.”

Bentley gulps. Well, that's to be expected, really. If all these criminals are working together, it's only
a matter of time before one of them learned the others were going to jail. And why. It doesn't mean
anyone's expecting them now. They haven't done anything noticeable yet.

With a final clatter of keys and a whispered “Watch the skies,” from Penelope, Bentley's gotten the
computer hacked. The door slides open.

“Thanks for the assist,” Sly says. “I'm going in.”

“Be careful, Sly,” Bentley says. Maybe Penelope is getting to him.

Sly goes in, but stops short. The area inside is just one room, unlike Rajan's tower; it's empty, unlike
General Tsao's. A staircase leading down is on one side, similar to both. Different from them,
though, is that there isn't a rope ladder leading further up, the trapdoor sealed. Instead, there's a large
impressive door on the far wall, marked STAIRS UP. FIELD ROOM. EXPERIMENTATION.

There is absolutely no way Sly's getting in there. To the left of the door is one very heavy switch. To
the right of it are a series of targets. Opening the door will require at least two people.

Since Sly can't go up, he decides to go down. Vampire terriers stand at guard platforms every ten or
twenty steps, but they're all looking down. Getting to the bottom is an exercise in patience, quiet
take-downs, and pickpocketing. It doesn't take long. But Sly stops at the last platform before the
floor.

There's another staircase heading further down, sure enough. But walking in lazy circles around and
around the bottom of the tower are three large alligators, spaced well apart. Not even the sentient
sort; no, these massive things stroll lazily on all fours, tails dragging behind them, as though waiting
for the world outside to turn into the swamp they love before leaving.

And with all the water out there, there's actually a chance it'll happen.
Bentley speaks in Sly's ear. “They don't have very good eyesight. If you stay right behind one, the other three won't see you. Just don't step on its tail.”

That seems like good advice to Sly. He takes it, slipping down the stairs like a shadow and ghosting behind one of the alligators. He stays there, just missing the thing's tail again and again, until he can reach the far staircase and remove himself from sight entirely. Though, now that he's on it, calling it a 'staircase' isn't quite accurate. It's crumbled and in such ill repair that Sly has to resort to pressing himself against the wall and easing his way down sideways. In some places, he has to jump from wall to wall while doing so.

At last, the staircase opens up. Unlike Rajan's booby-trapped monstrosity, or Tsao's soup, the base of this tower is a single room. The glowing black light ball pulses in the center.

If there are ropes, they're encased in the four solid pillars of rock, each in the right place. “Bentley,” says Sly, “I don't think we can get through that without some help.”

“You may be right,” says Bentley. “Do you see the drawbridge control switch anywhere?”

“Um...” Sly eyes the room. “Nope. Nothing.”

“Drat. Come on back to the safe-house. I really need to think about this one.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly whacks one stone pillar with his cane and has it bounce off, vibrating from the force.*
FftP Job 5

FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Job 5: Captive Cavern

Sly climbs around behind the island and balances on some rocks there while he pulls out his binoc-u-com. "Please say you don't want me to check every cave back here," he says, focusing on the well-covered cliff face. "It would take me all night just to get inside all of them. No way could I look around."

"You don't have to." Bentley adjusts his glasses. "Murray's informant mentioned some resistance from people on nearby islands who came to investigate. They're being held in that cave." A way point appears, pointing to an opening about halfway up. "We can't tell anyone we're from the future, of course, but we can certainly free anyone wrongfully imprisoned. And maybe they'll have some information for us."

"That sounds good to me." Sly puts his binoc-u-com away and starts making his way up the cliff. It's hard to get to the specific cave he wants, almost as hard, maybe harder, than it was to get to the top to begin with. There's no clear path to the cave, so he finds himself climbing to higher locations and trying to paraglide down; he can't throw wall-hooks close enough to make a difference, not when he's hanging off others just to get close.

Several impolite thoughts later, Sly's made it into the cave. He takes a moment to brush off his hat before going past the entryway. It's almost black in there, and he feels his way ahead with his cane as it goes forward, turns a corner, and lights up all at once. Spotlights light the way, moving at fixed intervals, the only light source something that has to be dodged around to continue.

Not a problem. Sly's been doing this for years.

Past the spotlights come laser security. The glow of the lasers illuminates a straight path, the lasers themselves a complicated mess of obstacles that would be a nightmare to traverse. Good thing they don't quite reach the floor. Granted, Sly has to press his ears against his head and keep his tail as low as it'll go, but he's crawled on his belly more than once in the past.

And this is cleaner than Jean Bison's sawmill, too.

Once he's through, the hall twists a little, purple candles lighting the way, standing tall and true by the walls. They lead him to a very sturdy heavy metal door, dented towards him in a dozen places as though someone were trying to break through it, and almost succeeding. Next to the door is a computer, keeping it locked and closed.

Mounted over the door, waiting for someone to notice it, is a large stone cane.

Sly stares at it. "Bentley?" he says. "Are you seeing this?"

"I am." Bentley sounds much calmer than Sly. "Better let me hack the door before you take it down; it looks heavy. If you drop it, it could break the computer, and then there's no way we'd get that door open."

Sly nods, but doesn't respond out loud. He digs into a pocket and pulls out the remote hacking
device, slaps it on the computer.

Bentley doesn't need any encouragement to get to work.

"Hello, Bentley."

Not that he doesn't get some. Every computer he hacks, every job they do, is one step closer to finding Penelope. Boy, does he have questions for her. Questions like 'Why are there people going back in time again?' Like 'Why is everyone we've encountered an enemy we faced before?' Like... 'Would you have betrayed us if you had a choice?'

"You should be more careful, Bentley."

But speculating about it isn't going to help anyone, or anything. It just serves as a distraction.

No use fretting about it, though. This job calls for his panzer code. Brute force isn't often the way to go with Penelope's security, but right now it's about the only thing that'll work.

"Get what you need and leave, Bentley," Penelope urges him through the computer.

Bentley raises his eyebrows. Does he really think he'll leave when the others are here? Or does she want them all to leave? Or is this just another trick?

There are too many possibilities, and switching back and forth between panzer and shell code as he takes down coded walls and unlocks databases leaves no time for debate.

"Make sure you watch the skies," it warns when he finishes.

Bentley heaves a sigh of relief. "Okay Sly, the door should be opening now." As he speaks, the door slides seamlessly upwards, vanishing into the top of the doorway.

Sly doesn't hesitate a moment before jumping up and pulling the massive stone cane off the wall... and promptly dropping it. The floor cracks. "Oof, this weighs a ton."

"Maybe you should leave it, pick it up on your way out?"

"That's not happening." Sly picks the thing up, cautiously this time, and ties it to his back. "I won't be able to run or double jump while carrying this thing, but I can't leave it behind. It might be needed."

Bentley sighs, but doesn't protest as Sly creeps through the door. More spotlights and laser security wait for him there; with his movement impeded, he has to time his actions more carefully to avoid being seen. It's all very exciting. Only years of training in being quiet while on a job keeps him from laughing about it all.

When he's past it, he's glad he was quiet. The tunnel opens up into a large room, with purple candles scattered throughout. Vampire terriers patrol throughout, keeping an eye on everything. In the center, surrounded by a purple-glowing force field, stands a raccoon. Tall and heavily muscled, this guy looks like he could bench press Murray. He's shirtless, probably because he can't get a shirt to fit over his immense arm muscles; the opposite of Murray's pants problem. A long sash goes over one shoulder, like a single suspender, with a raccoon mask hooked to it midway up his chest. The sash seems to be holding up his kilt. His hat, or helmet, or whatever, leaves his large ears free but dangles in the back.

Slaigh MacCooper, strongest of the Cooper Clan, locks eyes with Sly from across the room and
Sly smirks, crossing his arms. He jerks his head as though to ask, 'What are you waiting for?'

Sly blinks, then uses his hands to sketch an outline of the force field around Slaigh.

Slaigh rolls his eyes, bares his teeth, and points to the nearest candle.

All right then.

Keeping out of sight in a room empty of all but guards and candles as he puts out said candles takes finesse. It takes skill. It takes Slaigh tapping his foot and heaving heavy sighs at how long this is taking. Sly's cheeks burn. Okay, he may be moving slower than usual, but he's carrying Slaigh's cane! And he's rescuing the guy. You think he'd get some slack.

At least none of the guards have noticed he's there by the time the last candle is blown out. Slaigh grins outright and lets loose a battle yell.

Every guard in the room turns towards him. He grins a very nasty smile and says, "I'll give ye all one chance to run."

The stampede of fleeing guards nearly flattens Sly. He lets them go. "Uh, hi. We haven't met, but—"

"Oy, lad. Ye must be Sli Cooper." Slaigh speaks with an accent, altering Sly's name to sound more like his own.

"Right. And you're Slaigh MacCooper, aren't you?" Sly grins. "It's an honor to meet you, sir."

Sly holds out his hand, only to be swept up in a bone-crushing hug to rival one of Murray's. "It's always a pleasure to meet family, me lad," says Slaigh, as Sly's feet dangle and he see stars. "And ye did a fine bit of work there, once ye got started. But a bit slow about it, weren't ye?"

"I... uh..." Sly manages to squeeze out.

"Still, a fine job of it all." Slaigh sets him down at last, and Sly wheezes in air. "So the howlin' bampot that built this tower's one o' ye's enemies?"

"Probably," Sly says. "We haven't actually seen them yet."

"Ye haven't actually—what in the blue blazes has yer lot been doing?" The big man cries. "Sitting on yer bums in the meadow?"

"Uh...." It's not often we see Sly speechless, but boy, is he here. "I got your cane."

"Well, thanks fer small favors." Sly takes the cane off his back and Slaigh hoists it one-handed. "Don't get me wrong, me lad, you've done a fine job, but..." Slaigh swings his cane over one shoulder. "Ach, I suppose none of us be perfect. Lead on, lad; there must be places for us to be."

"...Right."

JOB COMPLETE

Sly starts a victory pose, but Slaigh walks by, hooks the back of Sly's shirt with his cane—maybe by accident—and tows him off.
FFtP: Slaigh's Tail and Slideshow 2

FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Slaigh's Tail AND Slideshow 2

Sly Voice-Over

We regrouped with the others back at the safe-house (Slaigh bursts into the room with a huge grin on his face and immediately stops and turns to the door; Sly drags through it, panting, and flops on the floor. Slaigh picks him up and deposits him in a chair.) Since Thaddeus told us about the book, we knew how he knew about us, and he already had a decent idea that we'd only be here if someone from the future was trying to mess with things. All that was left was figuring out who and why.

And introductions. (Slaigh attempts to give Bentley a hug, only to be fended off with every mechanical arm at Bentley's disposal.)

Eventually, everything was settled and Slaigh stopped arm-wrestling Murray long enough to discuss what was going on. (Murray massages his arm as everyone sits around a table. Slaigh stands up and starts gesturing as he talks.) Slaigh was a Scottish Baron, and a lot better than most: the people who lived on his land still helped him plow his fields, but he was known for going down and helping them out, and he always helped care for the sheep. He often took his boat on long voyages that always ended with him returning and sharing his newfound riches of money and food with his people. (Images of boats, thefts on other shores, and the Scottish peasants float by as he speaks.) In recent weeks, they brought several reports of odd things washing up on shore: dead things that squirmed as though alive, broken pieces of ships, and other unrecognizable items. (Slaigh holds up a modern-day portable laser generator, only to have Bentley snatch it from his hands. Slaigh grins and pulls out three more.)

Slaigh did the only thing he could: he got in his boat and started searching for the source of the problem. (The screen shows Slaigh sailing along in a flashback.) He knew this was an uninhabited island, so when he saw the tower, he came at once. He... didn't get far. (Slaigh jumps out of his boat, pulls it partway onto shore, and is immediately surrounded by guards as the flashback ends.)

Murray offered to find Slaigh's boat so he could leave, but he wasn't having it. (Slaigh stands up and swings his cane.) He's a Cooper, I'm a Cooper, he's going to help. I can't say I'm surprised.
Bentley:

Our jobs so far have been a rousing success. We have freed all of this person's prisoners (Image of Slaigh in the force field) and gained valuable intelligence about how they're working. We have yet to identify exactly who we're up against, however.

Slaigh:

I just can't understand it. How can a group with as much talent as yer lot not know the simple stuff? (Picture of Murray horn fighting.)

Carmelita:

Never put me in the same category as they are. Ever. (Image of Carmelita chasing Sly.)

Bentley:

Yes, well, we don't need to know who we're against to take the next steps. Sly may not have made it through that door (picture of the inside of the tower ) but he did learn it'll take numerous people to open. Before we can get through there and take this person down, we need to thin their defenses.

Sly, you're up first. In addition to Slaigh's location, Murray learned the vampire general would be visiting soon. (Image of an old terrier with a large white mustache.) Tail him without being seen; he should lead us to the location of their crypt. Once the crypt has been discovered, you and Slaigh will need to work together to destroy it. (Picture of Sly and Slaigh standing side-by-side, canes over their shoulders, in identical poses.)

Sly:

That shouldn't be a problem.

Bentley:

If my calculations are correct, without their crypt, we'll see fewer and fewer vampires. It may cut patrols in half.

While you're doing that, the rest of us will be busy with the ghosts. (Image of Murray and Carmelita standing together looking... rather out of place. ) Destroying that will significantly decrease the ghost population.

Murray:

Oh yeah! Ghosts, it's time to be DE-HAUNTED by... THE MURRAY.
Bentley:

...Okay. Between the lack of ghosts and the vampires, we'll be left with few guards other than the zombie unicorns (picture), and their movements are rather... limited. I'll load a few grapple-cams into my RC truck and pilot it up the death slope, then take out the spotlights. (Image of the very well guarded path up the mountain). With the spotlights gone, all of us will be able to make our way to the tower at will.

Once we pull off all these jobs, we'll be ready for the heist. (Picture of the tower.)


Thiefnet Computer

Sly: Rail Sprint.

Bentley: Security Breech. Plant this, then pull the trigger: guards will think an alarm's going off and come running!
FftP Job 6

FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Job 6: Fangs For The Memories

Sly leaves the safe-house and clambers to the top of the safe-house to look around. The way point he wants is across from the place where Murray had a sword fight; he makes his way towards it.

As he travels, he hears Bentley in his ear. "Sly, all the water coming from all the houses is making this place a muddy mess. If you leave footprints, guards may be able to follow them."

"Not to mention this makes it harder to run," Sly grumbles. He stays to the scattered rocks and blocks of salt when he can, or the sides of the house-mounds without water streaming down them. Or he walks in the water, but that's cold and uncomfortable. Not to mention the water's deeper than it was when he was rescuing Slaigh.

He hopes they finish with this before the entire gang needs to swim to navigate.

He climbs onto a roof to reach the way point and shakes water out of his shoes before pulling out his binoc-u-com. "So, what do I need to do here?" As he speaks, someone comes out of the sword fighting house.

"Sly, do you see that vampire?" Sly zooms his binoc-u-com in on a terrier with a mustache. "That's General Drak. He doesn't do regular patrols; he just checks on his men, then returns to the vampire crypts."

"Wow, what a life," Sly says, keeping tabs on the guy as he starts to walk. "You want me to follow him?"

"Yep. Tail him without being seen. Once we know where the vampire's crypt is, we can destroy it. That'll get rid of most of their reserves, and leave us with fewer guards to deal with."

"Not to mention restoring the laws of nature." Sly tucks his binoc-u-com back in his pouch. "I'm on it."

Without another word, Sly starts following General Drak. General Drak doesn't have his own personal set of guards, like the Contessa did, but that doesn't mean this is easy. Under normal circumstances, Sly wouldn't have any trouble. Sure, there are guard patrols around. Sure, the guy stops and checks behind him and even backtracks now and then. And yes, every now and then he goes over a building, not around it. But Sly's dealt with all that before. None of that would be an issue.

No, the problem is the thrice-cursed stinking mud. Every time a patrolling guard sees so much as half a boot print they sound the alarm and start to search for the boot print's owner, and every time General Drak comes to help. That means three guards, and the general, trying to find him. And the boot prints take time to fade, even with the rush of water around. Sly's sometimes followed the guy two streets away when a vampire cries the alarm and he has to hide before General Drak runs to investigate.

By the time the general's reached rock beach, Sly swears he has a headache coming on. He stays back, as far as he can, but he's still close enough to see when the guy shakes his head and jumps to one of the partial cliff paths.
Sly bites back a growl and ninja-spire jumps out to sea, where he watches the guy walk partway up one cliff side path before jumping to another. Sly wallhooks his way up, grabs onto hook-like rocks, and stays off the paths himself; with the amount of backtracking and randomness this guy does, landing on any of them would almost certainly get him caught. Not that he doesn't (still) have to be careful.

He has his back pressed to the wall, inching sideways across it, when General Drak lands on the partial path just a few feet to his right. Sly drops at once, grabbing onto a hook a few feet below and staring up.

General Drak does a cursory check left and right, then nods and makes his way into a cave near the end of the path, about three-quarters of the way up the mountain. Sly hoists himself up and follows.

Only to stop short at the first split in the path. A solid wall of ghosts parts for General Drak to walk through, then reforms to guard the way forward. Lasers, spotlights, heck, he could even deal with booby-traps, but this?

Sly pulls out his binoc-u-com and takes several pictures. Over a dozen ghosts vanish into its lens, but there are always more ready to take their place.

“It's no use, Sly. Come on back to the safe-house,” says Bentley in his ear. “We know the crypt is somewhere in this cave. You can explore it after we deal with the ghost generators.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly stands in the job complete screen, still taking photo after photo, ghosts rushing into his camera and vanishing again and again.*
FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Job 7: A Thrown Charge

Carmelita and Murray emerge from the safe-house together, with Murray sputtering as some water drips on his head. The two of them make their way past the patrolling guards to the rocky beach. There, they climb to a boulder and Carmelita pulls out her binoc-u-com. "So, we're taking out that generator, right?" asks Carmelita.

"Right," says Bentley. He adjusts his glasses. "Based on its design, most of its working parts will be located below sea level, but all the ghosts it produces are above water. Ghosts are notoriously difficult to fight."

"That doesn't mean I can't do it, Bentley!" Murray cuts in.

"We need you for other stuff, Murray. Carmelita's going to watch your back while you pry open the ghost generator's entrance; then, she'll stand guard while you go to town on the inside."

"All right; we'll talk after we've gotten that thing open."

Carmelita and Murray tuck their binoc-u-coms away. Play resumes as Carmelita; she leads the way to the beach, and the first of the metal bridges.

Where, of course, they're ambushed by ghosts.

Murray's punches stun them, but can't take them out. Carmelita's shots are fast and furious, carefully not hitting Murray as she takes out everything around him, then clearing the path ahead enough for them to keep moving. The ghosts get more creative as they get closer, coming from behind, dropping from above, once giving them an entire bridge of a breather before rising from beneath the next island's sand.

Murray absolutely did not give a tiny scream of surprise when that happened.

They reach the generator at last. Carmelita keeps off the ghosts (rising from the sea in never-ending waves) while Murray locates three levers and lifts each one over his head.

A door clacks open. Murray and Carmelita both look at it. "Do you think you can fit through that?" Carmelita asks.

"Of course!" Murray boasts, posing. "It'll be just like going down a chimney."

"Are you sure?" Carmelita asks, blasting away ghosts without even looking at them. "It looks awfully small..."

"Fear not! No task is too small for... The Murray."

With a LOADING screen and a lot of grunting, Murray emerges into a small room, the top domed like the top of the ghost generator. Candles, flickering purple out of reach, provide the only light and reveal a steep dirt staircase ahead.

Murray makes his way down it, almost touching the walls on either side, candles lighting the way.
He emerges into a large, empty room—if 'room' is the right description. A path, strewn with rocks and crates, stretches out before him; a gap, too deep to see the bottom in the flickering candle-light, gapes like a bottomless abyss on either side. Out of jumping distance are platforms, holding various machine parts. Water pumped from the sea and into a steam machine; a salt-shaker as big as Murray covering containers creeping around the edges of the room on a conveyor belt; a dozen or more gears that serve no obvious purpose; and several alarms.

"Start by taking out the alarms, Murray," says Bentley in his ear.

"You got it, little buddy," says Murray. With a powerful stomp, he picks up a boulder, and throws it at a nearby alarm.

All at once, the other alarms start blaring. Carmelita's voice crackles in Murray's ear. "Don't know what you just did, but we've got company."

"More ghosts?" asks Murray, taking care of the next alarm.

"Them. AND a stampede of terriers. I can't keep them all out!"

"Focus on the ghosts, Carmelita, Murray can't take those. Murray, you'll just have to deal with the guards that make it to you."

Everybody ready for a brawl on a narrow platform with The Murray, alarms blaring and stuff to throw all around? Of course you are. Ready... and... GO! Thunderflop and punch, pick up whatever's closest—whoops, looks like it's a guard this time, sorry dude—and throw it at the next alarm before charging back into the fray and breaking exactly as many skulls as dared to come down there.

Which, to be fair, is a lot. A WHOLE lot. A few of them even come from further down in the generator, howling the alarm to go along with the blare from the actual alarms, a klaxiconic symphony of destruction.

The Murray thinks the only thing that needs to be added is the triumphant horn section of his own triumph, and with every alarm he takes down, every guard he throws at an alarm, it gets a little bit louder. A little bit stronger. And greater still when he hurls one more guard and the last alarm falls silent.

"Great work, Murray! Now, you can't reach most of those platforms, but you can reach the conveyor belt. Ride it around until you get to your next target."

Murray has to punch three guys off a cliff where they hover a moment, bug-eyed, before looking down and plummeting like stones.

The first stop is the salt-shaker of death. It's... actually shaking literal salt. I have no idea why it's shaking salt, but, there ya go. Murray jumps off the conveyor and onto the platform feeding it salt, where a few punches knocks out the support and a groaning, full-body heave sends it flying. The salt shaker still moves, growing gradually emptier, until Murray picks up one of the hexagonal containers riding the conveyor belts and stuffs it in. Then it explodes in a shower of metal bits and sparks.

"Sweet!" says Murray, punching another few guards that are trying (failing) to follow him as he gets back on the conveyor Riding it a bit further gets him to the steam machine, which is too big to punch, but doesn't handle having a few guards stuffed into it and being thunderflopped very well. Or maybe it does, since he has to do it four times.

"How do you like that, suckas?" Murray demands.
Bentley's voice sounds in his ear, “Excellent! Now, the gears! Carmelita, how are you doing?”

“It's a good thing my shock pistol was fully charged,” she says in Murray's ear as he follows the conveyor belt again. “It's got less than half left. Try to hurry it up, Murray!”

“The Murray will hurry like no one has hurried before!” Murray boasts, rearing back and taking out the first gear with a booming chop. Another falls victim to his thunder fists; the last is victim to a thrown vampire.

“The ghosts have stopped coming,” Carmelita reports as the conveyor dies.

“So have the guards,” Murray says, punching the last few into the abyss. “What now, Bentley?”

“Keep following that conveyor belt; I wanna know where it goes. Carmelita, you stay guarding the entrance. Without the ghosts, I trust you'll be able to keep any unwanted guests from finding Murray?”

Carmelita barks an affirmative as Murray gets back on the conveyor belt and follows along its path. The conveyor, and hexagonal boxes, go through a small gap in the wall; Murray has to bend down and crawl to get through (and how often does he do that?). From there, he enters a maze of twisting passages, all alike.... well, no, he finds himself in a large room full of machinery that's stopped moving completely. It looks like things were being stamped in, or through, or out of the hexagons in places; in others, the pieces were picked up and combined.

Tiny robot birds, half-built, liter the conveyor belt. It continues further, down and into water, heading towards the island with the tower, but not even Sly could fit through that gap. But there's another problem as well: a second conveyor belt. Similar pieces; similar things being done to the things. But the tiny robots being built on them are different.

They're robotic foxes.

And by the second conveyor belt is a computer, gleaming, tantalizing, and so not for Murray to touch.

“That looks like everything,” says Bentley in his ear. “Head on back to the safe-house. At least we'll be prepared when the first robo-foxes attack.

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JOB COMPLETE

Murray gets stuck on his way out of the ghost generator. Carmelita has to grab his arms and pull
This time, when Sly climbs the cliff walls to the vampire caves, he's not alone. Slaigh comes with him, whistling a cheerful tune, sidling along edges and hoisting himself up with more ease than anyone has any right to when wielding a cane that weighs more than Sly.

Slaigh reaches the cave first and leaps in with a booming yell and a landing that shakes the ground. Sly hoists himself in a second later, grinning at the guy's enthusiasm as echoes continue through the cave. “So! Sli, young Cooper, what is our task today?” Slaigh demands.

Sly gestures to the cave with his cane. “Somewhere in here is the vampire crypts. We'll take it out, we halve the guards.”

“Ah! Without those lavvy-heads, we can surely make a mighty blow towards our objectives!” Slaigh says, starting ahead. Sly follows a moment behind. Slaigh turns to walk backwards and says, “Do you have a plan for locating the thing?”

Sly smoothes a laugh. “I kinda just planned to go down hall after hall until something jumped out at me.”

“Jumped out at—are you serious?” Slaigh demands, stopping in his tracks. “You're just going to wander? Without a plan, without a care?”

“Oh, we have a plan,” Sly says, walking past him.

“Good lad,” Slaigh says with a sigh. “I was startin' ta wonder--”

“I plan to search every inch of this place until I find a crypt.”

Sly can't see Slaigh's face, and neither can anyone reading this, but oh, it is glorious. “What are they teachin' young thieves these days?” he asks aloud, as Sly moves on ahead; Slaigh hurries to catch him.

At the first intersection, there are no ghosts; blowing up the generator worked perfectly. Sly stops there and glances at Slaigh. “So, do you think we should split up? Cover more ground?”

Slaigh picks Sly up by the scruff of his neck and pulls him up to eye level. “Are ye crazy, laddy?” he asks. “Ye don't split up in a place like this. There are twists and turns and more passages than sheep on a grassy field!” He gestures wildly with his cane. “Unless ye have a hundred people ta split and split again, which ye dinnae have, ye stick together and keep track o where ya been!”

Sly scratches the back of his head, ears cocked, looking sheepish. “Sorry. So, you got a plan for keeping track?”

Slaigh looks at the ceiling. “Sweet mercies on us all, the lad's a—” he cuts himself off there, seemingly remembering that he still has Sly by the shirt. “Not that I'm blaming ye, lad, ye're a fine thief, it's just—haven't ye learned a thing in yer years?”

“I've learned lots of things,” Sly says, shrugging as much as he can. “Including that sometimes, you
just have to get into the field and do things without knowing the specifics. Could you put me down?"

“Ach, sorry lad.” Slaigh sets Sly on his feet and dusts him off, knocking off Sly's hat and nearly knocking Sly over; Sly puts his hat back on with a grin. “I'll keep the two o'us from getting lost, then.”

With that, play starts. The player controls Sly as they go down passage after passage, looking, searching, sneaking. It's a downright, bone-fide maze, with turns here and there and connecting passages, but every time they come to a turn, Slaigh marks he way they've come from, dragging his heavy stone cane against the floor in an arrow pointing to the exit and an X in the direction they went. When they go in a full circle, emerging from one path into a four-way intersection with an arrow and an X already there, he draws a line connecting the two circling paths.

And on no less than a dozen occasions he tells Sly not to go down there, they've already been that way, ye dozy sheep!

I think Sly's gone back and forth on whether he likes Slaigh or just tolerates him a dozen times before they finally locate the crypt. It looks a bit different than the one back in China. In China, it looked like a natural part of the graveyard it was a part of, albeit a fair bit larger. Here, it looks like a stone sandcastle.

There are vampire terriers all over it, of course. Stupid stinking things. After peeking around a corner at it a few times, Sly turns to Slaigh. “All right, that's our target. Think you can destroy that thing?”

Slaigh smacks his cane into his spare hand. “By holding the square button, I can do a super-powerful two handed swing. It can knock down walls and break boulders. A course it can take down that wee structure.”

“Wee structure?” Sly repeats, but Slaigh is already striding off towards the castle—er, crypt. I'm sorry, did I say 'striding'? I meant 'galloping like a runaway horse while shouting loud enough to echo,' that's more accurate.

What follows is a brawl that would make Murray proud, with Sly taking care of some of the guards but most of it involving Slaigh, as the player, literally hitting vampires so hard it works as a pickpocketing maneuver and occasionally stopping to deliver a massive two-handed blow to the crypt. When it crumbles at last, with a cloud of dust and a scattering of fangs, the two raccoons stand on opposite sides of it, panting.

“I think that went pretty well,” Sly says at last, straightening up. He walks over to Slaigh and claps him on the shoulder. “It's good to know you're good in a fight.”

Slaigh smacks Sly's back in a friendly manner that nearly sends him careening into the collapsed crypt. “Ye ain't so bad yerself, Sli,” says Slaigh. “Things may change between now and ye's time, ay, but it's good ta know some things don't.”

“Couldn't say it better myself,” says Sly.

**JOB COMPLETE**

Sly and Slaigh do identical victory poses, then start making their way back through the maze.
Bentley wheels himself out of the safe-house and through the soggy area. There are distinctly fewer vampires around than there were before, but that welcome change is followed by a less welcome one: alligators. They're not just in the tower now; they're wandering around the island at will, following no discernible patrol route (if that's what they're even doing) but causing havoc all the same. When one lunges at Bentley from inside a waterfall, only quick reflexes and his jet pack keeps him from becoming a snack. Not even the rooftops are safe; they're wet and grassy, too.

Bentley breathes a sigh of relief when he reaches his post: near the base of the spotlight-strewn path, above the routes any of the unicorns will take, and without any water within six feet. He pulls out his binoc-u-com. “This is going to be tricky, Carmelita. Are you sure you've got the coms station under control?”

“This isn't the first time I've done this, Bentley,” says Carmelita. “I've got a handle on the guards. If any of them even look at you funny—or look at you at all, really—I'll know, and I'll send Murray as fast as he can run.”

“That's pretty fast,” Bentley admits. “I just don't want a repeat of... you know.”

“The last time you had a solo mission?” asks Carmelita.

Bentley nods silently. “I know it's illogical. This is a completely different situation. But—”

“Feelings aren't logical,” interrupts Carmelita. “I got your back, Shell Boy. I also have a way point on you, like I did with guards before, and pre-sent to Murray's binoc-u-com.”

That does make him feel better. “Thanks. This is going to be tricky. If I'm absorbed in the job, I may not answer if you ask me—“

“You may not answer,” Carmelita interrupts again, “but if you move from that spot without telling me I'll assume the worst. I've got my eye on you this time, Bentley.”

Part of Bentley feels relieved. The rest of him remembers she's a cop. “Thanks, I think,” he says.

“Don't mention it.”

With that, Bentley puts his binoc-u-com away, and throws out his remote control truck. It lands at the base of the hill below. “While there seem to be a million spotlights, there are really only four; the rest is done with mirrors,” he says as he starts driving up the slope. “If I can get my RC car close enough, I can use it to launch a binoc-u-com and destroy the spotlight, rendering everything it covers much more vulnerable.”

It's a good plan. Unfortunately, there are complications. Bentley has to disguise his car as a box by pressing the L1 button whenever a guard of any sort gets too close. It won't fool the spotlights, which shoot anything and everything—large rocks, unfortunate guards, anything that isn't grass or water—in their path. Avoiding those, without being caught by the guards, takes timing and patience.

It's a good thing Bentley has both of those in spades. He makes it a quarter of the way up the path...
without much effort and launches his first grapple-cam. It latches to the underside of several mirrors, the poles holding the mirrors, and other things before landing directly onto the spotlight and detonating there.

All the spotlight reflections he's already passed by flicker out, and so do a few on the path ahead. “Excellent.” Bentley starts his car again. “Just three more to go.”

There are more guards on this section of the path, and the spotlights move faster, in less predictable patterns. There are a handful of lasers as well... though none of them are low enough to actually detect the car. Bentley drives right under them, parks, and launches another grapple-cam.

Of course, his grapple cam has to dodge the lasers. Having his grappling line burnt through would make it significantly more difficult to move, after all. He has to move his grapple-cam to the next location as soon as he's securely latched. This makes setting up a good path more difficult. It still doesn't take long for him to destroy the second spotlight. The path he just went up flickers into darkness.

“Two more left,” Bentley says as he starts his car again. Now there are guards and spotlights intermingled, watching the same location; Bentley has to wait for the guard to look away and the spotlights to move at the same time. Many of the lasers are low enough to hit the car, now. Bentley has to drive between them with utmost care, whether they're lines he has to drive between like lanes in a road or slowly rotating wheels where he has to move with the safe zone.

And getting the grapple-cam to the third spotlight is downright ridiculous. Getting through the laser security is like getting past the windmill in mini golf—literally. And then it gets worse. “Gadzooks! I can shoot down those missiles with my turret. I just have to tap the R1 button.”

By the time Bentley's blown up the third spotlight, it's obvious SOMEONE'S noticed something. But they didn't tell the guards, because they continue not to notice the moving box. But the missiles going after the car all have to be shot down with the car's turret, which makes everything else an even more... interesting challenge.

“Phew,” Bentley says as the car reaches the top of the mountain and he sends out a grapple-cam. “Just one spotlight left.”

When he says it like that, he makes it sound easy. But it's not. There are lasers and the spotlights and moving targets. There are missiles and and guards. He has to throw two extra grapple-cams after the first one is taken out by a bullet and the second goes haywire after one of the few remaining ghosts hovers through it. But he destroys the spotlight at last.

“All right,” Bentley says. “We're all set up for the heist.”

   JOB COMPLETE

   Bentley pilots his truck back to his chair, picks it up, and does a wheelie.
Bentley:

Finish up your food, everyone, because it's time to plan the heist. While we haven't actually seen the villainous time-traveler this time (picture of death mountain with question marks drawn all around it), we've crippled their security and have a good idea of what's needed inside. It's time for Operation: Bring This Tower Down.

Sly:

Are we actually bringing the tower down?

Bentley:

Close to it. It's clear that we need to take drastic actions before this entire island is turned into a muddy trap. (Picture of all the rivers and increasing amounts of mud). We can deal with this like we've dealt with everything else so far: teamwork and strategy.

First, all of us will need to climb death mountain. Once there, Murray and I will find a spot to wait; if you need RC assistance, or hacking, I'll be on call and Murray can serve as back-up. (Picture of an alcove between two boulders behind the tower.) This is important because, as long as that drawbridge is up, we can't get inside.

Sly, you and Slaigh can swim across, and Carmelita, you can jump it. (Picture of Sly doing the doggy paddle). Once you're by the tower, the three of you can climb up the outside to the door Sly used earlier and let yourselves in. Our previous investigation showed it will take at least two people to get to the top of the tower: One person to raise a heavy lever (picture), and the second to shoot a switch until the door opens. It's possible the door will close as soon as the shooting stops or the lever is dropped (picture), or that you'll be attacked while that's occurring, which is why we have three people.

Carmelita:

I call shooting the switch.

Slaigh:

Aye, lassie, and I'll be lifting that lever.
Sly:

Guess that leaves me on guard duty.

Bentley:

Right. Somewhere up the tower is the drawbridge control switch. One of you three needs to press it to let Murray and I in. (picture of Murray and Bentley entering the tower). We've already seen that the black future-anchor here is reinforced. While I set up bombs on the supports, Murray will join the rest of you in subduing whoever's in charge of this. I want to ask them some questions before we send them back.

Sly:

And if it's Penelope? (picture of Penelope)

Bentley:

We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. Now, I've duplicated the portable laser emitters Sly used against the Contessa in England (picture). We may have to destroy the gems controlling them before we get answers. I'll be giving one to everyone.

We've all got our assignments. If we all play our parts, what could possibly go wrong?

Thiefnet Computer.

*Murray: Breaking Blow. This two-handed hit can send guards flying or break through walls, a variation of one of Slaigh's techniques.*
Sly leaves the safe-house and makes his way to the cliffs around the island, Slaigh and Carmelita flanking him. Slaigh and Sly can climb around the edges, and Carmelita can jump it; it's a longer but safer route than the one Bentley and Murray are taking right now, making their way past lasers and guards up the mountain path. Climbing the side of the mountain is easy for Sly, who can wall-hook his way anywhere; Slaigh moves slower, often pressing himself against the wall and easing himself along narrow ledges to better climbing positions. Carmelita takes the most time, lips pursed as she plans her moves, jumping from ledges to the entrances of caves as she makes her way up.

Despite it all, both groups reach the two boulders in back of the tower at the same time. "Everyone ready?" asks Bentley, adjusting his glasses and tossing a small bomb from one mechanical hand to another. "Shock pistol charged? Binoc-u-coms working?"

"Everything's set, mom," Sly teases. "We'll be fine."

"Famous last words," Bentley mutters, and reaches in a pack on his chair. He pulls out a pile of portable laser emitters and passes them out. "I'll want that back later, Slaigh."

"Aye, lad." Slaigh claps him on the back, nearly making Bentley shoot out of his chair. "Ye can go now."

Bentley and Murray duck between the rocks. Play switches to Slaigh: he, as the player, leads the way to the tower, dodging patrolling unicorns and reaching the moat. There Slaigh stops for a moment: there are now alligators in the water, swimming in slow, lazy circles. "Looks like we'll have to dodge those," murmurs Sly, as Carmelita leaps over.

"Aye, lad," says Slaigh. "You just watch how it's done."

Well, it seems that arrogance is an inherited trait, but Slaigh does swim across with ease, to be joined on the other side by Sly. The three of them climb up the outside of the tower more-or-less together; Carmelita uses her largest leaps while Sly wallhooks his way along and Slaigh climbs various supports. It isn't long before they've all reached the door halfway up.

Slaigh eases the door open, peering inside. Nothing. It's empty, without a guard in sight. The three of them enter together, looking around, watching the stairs for guards. "You're up, Slaigh," says Sly, pointing at the lever he has to lift.

With a groan and much button-mashing, Slaigh lifts the lever overhead and holds it there.

"My turn," says Carmelita, and play switches to her. She switches her bullets to regular rounds and fires at the switch, twice, three times, the door raising ever-so-slightly towards the ceiling with each shot. Smoke comes out as it opens, obscuring the view; behind it glows a pale purple light.

When the door clicks open at last, and the smoke clears, they're not alone. Behind the open door is a staircase. A purple force field, a solid, impenetrable wall, separates the staircase from the floor they stand on. And on that staircase, her green skin tinged a sickly aqua by the light, large gems on her
anklets and in her belly button, stands the unmistakable form of Mizz Ruby.

“Ah-ha ha ha ha ha,” she laughs. “Oh, Sly, did you really think you could get the drop on me?” she asks. “I told you before, I can feel that Cooper vibe a-comin.”

“And I told you that you give me the creeps, lady,” Sly snaps back. “Still frightening your neighbors with zombies? No wonder you don't have any friends.” He swings his cane at the force field, only to have it bounce off; he can’t get through.

Mizz Ruby laughs again and snaps her fingers; the entrance they used seals with a hiss, covered in a new purple force field. The hissing sound doesn't go away; it comes from behind her, joined with a sound of dragging, steadily pounding on the floor. “You would do well to stay out of my business here, Sly. Don't worry, it'll be done soon.”

“You're going to jail before that happens,” snaps Carmelita.

From the stairs behind Mizz Ruby emerge alligators: first one, then a second, lazily making their way forward. “I don’t think I will,” she says. “See you in the next world, Coopers.”

In a rush, play starts up again, as the alligators step through the force field, more following, their obvious intent to eat everyone in the room. Mizz Ruby stands there, laughing, as Sly dodges one's bite and Carmelita shoots it, as well over a dozen tiny robot owls emerge from somewhere overhead and dive bomb them, forcing Slaigh to release the lever and dodge. The door stays open on Mizz Ruby laughing at them, laughing even as she turns to go back up the stairs, but if it weren't for Murray crying “She’s getting away!” over their maskpieces, they wouldn't notice.

They're all too busy fighting for their lives. Slaigh and Sly can deal with the alligators, mostly—well, Slaigh can, at least, but Sly can't do much more than stun them and dodge, and Carmelita's frantic shooting is taking care of the birds without leaving any time or room for anything else. “This is getting serious,” Sly shouts.

“The Murray can't get in to help!”

“This wasn't part of the plan,” cries Bentley. “Try going downstairs. Maybe you can get out the front?”

The retreat down the stairs is frantic and confused, with Sly leading the way and Slaigh covering them, hitting alligators left and right and knocking them out cold, protecting the others, but more keep coming. When they reach the ground floor, they discover the way further down is also blocked by a force field, but the front door isn't. It's just closed.

“Slaigh,” says Sly, “think you can break that down?”

“Of course, Sli, but it'll take me—” Slaigh stops talking to knock out three alligators with one blow.

“We'll give it to you. Carmelita—”

“I'm on it.”

Suddenly, it's on Carmelita and Sly, side by side, to protect Slaigh. Frantic shooting and every offensive ability Sly's ever learned keep them from being overwhelmed, just as Slaigh grunts and groans and works on that door. A time or two he has to stop, turn, and take out the alligators threatening the others, getting out of hand, but he always, always goes back to that door.

With a BANG, it bursts open, the drawbridge blocking it splintering into chunks. One of those
chunks, just big enough to walk on, flies over and lands on the moat. Without another word, Slaigh turns, grabs the other two, and sprints away, dodging enemies like mad and taking the others along for the ride.

**JOB INCOMPLETE**

*The job complete screen shows an empty section of the island, then Slaigh sprints across it, still carrying Sly and Carmelita, in the general direction of the safe-house.*
FftP Slideshow 4

FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Slideshow 4

Bentley:

(\textit{Image of Slaigh sprinting out of the tower, carrying Sly and Carmelita with him.}) As we all know, things... didn't exactly go according to plan.

Slaigh:

Ay, you can say that again! Not only did we lose any surprise we may've ad, but the balmy maroon disgraced us all!

Bentley:

Yes, well, since Mizz Ruby is psychic and can sense us from a distance, we never had the element of surprise. (\textit{Picture of Mizz Ruby from game 1}). Now it's all even. We know about her, she knows about us, but she doesn't know how we work. We can still do this.

Slaigh:

How? Our chances are gone with the—

Sly:

Quiet, Slaigh. If anyone can figure out a way, Bentley can. (\textit{Picture of Bentley breaking Sly out of prison, game 2}.)

Murray:

Oh, yeah! Bentley can come up with anything if he has time to think! (\textit{Picture of Bentley, game 3, planning the assault on the Cooper Vault}.)

Bentley:

And that's exactly what we need now: information.

We got lucky with exactly one thing: the board that bridges the moat is still there. (\textit{Picture of the
piece of the ruined door/drawbridge Slaigh carried Sly and Carmelita across.) This means we can use it to get across. And this time, we'll all be going at once. But first, we need to take out that force field.

Sly, Murray, and I will be putting on disguises and going back into the guards' relaxation building. If we do well in the team tournament, we can use our status to suss out information from the guards. (Picture of the arena with teams of unicorns and dogs trying to steal from each other.) There are still enough guards around that we'll be able to blend in.

Once we know what's going on, we'll be able to destroy the force fields (picture ) and have a second go. And this time, it'll work.

*Thiefnet Computer*

*Carmelita: Confusion Ammo. Make enemies attack each other.*
Sly emerges from the safe-house and grimaces; with all the water around, even their doorway is mud. He hasn't made it more than a few feet outside, splashing through knee-high water, before there's a commotion behind him.

It appears Slaigh has tunneled out another exit to the safe-house where a normal window might be. Carmelita kicks a piece of wood—it looks like a broken-off chair leg—into position as a support and waves him off.

Sly tips his hat at them both and gets out of the water, trying to stay on the rooftops and out of the stream. Almost no vampire terriers remain, though one can still be seen every three or four roofs; the zombie unicorns stay primarily by the beach or on the booby-trapped mountain path, where it's dry. Alligators now patrol the streets, or rather, the streams. Most times only eyes or a tail can be seen, but every now and then Sly spots one that hasn't submerged, waddling along, looking for its chance.

At least with all the water around any footprints he leaves get washed away before guards can notice them.

Not even this much water can wash away the deep wheel tracks Bentley leaves when he has to use his rocket boosters to move his chair, though. Sly grins as he follows them, locating the rest of his gang on the roof of the large building guards use for entertainment. Bentley's wearing a fur hat and fake snout, a tail dangling from behind his wheelchair. He looks like... well, like a turtle wearing a terrible dog costume, really. Murray's wearing his unicorn costume again.

"Have you figured out what competition we're entering?" Sly asks, glancing down at Bentley.

Bentley wrings out his handkerchief and sighs. "It's a teamwork competition, of sorts; you and I will be dressing like vampire terriers." Bentley passes Sly a guard uniform to put on as he continues to speak. "Every team starts with a cart and four balls. I'll be the person in the cart, our last line of defense, trying to protect the balls; that should disguise the wheelchair. Murray will be keeping everyone away from it; and you'll be stealing balls from other carts and putting them in mine."

"Sounds like fun." Sly pulls the guard shirt over his head. "At least it'll be dry in there."

"Most definitely," Bentley agrees.

"This is gonna be AWESOME!" shouts Murray, and with that, the three head inside.

It seems Bentley already signed the three of them up as a team, because as soon as the LOADING screen clears they're in the arena, with a cart in the center marked TRAINING and another team across the arena. "All right, Sly, we have a moment to practice," says Bentley. "Go over to that other cart and try to pickpocket what's in it."

As soon as Sly gets close a terrier pops up, his eyes wild, watching Sly.

"Wait for him to get distracted before you get closer," says Bentley, and it only takes a few seconds before the dog does, turning to look in another direction. Sly sneaks closer and pickpockets one of the balls inside, then darts back to Bentley—his wheelchair disguised as part of the cart—and drops
the ball in. “Excellent! Now, do it again, but this time, don't get caught.” A unicorn guard springs out of the floor and starts moving around. “Remember: each guard can only take out one thief at a time.”

It takes Sly a few moments of maneuvering, but he manages to slip past the guard and get another ball. “Hey, this is kinda fun.”

“The Murray approves!” yells Murray behind him, gleefully socking a nearby terrier in the jaw.

“Swell. Talk to me when you're done practicing, and we can start the real thing.”

Sly doesn’t really need to practice, of course, but he does anyway because of the tone in Bentley’s voice. The tone that says ‘I know you don’t have to but yes, actually, you do’ without actually using the words. The one that says exactly how stressed Bentley is over this whole affair, and his perceived failure earlier, when he didn't know Mizz Ruby was there and that she’d do that.

That’s reason enough for him to spend some extra time making faces behind unicorn and terrier backs as he takes money from their pockets, as well as balls from their carts, and imitates them with a squeaky voice. Even if all it does is make Bentley groan and roll his eyes, Sly can tell it makes him feel better.

With that accomplished, it's time for the competition. Four teams, in a large circular arena, spread out in different sections to start, dozens upon dozens of unicorns cheering and booing from the sidelines, even some betting going on (the Cooper gang are the underdogs). As they wait for the signal, one unicorn cries out, “Hey, that's Murr! The sword fighter!”

Murray grins and waves. “Told ya I'd be back, Horny!”

“A hundred coins on Murr!” shouts Horny, to the laughs and jeers of the others. A countdown appears on screen: 3. 2. 1. STEAL!

And so, the three of them start kicking some tail. And stealing, and guarding, of course.

It is GREAT fun. The tournament takes place over three rounds, it seems, and by the time they get the trophies, well over a dozen unicorns are lining up to congratulate them... mainly because they won a ton of coins off their bets. “I knew ya could do it, Murr!” shouts one unicorn, making his way through the crowd towards them. “Ya got skills. What say I buy you lot a drink?”

“That sounds fine to me,” says Bentley, adjusting his glasses. “Know what I wouldn't like to drink? The moat!”

The unicorn roars with laughter. “Or those cursed scoopers o’ hers down in the crypts, in'it that right?” he says. “Between those and the candles in the ghost grave, it’s a wonder we can get anything done around here!

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly, Bentley, and Murray are steered off to a nearby booth, where Horny the Unicorn gets them each a tankard of sarsaparilla.*
“I will never understand how that fools anyone,” says Carmelita, snickering, as Sly pulls off his uniform.

“Hey, I don't question how, as long as it does,” he says. “You ready to head out?”

“Almost,” she says, checking her shock pistol. Bentley wheels himself through the safe-house, tugging at the fur hat, which seems to be stuck to his head. She lowers her voice. “Keep an eye on him, would you? That ghost generator isn't exactly a safe place.”

“I'll keep an eye on both of you,” Sly murmurs back.

Carmelita rolls her eyes. “Like I can't take care of myself?”


“Fear not, laddie.” Slaigh knocks over the table when he stands up and claps Sly on the shoulder so hard he staggers. “I'll keep an eye on yon bonnie lass.”

“I have no idea what you're saying,” says Sly.

“He's saying he'll keep an eye on me. Which I won't need,” says Carmelita, glaring at Slaigh. She turns her back and heads for the new exit with a scowl. “Come on, Slaigh. We've got some machinery to damage.”

Carmelita doesn't hesitate, leaping out of the safe-house and landing on a nearby rooftop. From there she makes her way from one section of dry ground to another, not pausing for even a second, until she reaches the cliffs and slows enough that Slaigh can catch up to her, splashing and soaked through the fur. He shakes hard, water flying in all directions. “What is 'machinery', lass?”

“I'm not even going to try to explain it,” Carmelita replies, leaping to the nearest platform. She lands without a wobble and looks for another spot. “Somewhere in that vampire crypt will be unnatural structures, and then if I can't figure out what to do with it we contact the others for help, and then we destroy every last speck of it until Mizz Ruby's water system stops flowing.”

Slaigh beats her to the entrance of the vampire cave and snorts. “You and Sli. Don't have a clue where to begin looking—”

“The place where you blew up the vampire crypts seems like a nice start,” Carmelita snaps. “If it's not there, it'll be nearby, where they could keep an eye on it.”

Slaigh stops, his jaw dropping, then starts up again, “Oh, aye, but you narry have a clue of what to do with it—”

“I may not be as brilliant as Bentley is, but I've operated hundreds of computers and other pieces of technology during my career at Interpol, and infiltrated enough criminal lairs to be able to work most pieces of technology.” Carmelita glares at him, hand on her hip. “And before you start any of that 'you must need a man to show you how to destroy it' or some such nonsense, you're only along
because I need a guide.” She turns her back and starts into the cave. “But if you're going to be such a baby about it, then I can do without you.”

She's actually made it to the first intersection before Slaigh catches up and takes the lead. The walk through the tunnels is quiet, with Slaigh getting halfway through a sentence and cutting himself off, and Carmelita ignoring his every effort. There are no guards, no traps. No nothing. Just the sound of footsteps on stone and Slaigh occasionally muttering under his breath, glancing at Carmelita, and looking away.

When they reach the remains of the vampire crypt, Carmelita lengthens her stride and moves past Slaigh. “Remember, Carm, you're looking for a gear,” Sly murmurs in her ear. “Once you find it, turn it three times counterclockwise.”

“I was listening in when that unicorn told you what to do, Sly,” says Carmelita, looking through the debris. She glances back at Slaigh and points to a large stone column that fell over near the crypt's center. “Could you lift this?”

“O'course, lassie,” says Slaigh.

“That's inspector,” snaps Carmelita.

Slaigh hoists the heavy stone column and holds it while Carmelita searches beneath. There. “Inspector, is it? And what sort o’ title is that for a girl? A modern day 'miss'?”

“No,” says Carmelita, twisting the gear. The floor rumbles as she straightens and a staircase forms, leading further down. “It's a title for a high-ranking law enforcement officer.”

“Yer what?” Slaigh demands.

“You heard me. Now come on.”

Slaigh does indeed follow her down the staircase. The large area below is a mix of the modern-day and past. Clear walls, made of something bulletproof at the very least (Carmelita tries) cordon off a zig-zag route down a long, wide room of death. At the far end of it sits a generator, seawater coming into tubes from the bottom and being pumped out the top, machinery whirring; the whole thing is both obviously strong and very susceptible to electricity.

To reach it, the two of them will have to get past some more... ancient traps. You know. Swinging axes. Spikes in the floor. Something that may be a much more lethal version of a barbed-wire fence. Old stuff.

“Ach, this is an easy jaunt,” says Slaigh, strolling past her for once, then glancing back over his shoulder. “Are ye coming?”

“In a moment,” Carmelita says.

Slaigh crosses his arms and ponders her a moment. “If ye're a lawman—lawwoman, or whatnot—then how did you get together with Sli? I mean, sure, several o' the Coopers have been knights and whatnot, but tryin' ta see Sli doin' that is like tryin' ta use wolves ta make wool.”

Carmelita snorts. “I was assigned to his case for years, chasing after him, being flirted with. He faked amnesia for a chance to date me, and is on the force now, for that matter. He's not a bad cop.”

“Oh?”
“He's a good cop, in fact,” Carmelita says, her voice quieter. “And here we are, catching criminals together. But I'm better.”

Slaigh laughs; it bounces off the walls and almost seems to echo. “And he's a better thief, innit he, and you're lookin' at this goin' how in the blue blazes are ya sposed to get through there?”

Seeing Carmelita blush is interesting; the fur on her face darkens a little, but otherwise she stays unchanged. “I'm certain I can figure it out.”

Slaigh chuckles. “But we have ta hurry; innit that what Bintley's always carryin on about?” He turns his back to her and kneels. “Climb aboard.”

“What?”

“Climb. Aboard.” Slaigh doesn't hesitate. “I'll get the two o'us through this sure as water through rocks and ye can put your specialty elsewhere.”

“I don't need to be carried.”

“Who said a blasted thing about need?” Slaigh looks at her over his shoulder. “Ain't I here ta be your guide? Well, climb on and let me guide!”

There's a few moments of silence, neither of them moving, before Carmelita speaks again. “Not a word of this to Sly.”

“Och, a'course not.”

“Or Bentley and Murray.”

“Not on me life.”

“Or anyone.”

“Swear it on me mam's grave. Now get on!”

And Carmelita gets on. Didn't think that would happen.

Play switches to Slaigh as he stands up. Ax-dodging and avoiding stepping on spiked floors is familiar to players from Sly 2. The conversation, as Carmelita says she felt the wind from that ax and Slaigh tells her she worries too much, as Slaigh laughs and dances between spikes for a while until Carmelita pinches one of his ears and threatens to cut it off if he doesn't stop it, as Slaigh advises Carmelita to keep her head down while he crawls under some things and Carmelita speaks half-heard mumbles that may be death threats, is new.

But they reach the far side without any real problems, and Carmelita takes the generator out with a dozen very nice shots. As soon as it stops, the traps flicker and die, the physical ones falling to pieces, and the glass wall-things vanishing.

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Carmelita poses with her gun, only to have Slaigh pick her up and hoist her in the air one-handed, so she's posing in mid-air while standing on his hand.*
Bentley hoists himself out of the safe-house's new exit and makes his way across the... island. With the amount of water around, it's rapidly becoming more of a swamp than anything. He stays to the clear dry places, even though it means using every jump and jet pack upgrade he could possibly invent or buy off thiefnet; even so, by the time he reaches the rocky beach, he has to stop and clear away the mud gumming up his wheels.

Not that the beach is any less wet. Just less muddy. And the water slides through the rocks in some places, not on top of them, leaving clear places to walk. The unicorn guards patrol down here, their flashlights clearly visible, the alligators sticking to the muddy areas, forming a sort of co-existence more than them cooperating.

“Hey Bentley, how ya doing?” asks Sly in his ear.

“Fine,” says Bentley, pausing to take out his binoc-u-com. He zooms in on one of the zombie unicorns. “Is that Horny?”

“I think so. You know, he's really not a bad guy.”

“I wonder if zombies retain the personalities they had when alive.” Bentley adjusts his glasses. “That would make a fascinating field of study.”

“Please tell me you're not going to study it.” Sly's picture in the corner is as horrified as Sly gets.

“Of course not, Sly. That would mean making zombies myself, and you know I don't hold with corrupting the laws of nature like that. Aren't you keeping an eye on Carmelita and Slaigh?”

Sly coughs. “She about tore my head off about that. Besides, they're in the caves now. I can't get a signal; they must be in too deep.”

“Fine.” Bentley puts his binoc-u-com away and wheels his way towards the nearest bridge. Without the ghosts about, getting across it shouldn't be a problem... except for the shadow beneath the bridge as an alligator patrols beneath it, its eyes just poking from the water. Bentley times himself so it never knows he's there, then repeats the process on the next few bridges. The larger islands have guards on them as well, zombie unicorns that look bored to tears. Or to sleep, as some of them are sleeping.

Bentley reaches the entrance to the ghost generator without a hitch. “Okay Sly, I'm heading in. Any sign from the others yet?”

“No. Should I be worried?”

“They can take care of themselves,” says Bentley, and wheels his way inside.

After a brief LOADING screen, Bentley's in. The interior doesn't seem to have changed since Murray's visit, though it is... quieter. And emptier. The conveyor belts still trail the edges of the room, but they appear to have stopped working. No more evil mechanical birds are being made.

Good.
“The candles are controlling the force field, but I should wait to put them out until I'm on my way back,” Bentley decides out loud. “They're the only source of light in here; I'd hate to have to navigate this in pitch blackness.”

You and me both, Bentley.

Navigating the room with Bentley is a bit more difficult than it was with Murray, however. Wheeling Bentley's chair around things is fine, but when he leaps to the conveyor belts, he finds himself wheeling over and getting caught on the containery things that would eventually become robo-birds. The way through the wall the conveyor takes is blocked with one of them, in fact; Bentley has to bomb his way through. Once inside, he looks around at the candles in the room and sighs... only for his attention to be caught by the computer near the back.

Bentley cracks his knuckles and wheels his way over. “Sly, I'm about to do some hacking. If I don't contact you in ten minutes, send Murray.”

“It would be my pleasure.”

With that, Bentley starts his way into the system.

“Hello, Bentley.”

Penelope's work again. Bentley bites his lip as he picks up a key and puts it in the lock, opening his way forward through the databases. She's not here, again. Where is she? WHEN is she? And what, exactly, is going on?

“Don't let Sly in the tower,” Penelope murmurs as Bentley switches code types and shoots around the corner into a very heavily guarded computer room. Anti-virus, firewall, scanners... hoo boy, that place has everything.

“Anyone else can go,” Penelope says, or the computer says for her, “but not him.”

As Bentley works his way down one path and up another, finding his way blocked and backtracking to swap codes yet again, he wonders more. When last they talked, Penelope blamed Sly for corrupting Bentley, for preventing Bentley from being a weapons dealer, focused only on money. If Penelope is in one of those towers, her refusal to see Sly could be a result of that. But if she's being brainwashed...

Does she not want to see Sly because she truly hates him, even as she's helping them? Or is it a further result of brainwashing?

“The doctor is watching,” the computer whispers as Bentley clears the code at last. He scrolls through the information there and sucks in a hard breath.

Sly contacts him. “It's been ten minutes, Bentley.”

“I'm here. Mizz Ruby will be meeting with someone soon; it looks important.”

“Really?”

“Indeed. I'm copying the files for later analysis.” Soon as Bentley's done, he wheels away from the computer and takes out his binoc-u-com. Shots from his darts blow out candle after candle.

He makes his way back to the ghost generator's entrance that way, stopping frequently to blow out more candles, the rooms around him dimming further and further until, at last, he's standing by the
entrance in darkness.

JOB COMPLETE

_Bentley wheels his way back out of the generator room and sneezes in the sunlight._
FftP Slideshow 5

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Slideshow 5: Operation Unwanted Guest

Bentley:

(Picture of the tower) No need for subtlety here. Mizz Ruby knows we're here, but even if she can see the future, she's going to be distracted. It's time for us to take her down and get some real information.

I hacked the computer in the ghost generator (picture), and she's expecting a guest to arrive at midnight and stay for an hour or two; they'll be having a meeting at the top of the tower. Based on what I got from the files I stole (picture of Bentley studying various blueprints and documents), this person is incredibly important to their operation. It may even be whoever's behind it all.

Carmelita:

Then we need to take them down. (Pictures of Carmelita taking down various past villains appear, one after another.)

Bentley:

That would be nice. A few minutes after midnight, we'll make our way into the building. All of us; we're not splitting up for this. (Picture of the whole gang and Slaigh). Murray and I will open the door. Based on my analysis of the last time we were in there (picture), the door will stay open as long as I keep shooting that switch, so the four of you will be able to get through.

Sly:

I don't know, Bentley. Do you really think it's safe to leave you alone in there? (picture of Bentley using his jet pack boosters to flee from robobirds.)

Bentley:

I'll be fine, Sly. In any case, once the lot of you are through, I'll be getting out of that tower as fast as my chair can carry me. (Picture of Bentley running for his life again). I'll head below, where I can set up bombs on the tethers for the black-light time ball. (picture)
Murray:

That is the BEST NAME FOR THAT THING SO FAR!

Bentley:

I quite agree. In any case, while I'm occupied, I'll be close enough to assist if anything goes wrong. The four of you will go upstairs and deal with Mizz Ruby and her 'guest'. (picture of Mizz Ruby being arrested in game 1.) I'd like to ask them a few questions. Murray, if you don't know it already, be sure to learn the Breaking Blow from Thiefnet; I have no doubt it'll come in handy.

That should be everything. We'll move out in a few hours.

Chapter End Notes

Just a heads up: In the past couple months I got a second part-time job (finally) and moved into my own one-bedroom apartment yesterday. The internet person who was supposed to set me up yesterday... didn't. A long series of snafus later, a different company'll be getting me internet by next Monday, the 24th.

I've got some chapters uploaded ahead of time, so updates should continue as scheduled even if I can't get internet as expected. Plus or minus a few hours. But if there's an interruption, well, you know why.
FIENDS FROM THE PAST

Operation: Unwanted Guest

This time, things would be different.

They still split up to climb the mountain, Murray and Bentley up the path while the other three took the safer, more athletic route up the cliffs; they still met up at the twin boulders outside the moat, and Bentley fussed at them all about whether they had everything ready, everything equipped.

But this time, when Sly stands, it's at the head of a gang of five. Bentley and Murray, his friends from childhood, on either side, Carmelita and Slaigh a step behind them. Sly stands with his family, even if only one is actually related to him, and that only by the unbroken thread of time. He takes a step forward. “Let's go.”

Rolling, walking, running, stomping, they follow him. Across the board bridging the moat (taking care to avoid both guards and alligators). Through the, uh, 'doors' Slaigh had broken into smithereens. And into the tower.

The bottom floor is curiously empty, as are the stairs up. Suspiciously so. It wasn't guarded last time, either. “Be careful, everyone,” Bentley says. He looks in all directions, taking out his binoc-u-com to peer further up the stairs. “We don't know what she has up her sleeve, but there's no way it'll be pleasant.”

“Don't worry, shell boy,” Carmelita says. “We're ready for anything.”

The landing with the door is deserted. Murray runs to the lever, straining and grunting to lift it overhead. As soon as it clicks into place, Bentley's working on the other part, firing dart after dart into the target.

The door opens in a jerky motion, rising a little more with every shot. No purple light spills out; the staircase is clear. Sly, Carmelita, and Slaigh step through.

Murray releases the lever and steps back, but as long as Bentley keeps firing, the door stays open. “Go on ahead, Murray,” Bentley says. “I'll be fine back here.”

“You'd better be, little buddy.” Murray claps Bentley on the back, nearly knocking him from his wheelchair, and joins the others. The four of them go up the winding staircase. And up, and up. There is some security here: not guards. Heavy wooden poles, horizontal and embedded into the walls, block their way up. Murray and Slaigh take turn breaking them; the breaking blow Bentley told Murray to use comes in handy. Up and up and up they go. In circles. Until, all of a sudden, they're at the top of the tower.

There are a lot of things to notice about the room at the top of the tower. It's a perfectly round room, to begin with; windows, eight of them, take up almost the entirety of the walls. In the space between the windows, where actual walls stand, dangle orange pennants tipped in white. In the center of the room is a column, with all sorts of machinery embedded in it, for some unknown purpose. Several of the lights are lit, and a sucking sound, as though from a very small vacuum, is coming from somewhere inside.

But Sly, Murray, Carmelita, and Slaigh don't notice any of that. Their attention is on something else.
One of the windows is open. Mizz Ruby stands at it, her back to them. She's speaking to a large owl—a humongous owl, really; even with his silver wings closed he takes up almost the entire window. Razor sharp talons dig into the stone beneath the window, no doubt crumbling it with their power. Not all of the bird is silver, not yet at least; metallic gray feathers mix with tawny brown ones across his body, and his tail is almost completely brown, as is his head, save for a savage looking beak. But it won't be brown forever.

Clockwerk. The owl with a grudge against Sly's family, so much so that he replaced his body with machinery and almost achieved immortality, until Sly killed him. Clockwerk, who killed Sly's parents and dozens of other Coopers through the millennia. Clockwerk, here, and staring at them.

Sly freezes under Clockwerk's stare, his eyes (red now, still red, not yet replaced with mechanical ones) locked with Clockwerk's. And even without the mechanical eyes' hypnotizing ability, Sly can't move.

Mizz Ruby laughs.

And Clockwerk launches himself, talons first, across the room, straight at Sly.

It happens in a moment, in a breath, in a blink. Slaigh tackles Sly out the window.

Clockwerk follows.

Mizz Ruby, bent over with laughter, gasps out, "Now this is the essence of Clockwerk. Thanks, y'all, for helping me get in touch with it."

Murray roars and barrels at Mizz Ruby, knocking her across the room with one punch. "Go!" he yells at Carmelita. "Help Sly!"

So Carmelita, too, jumps out the window.

There's an awful lot happening here, all at once, and all of it is terrible. But let's start things off with a short Rewrite and catch up with Sly, who was just tackled out a window.

It's a very good thing there's no fall damage in Sly games, but just as good that Slaigh is both really strong and a Cooper. Sure, they fall down the island, but as they're falling by the cliffs Slaigh uses his cane to grab a number of protruding rocks and slows his fall as they break, ending by getting a solid grip on one and wall-hooking to solid ground. All the time, he keeps a strong grip on Sly. "Get a hold o'yerself, lad," he says, giving Sly a small shake. "When the bird is around ya can sneak, ya can run, but you can never, ever freeze."

But Sly has clearly frozen. Slaigh jumps from spot to spot, holding Sly in one massive arm and wall-hooking his way down with the other... when Clockwerk appears in the sky, circling, and dives for the wall.

Slaigh drops. He lands just above the water-line and moves as fast as Cooper moves will let him, carrying Sly all the while. Clockwerk strikes, again and again: above him, below him, diving headlong into the cliff side and breaking off rocks to tumble to the water below, sending massive splashes towards the sky. Reaching solid ground—the beach, the tower overhead—is impossible; it's all Slaigh can do to keep dodging, Sly thrown over his shoulder.

One particularly violent blow stuns Clockwerk for a moment. Slaigh seizes the opportunity and leaps past him, into an area he knows well: the cave with the vampire crypt. He moves out of sight and holds Sly by the shoulders, shaking him. "Come on, Sli," Slaigh whispers. "Dinnae tell me the bird's still after your children."

REWIND

“I know, lad,” says Slaigh. “Believe me, after what he did to me mam, I know. But you can’t just stop. He wins, then. And a Cooper never lets that one win, not without making him pay fer every gain until one day he can’t pay anymore and loses.”

That startles a laugh out of Sly, but then there’s a sound from the entrance. Slaigh sets Sly down. “He found us. Go down the path there,” Slaigh nods to the right, “and I will draw him off.”

“Absolutely not,” says Sly. “I’m not leaving you to deal with— with him alone.”

“Ach, lad,” says Slaigh, but a smile creeps across his face. He scoops Sly up again. “Let’s lose him in the tunnels, then.”

And there’s no time to say anything more, just time to run. All of the signs from when they went through here the first time are still in the ground and walls, and the second time; new halls, if there are any, are explored, but no matter where they turn Clockwerk is both just behind them and between them and the exit. Deeper and deeper through the maze they go, the walls shaking around them, tiny stones falling from the ceiling as Clockwerk tries to strike a blow where they would have been were it not for a turn, a dodge, backtracking that’s little more than prayer that he won't find and follow them. But they can't get out.

There’s only one way into or out of the room with the former vampire crypt, and when they reach it, Sly knows it's the end. But Slaigh charges through even so, finding the gear on the floor and turning it, revealing the staircase and the large room below where Carmelita had to be carried. The two of them tumble down the stairs, hearing the bird search for them above, and position themselves in the center of the room.

Sly looks at Slaigh and tightens his grip on his cane. “Time for making him pay?”

Slaigh grins, taking a hold of his cane in both hands. “Let him get closer first, lad; if we can get past him, we can still make it out.”

Sly forces a smile back.

The staircase creaks. There's little light, but even so, Clockwerk's shadow precedes him, taking up the entire room as it looms over the two raccoons. “Remarkable. I never expected to get a pair of Coopers when I gave that person my assistance.” His voice isn't mechanical, not here, not now, but it may as well be; he clips the ends off his words and lays them out without inflection, as though nothing can or will bother him. As though he is more machine inside than he appears to be. “I suppose this will be another pleasant day for me.”

“Come over here and say that, why don'tcha?” Slaigh demands.

Clockwerk is so large the tips of his folded wings brush the ceiling. He takes one step, then another. “Taunts. An ineffective measure the inferior use to make themselves feel superior. The Cooper family always has failed at recognizing when their time has come.”

A third step. A fourth. Sly drops into a fighting stance, readying his grip on his cane. Clockwerk is almost in reach—

Pounding feet from the staircase has Clockwerk turn his head to look, just fast enough that the boot hits him solidly in the beak. The force of the blow knocks him between Sly and Slaigh, past them, against the far wall, where he lays in a small cloud of dust.
"No one touches my criminal."

REWIND

"Oh no, oh no!" Bentley yells over the binoc-u-com, but Murray pays him the barest attention. All his focus is locked on Mizz Ruby.

This wasn't a fight he was meant to have, but it's a fight he's not going to lose. He jumps over Mizz Ruby's tail and uses the breaking blow to get in the first hit she actually reacts to—and what a reaction. She flies back. Murray knows he should use the portable laser emitter Bentley gave him, knows he should be thinking about capturing her and what would Bentley say, but he's Just TOO FREAKING MAD.

"They're okay! They're okay, they just—what? Oh, please don't tell me..."

Mizz Ruby laughs again, throwing voodoo magic at him left and right, but Murray hasn't been champion of underground wrestling circuits around the world to get hit by that.

"Come on, Bentley, think! What can I—gak!"

"Got you! Careful, shell boy, the cliff side's going. What's the plan?"

"I don't know, I don't have enough information! Maybe if... if..."

"If what? Say it already!"

Murray gets hit this time, knocked off his feet by Mizz Ruby's tail, and he gets back up with a roar, holding the laser emitter before he even realizes it, and when he punches her off her feet this time he turns it on and cracks one of her gems to pieces in the process.

"Maybe if... if he's caught up in whatever's going on in that tower, somehow, sending it back to our time might confuse him enough for us to escape. But my bombs can't crack those supports!"

"But Slaigh could," Carmelita says. "I'm going after them. See if you can help Murray."

Duck, dodge, weave, and punch. Murray knows how to handle this; fighting is what he LIVES for. So when Mizz Ruby dives at him, meaning to knock him to the ground for a full-on tussle, Murray jumps and thunderflops her while she's down.

From the stairway comes a commotion, bangs and thundering and groans, but Murray stays focused on the fight. Another few moves, a few good punches, and he knocks Mizz Ruby flying again, leaps on her and destroys a second gem.

With a squeak of wheels on the stairs, Bentley makes his way up. "Come on. Murray! We've got to get to the bottom and get rid of the black-light anchor!"

"But you said—"

"Change of plans."

The two of them pelt down the stairs at full speed, in circle after circle, chased by Mizz Ruby's laughter. The heavy door formerly blocking the stairs has seen about a dozen bombs too many, but as Bentley starts down the next set of stairs Murray bounces off a force field from nowhere. He turns on the spot to see Mizz Ruby's followed him down, a remote control in one hand.

MEANWHILE
“No one touches my criminal.”

Carmelita stands in the center of the floor where Clockwerk was, her shock pistol out and pointed at him, breathing hard. “No one touches my criminal,” she repeats, “but me.”

Through the dust, Clockwerk stirs.

“We need to get out of here,” says Sly.

“No, you need to get out of here,” Carmelita says. “Bentley thinks we’ll confuse him enough for us all to get to safety if we take out the tower, but someone has to keep him pinned or we’re all in for it.”

Sly's tail droops. “Fine. Then I'll stay.”

“Absolutely not.”

“Carm—”

“If you don’t start for those stairs right this instant I will shoot you senseless and make Slaigh carry you out.”

“Which I'll do, lad,” Slaigh says at once, putting a hand on Sly's shoulder. “Come on.”

Sly heaves a sigh that travels from his head to his toes, as Clockwerk stirs behind him, but starts for the stairs. He stops by Carmelita and puts a hand on her arm. “If you need to run, do it. I can handle him.”

“So can I, Ringtail. Now get.”

Slaigh grabs Sly's arm and pulls, towing the smaller raccoon along behind him, as Clockwerk stirs and at least heaves himself from the dust. He turns to Carmelita, his eyes glinting in the dim light. “You will regret ever attempting this.”

“All I'll regret, is if I don't make you cry like the big baby you are.” Carmelita holds steady, her gun trained on him. “One move, and you'll regret it.”

Of course, this is a boss fight, so he moves. Clockwerk is fast and strong and powerful, but he's also at a disadvantage. Underground, in a room scarcely bigger than he is, he can't jump or fly. That means he can't charge or do many of his attacks. He can dive forward and try to peck her with his beak, leaving him vulnerable for a moment; if he gets close enough he can grab her with one talon and squeeze, the air leaving her in desperate gasps and her paws beating against his claws in vain. But the most important thing is one Clockwerk doesn't even consider.

He isn't all metal.

Carmelita’s shots CAN hurt him.

And while her shots to his talons, his wings, his torso, his beak don't seem to do anything... Carmelita’s a good enough shot to go for the eyes.

Clockwerk’s screech when Carmelita takes out his first eye is painful as a dropped microphone turned up to the volume level of a heavy-metal concert. His attacks become wilder, and yet, harder to avoid; with only one eye he can't judge as well, so he swings wider, more frantically, more often. He can't fully extend his wings and yet he uses them anyway.

Carmelita is battered and bruised when she takes out his other eye.
His scream is so loud it vibrates through the rock, causing damaged stones to fall and the entire island to shake.

REWIND

Murray turns away from the staircase with Bentley on it and punches one fist into the other hand. “Some people just don't know when to quit, do they?” he demands.

“I could say the same for you, Murray.” Mizz Ruby hisses, sticking out her tongue; the large ruby in her belly-button gleams. “What do you hope to get by doing this, hmmm? A shorter stay in prison, while your friends rot?”

“No one in our gang is going to prison.” Murray stomps his feet and braces himself. “But YOU will, when I'm done pounding you to a pulp.”

“Oh, Murray, I see your lips moving but all I hear is 'blah blah blah!' If you're so eager to fight, answer my question: who am I working for?” Mizz Ruby bats her eyelashes, just once, as she swings her tail and braces herself for the fight to continue.

“You work for a bad guy,” Murray says.

“No, you idiot. I WORK FOR A COP!” And so screaming, she charges at him.

“You what?!” Bentley yelps, but Murray is beyond hearing him. Murray is in a fight. A fight for his life, and his friends. AND IT'S NOT ONE HE'S GONNA LOSE!

The fight is a lot like the one from before, except Mizz Ruby is faster and more vicious, more prone to using her magic attacks. She runs away far too often, and every attempt to catch her involves dodging zig zag voo doo, zag zig voo doo, zig zig voo zag zag doo. It's downright irritating, especially because the music syncs up to it.

Seriously, didn't she ever learn not to call her attacks? If she didn't teleport around the room all the time she'd be down in a heartbeat.

But with one last solid punch to the jaw, she flies backwards, the jewel in her belly-button flying out, the remote control in her hand breaking. The force fields vanish. “You okay, Murray?”

Murray's bruised and tired, but not broken. “I'm fine, little buddy.”

Around them, the tower starts to shake. “Let's get out of here,” Bentley says, and Murray nods and follows him down the stairs, leaving Mizz Ruby behind.

REWIND

Slaigh and Sly clamber out of the cave and up to solid ground, wall-hooking their way up with lethal care: Clockwerk did a number on the cliff side earlier, and any stone they land on has about even odds of staying put or tumbling to the water below with them still clinging to it. A scream, like a dropped microphone, vibrates through the ground as they finally reach the tower.

Slaigh laughs out loud. “That lassie knows what she's doing, aye, that she does!”

Sly smiles. “Yeah. She really does.”

Without hesitation, the two of them make their way inside. The sound of a fight echoes down the staircase, along with three voices: Bentley, Murray, and Mizz Ruby. Bentley and Murray don't sound
like they're in trouble, so the two Coopers head further down at a run, ready to do whatever it takes to get this tower out of here and make everything safe again.

Of course, the alligator patrol guarding the black light anchor makes things a little bit difficult.

“Ach, lad, I can take these out,” Slaigh says. He puts a hand on Sly's shoulder and steps in front of him. “Just leave it to me, and then I—”

“No.” Sly pushes past Slaigh. “There's no time. We need to take out those anchors, now.”

“So what do ye propose we do then?” Slaigh asks. “Ask them nicely?”

“I'm going to distract them.” Sly takes another step forward. “As soon as they're away from a support, you smash it. Got it?”

“That's dangerous—“

“Everything is dangerous, Slaigh,” Sly says. “But the faster we do this, the faster the rest of my gang is out of danger, and for that, I'll take any chances I need to.”

There's no more time to argue, no more arguing to be done. Sly darts in the center of the room, beneath the black-light anchor, and spreads his arms. “Hello assorted pin brains!”

Four alligator heads snap towards him.

Sly pinches his nose with one hand and waves his other hand in front of it with the other. “Pee-yuuu, does someone have fish breath? Oh. You all do. My bad.”

I didn't know alligators could growl, but I know it now.

“Oh, I'm sorry. Did I huwt the wittle baby's feewings?”

Boy, when it comes to ticking people off, Sly really gets the job done. All the alligators go for Sly... who runs for it.

Slaigh has to use both hands and several blows to smash the rock-encased rope holding the black-light anchor, but he gets three of them destroyed before the alligators even notice. Sly just ticked them off THAT WELL. That, and he's been leading them as far away from Slaigh as possible. Nice work, Sly.

Even with the alligators after them both, it doesn't take much longer for Slaigh to smash the last pillar.

Everything starts to glow. The ground shakes, ever so slightly; the alligators float and get sucked into the ball.

“We need to get out of here,” Sly says. “Come on.”

The two of them run up the stairs. They're joined on the main level by Bentley and Murray, and the four of them book it out of there together.

The whole island shakes as the tower groans, purple bursts of darkness escaping from it like a color-blind kindergartner's sun rays, dragging in the spotlights and alligators all around. With one more flash, it vanishes.

And the cliff side collapses.
“CARMELITA!” Sly dashes towards the cliffs, but Slaigh grabs him and points. On the beach, far below, lies an orange figure with dark blue hair. She stirs and crawls from the ocean, but doesn't stand.

“I'd better go see if she needs medical attention,” Bentley mutters, wheeling himself towards her. Murray follows. Sly stays where he is, heart pounding, Slaigh's hand still heavy on his shoulder.

As soon as the other two are out of earshot, Slaigh leans in close and speaks directly in Sly's ear: “Marry her.”

**HEIST COMPLETE**

_Sly shakes his head, blinking, as Slaigh releases him and starts down the island towards the others._
(SLY VOICE-OVER)

(The four of them walk along the island, water not pouring out, and duck inside the safe-house) We regrouped at the safe-house. Bentley wanted to check everyone for injuries, but more than that, we wanted to stay out of sight for a while. (image of Clockwerk in the cave, rocks falling) Carmelita left Clockwerk underground as everything fell apart, but that doesn't mean much. He'll be back.

He was back? He will be was back? But we know he's still around until I kill him in my time, so this didn't take him out. Still, when the night and the next day pass without any sign of him, we start to relax. (Sly and Bentley play ping-pong while the others watch and cheer.)

With everything else that happened, we didn't get a chance to question Mizz Ruby (picture). But we did have a recording of Murray's fight with her, and none of it makes us happier. (picture of Mizz Ruby talking to Clockwerk in the window.) What did she mean, the 'essence of Clockwerk'? (picture of Mizz Ruby fighting Murray ) And... is she really working with a cop? For a cop? That doesn't seem like the sort of thing she'd lie about (Sly scratches his chin, looking out the window of the van as Bentley starts up the time machine) ... and Carmelita is ticked. (Sly glances behind him, where Carmelita seems to have acquired several new guns and is cleaning them, ALL of them, with sharp movements, her teeth bared in a snarl.)

As soon as we got back to Interpol, Carmelita and I were congratulated. (image of Carmelita's and Sly's hands being shaken simultaneously by the director of Interpol while another, elderly fox stands in the background, his face in his hands.) Mizz Ruby was being held in the anti-magic wing of the local high-security prison after her newest 'crimes against humanity'. Apparently she was delivered to Interpol, tied up and with zombie parts on her. Not quite sure how we got credit for the bust. (close-up on Sly and Carmelita's puzzled faces.)

Once we received our medals (Sly and Carmelita both throw them in a closet and Carmelita kicks the door shut) we went to spend some time with Carmelita's uncle. Dr. Foxworthy seems to be having a mental breakdown: he's been on the force for over thirty years, rehabilitating criminals, and we've put four of them back in jail in as many months. (image of the elderly fox, orange like Carmelita but with silver in his fur, with his head on the desk; Carmelita reaches to cover his hand with her own and comfort him.) He's considering retiring. It may be for the best, but Carmelita and I are trying to convince him to take a vacation first. Maybe a little rest will let him get his head back on and see all the good he's done with others.

Bentley and Murray cleaned out the van—and the time machine (picture of them doing just that.) We still haven't found Penelope. And somehow, I think everything is only going to get worse when we do.

END OF FIENDS FROM THE PAST
And so finishes area 4. We still don't know where Penelope is—or when. But we did get to meet another Cooper ancestor, and have... other... events.

This past area marks an odd milestone: while incredibly bored at my second job, I started calculating how many chapters the various games would be if I wrote them out like this. Sly 1 would come to around 60 or 61 chapters, depending on exactly how I divided up some cutscenes. Sly 4 would end at around 64 chapters, if I did my math right. If I did it wrong—and I admit, I may have miscounted the slideshows—then it's likely around 70 chapters.

Either way, this story is now a longer Sly game than two of the actual games. If this were made into a real game, they may still have more actual gameplay. And exactly what a 'job' entails changes game to game, so game 4 would probably be longer than game 1 written out. But this is still longer than BOTH of them ALREADY and that just feels weird.

Moving on... most of my updates would be about having gotten a second job and a new apartment, but my internet outage and subsequent warning a couple weeks' back probably did that already. Internet seems reliable again, and I'm 90% unpacked. Writing-wise, this story is finished. I finished the ending credits June 30 (though some jobs are still untitled). The break between the ending of the final area and the credits may be the only time this story has a brief hiatus; I'm posting this on FF.net too, and they're a bit behind (they'll get Operation: Unwanted Guest on July 23). I want to do the ending credits in both places at once, so you'll have to wait. Not long, I'm giving them two updates a week when they're short things like level intros/outs, but still a bit.

Thank you, all of you, for reading and enjoying this. I've gotten some more kudos, and lots of reviews (:D!), and your responses give me lots of reasons to smile. Thank you.

Come back next week for area 5. You're probably expecting some of it. But I guarantee, you're not gonna anticipate half of what's up my sleeve.

-EikaPrime
(Sly Voice-Over)

(image of a calendar with crossed off days) A month passed with nothing to show for it. We'd already exhausted all of our sources of information (pictures of the attempts they'd made in the opening of Fiends From The Past). The only luck Carmelita and I had was convincing Dr. Foxworthy to take a long vacation. The old guy'd accumulated over a year's worth of vacation days by not using any of them for ages, so he had all the time he needed. (picture of Sly and Carmelita all but shoving the old fox on a plane.)

With him out of the way, there was nothing to stop Carm and I from going through his files ourselves (picture of Carmelita pulling on gloves with a snap while staring at a filing cabinet.) Dr. Foxworthy'd been there so long, half his information wasn't even on computers, but I still brought in some after-hours help. (picture of Bentley joining Carmelita in the office, looking through folder after folder.) We don't have much to go on, but the only connections we have are that everyone involved has been an old enemy of ours, and they all went through Dr. Foxworthy's treatment. Who knows; maybe we'll find something else in there. Though his file on Penelope was... interesting. (picture of Bentley opening a folder larger than he was only to find several pages with bold writing, the phrase 'WHAT IS WRONG WITH THIS MOUSE?' visible in several places.)

We hadn't found any leads when Murray noticed something that changed all our plans. (image of Murray reading the newspaper at breakfast and reacting so harshly to something that he sprays a mouthful of coffee all over the table, Sly, Bentley, and the wall, leaving cartoon outlines of Sly and Bentley but completely missing Carmelita even though she's sitting between them.) The local paper had an article on a museum exhibit, and in one of the pictures was Penelope. Unmistakably. Sitting on a biplane in the 1940's.

I let Interpol know we had a lead, that we needed to go on an undercover assignment (picture of Sly talking to Interpol's director), and even managed to steal a part from that airplane before Carmelita stopped cursing. (picture of Sly showing up, part in hand, to see Bentley and Murray cowering as Carmelita stomps around the safe-house.) We gathered our things and got in the van at once.

(Sly and Carmelita settle in the back of the van, Sly rubbing Carmelita's shoulders, clearly trying to get her to calm down... and it's working. The time machine roars into life.) It's time to settle this. For all our sakes.

But for Bentley's most of all. (Sly glances over his shoulder at Bentley, who's staring at the torn photo of him and Penelope as though it has all the answers.)

**SLY COOPER
AND THE GANG
IN:
PROGRAMS OF BETRAYAL**
Chapter End Notes

I'm not even trying to be subtle with this one.
Straw is everywhere. The floor is bare wood boards, with gaps and knotholes showing plainly, even in the light of dusk; two of the walls are very short, one with a shuttered window, one without. There are only two walls, and instead of the others there's a pitched roof, leaving them all plenty of room to stand in the center but scarce room for someone to lie down at the edges. Bentley has his inhaler out, taking measured breaths; he wheels away from a hole in the floor with Carmelita kneeling by it, pulling up a rope ladder. She drops a trapdoor, sealing the place beneath them. She joins Bentley closer to the center of the room, where Murray is wrestling a large, rickety old table into position by some milk crates for seats. Behind him, Sly walks towards the closed window and flings open the shutters. Rolling fields and windmills and, a decent distance away, a half-built airfield come into view; further away yet is a steep hill with a castle on top.

Without another word, Sly climbs out the window and onto the roof. He's standing on a barn in the middle of several fields, plowed but with nothing growing in them yet. Another barn stands not too far away, a bridge over a river beyond it; a small town, dominated by a large hotel, can be seen there. Large, tall walls—identical to the one that divided the island where they met Henriette—surround the place on three sides, though they're all far enough away that the gang may not have to deal with them. He pulls out his binoc-u-com. “Can you breathe okay yet?”

“I'm fine,” Bentley says, though he wheezes a little as he says it. “This safe-house is going to wreak havoc on my computers, though. And there's no way we can power the arcade machine with the van.”

Sly winces, but only a little: he's never been as into that as Bentley has. “All right, but we're all here and safe. What sort of photos do you need, Bentley?”

“I'd like pictures of the guards, of course,” Bentley says, “but also as many details of the surrounding area as possible. Penelope's here somewhere, and we're gonna have to flush her out.”

“I'm on it.”

Sly tucks his binoc-u-com away and glances around. The number of moving lights in the field bode well for it being guarded, so Sly paraglides closer, landing on a large pile of seed sacks. A bulky fox stands with its back to Sly, an oversized flashlight in one hand, an even more enormous gun in the other. Sly snaps a picture.

“I don't think any of us want to tangle with those guys,” Bentley says in his ear. “They look mean, and just like the zombie unicorns, they have pulse laser rifles.”

Sly winces and continues through the fields, following a well-worn path clearly made by horses and
wagons as much as by tractors. He stops when he reaches the river, frowning: the bridge there is the sort that can separate in the middle, each side rising to let ships through, and it appears to be raised for the night. He snaps another picture.

“In our time, there would be buttons to control it, but here they have winches. Hand winches.” Sure enough, Sly can see a small crank on one side. “And you'd need people on both sides to raise or lower it. You and Carmelita might make it across, but Murray and I will need to find a way around.”

May as well do it now, then. Sly turns his back on the bridge and goes back through the fields, passing a small hill on one side. A windmill stands on top of it, with three tiers of landings for repairs; Sly snaps a picture just to be thorough.

“Fascinating. I'm detecting radio signals coming from that windmill, Sly. Take a picture of any others you see; they may provide useful information.”

All right then. But as he moves past it, there are no nearby windmills. This area may have been the main farm at one point, or its outbuildings, but now everything is in a state of construction. A large ramp, made for biplanes, stands shiny and new in the center of four buildings that stand in a rough square, each looking halfway between a mechanic's workshop and a farm stand. Sly takes pictures of each building, then climbs the ramp to take a picture from the top. There are electronics here—a working elevator to get biplanes from ground level to this launching pad—but not much else.

“They must be building this because of the war,” Bentley says in his ear. “The Netherlands got conquered early on, so most of this will be helping the Germans. Be careful, buddy.”

Sly nods, but his attention is on a small figure patrolling the far side of the landing. He moves behind it, careful and quiet, and swallows a gasp. He takes a picture of a rat trooper, one of Le Paradox’s rat troopers, complete with gas mask and hazard suit.

Bentley groans. “I don't like the looks of this,” he mutters. “Is there anything else you can find?”

Of course there is. Sly paraglides down to another windmill, snaps a picture of it, then runs a line of some sort to a third windmill. There’s another one across the dammed stream, but the bridge is closer; the water was low enough that he could just splash across, but he had enough of that for a year already. He makes his way across the bridge, then sees movement from the steep rise to the castle and bounds up a small slope to stand by a tree. A small wolf pack of enormous wolves strolls by, noses in the air; a patrolling rat comes across them and turns on the spot to patrol somewhere else.

Sly takes a picture of the pack. “Based on the time of year, they may have pups nearby,” Bentley mutters. “That means they're hunting. Be careful, Sly.”

“Come on, Bentley,” Sly mutters as he makes his way towards the last windmill, precariously perched so it's almost in the stream. He takes a picture of it. “When am I ever *not* careful?”

“Do I really need to answer that?”

Sly laughs. “I suppose not.” He makes his way through the lightly wooded, hilled area, avoiding the guards—foxes and rats—as well as the wolf pack, heading towards the town. “Something about this place is bugging me, though.”

“Any idea what?” asks Bentley.

Sly shakes his head as he walks into town. The street surrounds a well, houses on most sides around it; a bridge over the river is across from where the street he used, and another street, back to the wooded area, to his left. Some chairs are set outside for use in a local cafe. “It just seems—“
A tank drives over the bridge, and Sly jumps on a nearby wheel of cheese and to a roof. It circles the well, red light looking outwards, then goes back across the bridge; moments later, a second tank comes over as well. Sly takes a picture of this one.

“Lovely,” Bentley grumbles. “Because things weren't complicated enough.”

Now that the tanks have gone back to the other street, Sly drops to the ground and uses a small decorative arch on the edge of the bridge to cross over, keeping him down below sight of the tanks. It looks like they're doing figure-eights around the buildings up here, diverging over the bridge after every complete eight, and then Sly looks at it again and it clicks. “Bentley, this is Holland.”

“I know very well that it's Holland,” Bentley says, as Sly waits for a safe moment and bounces on a round of cheese to a rooftop. “Holland is part of the Netherlands, Sly. You're not this bad at geography.”

“No, Bentley, this is Aces Holland,” Sly says, snapping a picture of the hotel balcony he and his friends had once used as a safe-house. The balcony that now has a spotlight trained on it.

And the lid to the sewer he and Murray went through on an inflatable raft.

And the door to the hotel, too, for that matter.

“I don't believe it,” Bentley says. “You're—you're right. Penelope went back in time over sixty years to the same place we met her. But why?”

“No clue, pal, but she's definitely involved in this.” Sly aims his camera as far up as it can go to snap a picture of a tower, looming over the back of the hotel. “But even if it's the past, she did the Aces tournament for, what, five years? More? She could be anywhere.”

“Maybe,” Bentley says. “Try going up to that castle. I remember there was a hatch on the roof; maybe it's there in this time period as well. We know she pretended to be the Black Baron for the dog-fighting.”

“And the 'Black Baron' lived in the castle,” Sly confirms. “I'm on it.”

It's the work of a moment for Sly to abandon the roof, now that he knows what's going on, and the sense of deja-vu from every corner has meaning behind it now. The guard patrols are nearly the same, too, including which rooftops have their own reasons to be avoided. Sly slips past them all with ease, finding his way to the hill and up it. And there's still a few convenient ways up the outside of the castle if one goes behind it.

Sly is most of the way up the outside of the castle, inching along the front with his back pressed to the wall between two windows, when the drawbridge lowers with a BANG and two figures step out, one dragging the other with a strong grip on their arm.

Dusk deepened into night while Sly took pictures, but even in the dark, the smaller form is clearly a mouse, and any doubt about the mouse's identity vanishes when she speaks: “If you keep dragging me like that, it's going to come off.”

Penelope. Penelope, and she's—she's irritated, that's as clear as the sweep of her tail, but she doesn't seem to be hurt.

Sly isn't sure if he should be okay with that or not.

Sly doesn't recognize the other figure, though he feels he should; it rings a bell somewhere. Still, it's
dark, and all he has to go on is the reply, a voice that manages to be both deep and nasally at once: “Maybe that would keep you from wandering off where you're not supposed to be.”

The two set off, down the path, and it takes Sly all of two seconds before he abandons his attempts to get in the castle and follows them, before Bentley can tell him to. Here, at last, might be answers.

They don’t speak again until they’re down the slope, Sly hiding behind trees as he attempts to follow them. Penelope, it seems, is far from willing; she keeps snatching her hand away, taking a few steps in one direction or another, before the other figure catches up to her and grabs her arm again. They pause in the light of a guard's flashlight, and Sly's breath catches. Penelope looks much the same as she did in the previous game: yellow jumpsuit, yellow goggles, but as she yanks her arm away again her sleeve rides up. Tight around her wrist is a bracelet, secure as handcuffs, at least a dozen gems catching the light. “I don't need to be supervised. I'm doing my job.”

“And sending romantic post-cards to your old friend,” the first voice says, trying to be intimidating but sounding more like a whine. “That was strictly prohibited the first time.”

Sly raises his eyebrows, but the other figure isn't shown in the guard's light, and the two of them continue walking, crossing the bridge he crossed earlier, heading away from town. “Does that voice sound familiar to anyone else?” Carmelita asks.

“No yet,” says Bentley. “Keep following them, Sly.”

Sly doesn't need to be told that; he's no more than another shadow in the night.

They walk past one windmill, then another. They keep going, past it, to where the four buildings—no, to where, in their time, an airfield is. An airfield that must get its start here. “This is coming along nicely,” says the unknown figure, wheezing slightly. “A few more days, a week at most, and this will be ready for German planes.”

“You're a monster,” Penelope says. “You know as well as I do what happens in this war—“

“I'm protecting history,” says the unknown voice. “The exact opposite of interference. We know what's done, so let's make sure it happens.”

They move on, heading towards the open fields. Sly shakes his head. “I've never heard Bentley's argument about not changing history like that before,” he murmurs.

“I feel like I should bleach my shell,” Bentley replies.

“How about it, Carmelita?” asks Murray. “Do you know the voice yet?”

“I should.” Carmelita hisses. “None of you recognize it?”

“A little,” says Sly, climbing to the roof of their safe-house and keeping an eye on the pair from the barn roof. “I know I've heard it before.”

“The Murray has never heard this voice.”

“I remain unfamiliar with it as well,” says Bentley. “Perhaps this is the police mastermind we've been led to believe is behind this.”

Sly snorts—there's no way they'd get that lucky—and continues following them. A pair of guards are waiting on either side of the bridge and lower it as the two get close; Sly uses a nearby boat to cross. He stays on a roof, binoc-u-com out, as the two approach a hotel.
They step into light from the spotlight at the front door, and Sly has his first clear view of them both. The weasel that's been dragging Penelope around has purple fur, darker around his eyes and on the edge of his tail. He isn't much taller than Penelope; he's probably just as tall as Bentley in his wheelchair. His green suspenders seem to be three sizes too big for his body, and he's wearing an oversized bow tie instead of a shirt.

Pinned to his suspenders are two badges. One, a small triangular pin, orange with a white tip, several small gems embedded around the edges. The other, a police badge. Interpol.

Carmelita starts to curse, but Sly ignores her, studying the pair closely. “Do not leave your designated area again,” he says, a drawn-out whine in his voice.

Penelope scowls. “Or what? I'll get another lecture? Face it, you need me to get this to work.”

“No,” says the weasel. “No lecture. But your friend will face the consequences.”

Penelope wraps her tail around herself, taking a step back, then shakes her head and steps forward. “You cowards don't have Bentley—“

“Here's a picture of him in the Contessa's custody,” says the weasel, handing Penelope a slip of paper. Her ears droop. “Any and all future delays will be taken out on him, understand? Now get back in that tower and make our machine!”

Penelope, still drooping, nods. The weasel puts a hand on her back as he opens the door, and guides her inside—or pushes. It's hard to tell.

Sly lets out a long breath and pulls out his binoc-u-com. “All right, Carm, who are we dealing with?”


Sly almost drops his cane. “Didn't he work in your department?”

“He did my paperwork for years, until he asked me out on a date. I declined, he put in for a transfer.” Carmelita's scowl could make Clockwerk run in terror. “That was a month before Kaine Island.”

A month before Sly faked amnesia, that is. “Yeah, well,” Sly says, “he's changed since then, hasn't he.”

Still, as Sly puts his binoc-u-com away, he stays staring at the hotel for a long few moments. “Why are the cops involved in this, anyway?”

“If you can answer that, then I'm sure you'll find all of life's true meaning,” says a voice behind him. “Why are the authorities ever involved in anything?”

Sly turns around.

The raccoon on the roof behind him has a very impressive mustache. Sly blinks, mesmerized by it for a moment; it's curved into the shape of a cooper cane on either side and sticks out a good six inches under his nose. Sly isn't sure they have hairspray in this time period, but they must, because there's no other explanation for it. Sure, the rest of the guy's outfit is impressive—the brown flight suit that covers his whole body, the aerators scarf, the flight cap and goggles, but Sly keeps coming back to the mustache.

That, and he isn't carrying a cane. So even though Sly recognizes Otto Van Cooper from the
Thievious Raccoonus, he still isn't prepared.

“Not used to being snuck up on, I take it?” Otto asks. “That's quite all right, Sly; take all the time you need.” Otto smirks. “Not that you haven't been doing so. You're here, after all.”

Sly laughs. “Otto, I mustache, where's your cane?”

Otto chuckles. “Because some of the others you visited had theirs stolen? Sorry to throw a wrench in your expectations, but I have it here.” Otto reaches inside his pocket and pulls out... a wrench. With the distinctive Cooper hook on it.

“Oh great, there's two of them,” Bentley mutters over the earpiece.

Sly is grinning too much to care. “So when you steal things, are you throwing a wrench in the works?”

“It certainly makes fighting a gut-wrenching affair,” Otto says.

“Seriously, Sly, stop it.”

“I don't suppose I could wrench an explanation out of you?” Sly asks. “I haven't figured out what's going on here yet.”

“I'm not doing anything I can't be wrenched away from,” Otto replies.

“That's just... that's terrible, both of you.”

Sly offers Otto his arm. “Then let's wrench out of here.”

“That doesn't even make any sense!”

Otto walks over, revealing a limp, and accepts Sly's arm. “Yes, let's wrench our way.”

“That does it. I'm turning off the audio. Sheesh!”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly and Otto laugh at more terrible puns as they wait for a tank to pass, then jump off the roof and head towards the safe-house.*
Just a quick note: Otto. I could say many, MANY things about him, but here's your warning: he made me question the story's rating a bit. But if Sly 2 got away with an E rating and included Sly and Neyla's conversation at Rajan's ball ('You aren't by any chance here to turn yourself in, are you? Old Ironsides [Carmelita] would fall out of her dress.' 'As good as that sounds, how about a dance first?'), then this can get away with Otto's... Otto-ness.

And the puns. I am sorry about the puns.

PROGRAMS OF BETRAYAL

Interlude: Otto's Tail and Slideshow 1

Otto's Tail

Sly Voice-Over

Otto and I had exhausted the wrench puns by the time we got back to the safe-house (picture of Sly climbing to the barn roof and leaping inside, whereas Otto bounces off a wheel of cheese to get up.) Carmelita was still hung up on Winthorp being here. She found the idea very arresting—

(Carmelita fires her shock-pistol, leaving a charred, smoking mark on the wall an inch from Sly's head.)

...I'll stop.

Bentley Voice-Over

Sly and Otto were still being obnoxiously punny by the time they returned to the safe-house. The rest of us ignored them until they got it out of their systems. (Sly waves his hands in front of Bentley's face, but he continues typing away on his computer, and Carmelita opens a book—the Thievious Raccoonus—and reads it in a very obvious 'ignoring you' manner, though Murray keeps looking at the pair of them between bites of sausage.) It took a while.

(There are several seconds of silence while the two raccoons just look at everyone studiously ignoring them. Capital I ignoring. Crickets chirp. Carmelita turns the page. Then Otto shrugs and pulls out a seat.)
Once they were ready, Otto gave us the ten-four about what was going on. Holland had recently been overrun by the Germans, near the start of what I carefully did not tell him was World War II. The government fell, but Otto is part of the underground resistance, overlooked by the authorities because of the injury he took during the Great War. While he remains an ace fighter pilot, with his injured leg he can't run, carry anything heavy, or do half the moves in the Thievious Raccoonus—but that hasn't stopped him from sneaking over the border and stealing from Germans for the past five years. If 'stealing' is the right word. In any case, he knows the countryside like the back of his hand.

Otto discovered that this village had a few... modifications nearly two months ago. While not an important area to the war yet, his personal goal is to prevent the airbase from being completed. Unfortunately, there have been some... problems. Otto's every attempt has been foiled by technology that he's unfamiliar with—technology that shouldn't exist.

He was also able to give us more information on what's going on. Winthorp had been overseeing day-to-day operations, checking on the airfield's completion and sometimes using a launcher to fly a biplane and check its progress from the air. However, on occasion he would travel to the castle. Someone would come and meet him there, and while Otto never managed to get close enough to listen, he did notice something.

Penelope only came out when Winthorp was occupied. And she always exited two ways: the sewer, and the castle. Winthorp couldn't tell if she was a captive or not—but she's not in the castle now. If she only leaves through the sewer, then that's our way in.

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SLIDESHOW 1

Bentley:

We're in a unique situation here. Penelope's here, but she's not alone. We're in the middle of a well-known conflict, and whatever our actions, we need to be careful not to have an undue mark on history.

Otto:

You just let me worry about the mark on history, then. I'm sure it'll be one for the books.
Bentley:

Can you stop with the puns for just... five minutes? Please? *(picture of a clock)*

Otto:

I don't have time for that.

*(Several loud groans from the others, though Sly can be heard chuckling.)*

Bentley:

In any case, we have a few different objectives. In addition to getting rid of the tower and everything else from our time that's come here, we have... several... questions that need to be answered. *(picture of an itemized list with lots of bullet points.)* In order to do that, we have to sabotage the operation here and get inside the tower unseen. Here's the plan.

I've looked at the schematics for the buildings around the hotel, and one of them is definitely a guard tower. Sly, that'll be your responsibility. Get in there and find someone who can answer a few questions. *(picture of Bentley wielding a feather with a very stern look.)*

Sly:

That shouldn't be a problem.

Bentley:

Right. While Sly's doing that, we need to deal with those windmills. *(picture of a windmill.)* They're providing power to the castle and hotel, and no doubt the tower as well, fueling everything Winthorp is trying to do. Unfortunately, the insides of the windmills are locked down tight.

Otto:

I much prefer it when things are locked up loose, myself.

Bentley:

Otto, do I need to gag you?

Otto:
Depends. Does the thought of that—

Bentley:

Don't finish that sentence. In any case, Sly, you'll pickpocket the keys to get into those windmills. Carmelita, you'll go inside and take them out. (picture of Carmelita frying Sashimi from area 3)

Sly:

I can do that. Carmelita, is it okay with you? I know it's not exactly—

Carmelita:

It's fine, Ringtail. We need to get this done.

Sly:

Wait, really? But—

Carmelita:

I said it's fine, so it's fine. Do you want to make something of it? (image of Carmelita chasing Sly in game 3 comes up.)

Sly:

So, no problems with that, Bentley. Continue!

Bentley:

Now, we've been down in those sewers before—er, after? (picture of Murray rowing a boat in game 3 appears) but I expect things are a bit different now. Otto, do you have any machines that might be suited to get us through them? If Penelope's always leaving through the sewers, we should be able to get to her through them.

Otto:

I have a boat that will be perfect for that. Don't worry; we'll sail through this.
Murray:
I get to row a boat?!

Bentley:
...Carmelita, you go along too, in case things get... out of hand.

Carmelita:
Do I have to?

Bentley:
Yes. Murray, if you don't have it yet, you're also going to need to know the Breaking Blow.

Last of all, one of us will be stationed in the central square at all times. We'll have a clear view of the sewer entrance, the front door of the hotel, and the castle's drawbridge from there. (picture of Winthorp strolling along the road.) If anyone comes out, we should follow them. We may learn something.

-Thiefnet Computer-

Sly: Not-Drowning 2. Swim through moving, clear water; if you can see the bottom, you can swim, even if the water's moving.

Bentley: Adrenaline Burst.

Murray: Fiery Wheel. Hey, spending time with The Panda King has its advantages.

Carmelita: Professional Pat-Down. Remove potentially dangerous objects from the pockets of guards that haven't noticed you. It's not pick-pocketing; it's protection.
Sly climbs out the window and stays on the roof, looking about, and just takes a moment to stand there and stretch, arms overhead. Whatever's going on, it's a beautiful evening, with a clear night sky and stars peaking out by the dozens. He could pick out constellations, if he wanted or knew any. One great thing about time travel: no light pollution.

Once he's finished his stretch, he glances at the ground, making sure the coast is clear, before dropping down and making his way to the partially-built airbase. There are lots of guards around, more than there were earlier: foxes with flashlights and far too much muscle patrolling here and there, but others, rats in gas masks but with wrenches in hand, scowling at piles of machine parts that will never be planes. Even Murray would know—no, Murray actually built a plane once; Sly actually is the most ignorant member of the gang about this, and there's no way those will ever be planes of any sort.

He climbs a drainpipe to a rooftop and pulls up his binoc-u-com. “How you doing, Bentley?”

“No sign of anyone yet,” says Bentley; from the way the background looks, it seems he's the one keeping an eye on the hotel.

“Okay. If anyone does show up, just give me a yell, and I'll tail them.”

“Do you think I'm not capable of doing that myself?” Bentley asks, eyebrows raised.

Sly decides to change the subject. “So, what do you need me to do here?”

“We need more information, and those foxes are our best bet. You stand the best chance of passing yourself off as one of them.”

“Well, Bentley... Carmelita actually is a fox.”

If it's possible, Bentley's deadpan look gets even more deadpan. “Do you really think Carmelita should go undercover in a group working for members of Interpol acting illegally?”

Sly winces. “Forget I said anything.”

“Thought so. In any case, you're going to have some fun ahead of you before you infiltrate the guard compound. You're going to need a jacket, goggles, a scarf, and a hat.”

“That sounds simple enough.” Sly takes off his own hat and twirls it around on his cane.

“Once you're finished, you'll have to do some leg-work. The guards around here are always password-checking each other.”

“So the Interpol guys are going the way of the most paranoid crime lords?” Sly flips his hat back on his head.

“That seems... accurate. In any case, there are three foxes that seem particularly social; if you follow
them, you should be able to overhear the passwords. Once overheard, I'll write them in the gadget menu.”

“All right, let's do this.”

Sly tucks his binoc-u-com back into his thigh pouch and looks around. Not far from him, a guard removes his hat to scratch his head; Sly jumps off the building and shadows him. The guy stops again to scratch, and a third time. Stealing his hat seems like the obvious choice; the guy would no doubt find it easier without it.

Sly steals the guy's scarf though. He's scratching so much he may have lice—no thanks. He takes the hat from the guy standing at attention with his back to lots of rats working on what seems to be an oversized fan.

The brown-furred fox who keeps stopping his patrol to swagger already has his jacket off, tied around his waist to better show off his muscles (not that there's anyone watching him pose). Sly slips it off him without him even knowing. The last guard, a purple-furred fox with a yellow-tipped tail, unfortunately for them, is passed out in a corner, snoring; Sly pulls the guy's goggles off from over his eyes and, after a moment's hesitation, adjusts the guard's hat so that it's shadowing his face. “Sweet dreams, fella.”

With that accomplished, it's time for a bit more work. Sly climbs to the top of the partially-finished ramp and looks around for way-points. Three of them, of course: one in the fields around the safe-house, one near the castle, and the last by the well in the center of town. Sly stretches his legs and decides to start with the one by the castle. He's high enough up that he can glide most of the way there.

His target is near the top of the hill, walking up and down and up again. Sly hooks onto the wall, a spot where he'll be out of view, and waits.

His arms have started to ache when he hears, “Stop! What's the doctor's password?”

“Square triangle square triangle,” replies another. Bingo.

“Oy. It sure is a pain having to check that all the time, inn't it?” asks the first guard. Sly hoists himself up to solid ground and glances below, in time to see his target lean against the wall. “Security security security... I know where I'd like to shove his security.”

His companion chuckles. “He ain't so secure as he thinks. Do you know how many times I've transferred? His passwords are the same everywhere that spider didn't touch.”

The first guard shudders. “Nothing worse than that spider.”

Then they're off in separate ways again, leaving Sly smiling. One down, two to go.

Sly heads into town for the next guy. This fox is standing by the well in the center square and... he's fishing. In the well. He has a pole, and a line, and he's... what.

Sly just stands on a nearby roof and stares for a while, wondering what on earth happened that this is going on. Across the square, on a similar roof, Bentley stands, looking similarly confused. A tank circles the well, then crosses back over the bridge, without taking any notice; Sly shrugs and uses a bouncy wheel of cheese to get to the small roof over the well. The desperate fisherman waits below him.
It doesn't take long before another fox walks in from the wooded area nearby. “Halt!” shouts the fishing fox. “What's the volcano password?”

“Circle x circle x,” the other says at once. Sly gives Bentley a thumbs up. “What are you doing?”

“Fishing.”

“In a well?”

“Bruno said this was a fishing well.”

The patrolling fox's sigh could power ships. “Wishing well, Richard. A wishing well. You throw money in, and all your wishes come true. Watch.”

Sly bites on his lip to keep from laughing as Richard says, “Wow! What did you wish for?”

“You to get your ears checked. Come on, at least go to the river; something may have made it through the dams.”

The two wander away in opposite directions. Sly stands up and dusts off his pants. One to go.

The last guard he has to follow is patrolling the open fields near the safe-house. Keeping an eye on this guy means ducking from one bit of cover to the next—the safe-house roof, the inside of another barn, pressing back against the raised bridge, the work. Sly's posing as a scarecrow when a rat trooper comes into view. “Halt!” Cries his guard. “What's the robot password?”

“Triangle x triangle x,” replies the rat. It titters unpleasantly through the gas mask; the sound makes it impossible to tell if the rat within is male or female. “Though you shouldn't be asking me, you fool. I serve the doctor's interests better than you fools.”

“Shows what you know,” retorts the fox. “Like works for like, that's how it goes.”

The two don't seem friendly, and separate almost at once. Sly disentangles himself from the pole and shakes straw from his sleeves. “Okay Bentley, now what?”

“The guards have a base of operations across from the hotel,” he says, and a new way-point springs up in Sly's binoc-u-com. “Go inside, then find some way to endear yourself to them. We need more information.”

“Anything in particular?”

“Well, there have been lots of mentions of a 'doctor',' Bentley says, pulling out his holographic computer screen and checking his notes. “All over the place. So anything about what sort of doctor might help. Or the name of the person behind this, or even their status in Interpol”

Sly removes his hat and dusts straw off it. “You have no idea, do you?”

“No,” Bentley admits, putting his computer away. “There are too many variables. And with Penelope involved... Winthrop showed her a picture of me, Sly, he had to have. I don't know what's going on anymore.” He pushes his helmet up to rub his forehead.

“Calm down, Bentley.” Sly puts his hat back on. “We'll get this. Don't worry.”

“Easy for you to say.” Bentley grumbles, and cuts the contact.

Sly puts his binoc-u-com away and steps in the bottom half of the nearest barn to change his clothes.
He emerges moments later, fully dressed. The hat covers his ears and the goggles disguise his mask; he could pass for a fox if you squint. They're not too dissimilar. And, since he now looks the part, all he has to do is walk in.

So he does, blatantly uncaring about the rats (who snap to irritated attention when he walks by) or the tanks (that ignore him right back). He heads straight to the door of the guards' compound and knocks. A peep-panel slides open. “What's the volcano password?”

Sly immediately puts on his Italian accent. “Cuichle ex, cuichle ex,” he says.

The guard rolls his eyes. “Is this stupid accent day? Seriously, you're the fifth person. Come on in and talk normal, why don't ya.”

With the flash of a LOADING screen, Sly's inside. He keeps his eyes open as he walks in, checking all around. The guard's relaxation area is a wide-open space, with a small band in one corner and tables around the edges. There are a handful of doors at the far side of the room. Foxes stand at random all over the place.

Sly walks up to a group of three foxes at random. “I just-uh transferred here,” he says, still using his accent, “and I haven't-uh signed up for a health plan yet. Do you-uh know-uh which doctor I should talk to?”

“That is the worst joke I've heard in years,” says one fox.

“And an even worse fake accent,” says the second.

“You want me to talk, eh?” asks the third, setting down his drink. “I wouldn't do this normally, but that accent was so bad, I'm not saying a word. If you want to prove you're one of us, you have to beat us in a competition first.”

Sly raises one eyebrow behind the goggles. “What's the competition?”

“Thank you for dropping the accent. Dancing,” says the fox. “How's your tango?”

Sly smiles a sly smile, a sentence I've been trying not to write for the past year only to fail now. “Oh, I think I'm pretty good. But it takes two to tango.”

A broom is thrust in his arms. “Work with it.”

Without further ado, Sly is set up to tango with a broom, and the band in the corner starts a beautiful song. But... well, just like I was incredibly unqualified to write out a dance scene between Carmelita and Thaddeus earlier, I have no capability of writing out a dance scene here. I barely know what a tango is. I'm sorry.

But his broom dance is more impressive than that fox can do with his foxy fox partner, and that's just plain impressive.

After, the fox who challenged Sly slaps his knee. “Shucks, I'm sorry to have doubted you. But don't fun about the doctor like that, you understand me? He don't like it.”

“That's good to know,” Sly says. “Sometimes, it's hard to know what I can't get away with.”

“So, are you another of his police blokes, an Interpol stoolie, or one of us low-rankers angling for a promotion?” asks the fox. He reaches in his pocket and pulls out a wallet, flipping it open to reveal a police badge. “I've had enough of writing parking tickets for the next ten lifetimes.”
Sly does not freak out. “You and me both, pal.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly continues chatting with the foxes, who—it seems—are ALL cops. From around the world. Don’t tell Carmelita.*
Carmelita jumps from the safe-house window and jumps again immediately, not even bothering to land. She sails over the field and the head of one utterly oblivious guard, then makes her way through the field more normally. She can, and does, jump the river, so it doesn't matter one bit that the bridge is up. She reaches Bentley's rooftop a moment later, scowling hard.

Bentley's already there, of course; he's monitoring the castle and hotel for their targets. Murray and Otto had to take the longer way around, but they join her moments later. “Is everyone ready?” asks Bentley.

If anything, Carmelita's scowl gets worse. “I can't believe you're expecting me to go in the sewers,” she says.

Bentley raises an eyebrow at her, then turns to the others. “Murray, Otto, are you ready?”

“You betcha, Bentley!”

“I could use some assistance getting my boat into position,” says Otto.

“Great. Murray, you help him.” Bentley turns back to Carmelita as the others jump off the roof. “Do you have a problem with the sewers?”

“Anyone sensible has a problem with sewers,” Carmelita replies. She wraps her tail around her ankles. “I notice you're not going down them.”

“No, but I have in the past,” Bentley replies absently. He looks towards the castle again, checking, then straight at her. “You're not exactly going to be swimming in the sewage, the smell won't be any worse than the Haitian swamps where we dealt with Mizz Ruby years ago, and you don't have any problems with small spaces or you wouldn't have hidden in that sarcophagus when we were too late to steal the Clockwerk Parts from that museum.”

“I'd need a warrant—”

“That's if we were in our time, and if we were doing this legally,” Bentley adjusts his glasses. “And you didn't have any problems acting without a warrant when we were in Scotland. Something else is going on.”

Carmelita's ears press flat to her head as a tank passes by below, briefly illuminating them both in deep red light. She sits on the edge of the roof and lets her legs dangle over. “I'm not a thief, Bentley.”

“Of course not,” Bentley says. “You're a—”

“Traveling with criminals. Knowing about crimes and not reporting them. Breaking the law myself.” She glares at the next passing tank like it's responsible for all her problems. “And now I'm going to the sewers because I can't get in any other way? That's not—this isn't me. This is...” She trails off.

Bentley wheels over to put his hand on her shoulder. “When you first came after us, every crime had
to be punished, remember? You didn't even notice The Panda King's illegal activities because it all had a legal front, and you didn't learn that things could be different than what they seem until you were framed by Constable Neyla.”

Carmelita winces. “I don't like remembering that.”

“When you went after Octavio in Venice, you ignored all sorts of small crimes so you could lock him up.”

“How did you—”

“I read your reports. And then you lied about Sly being a cop so he wouldn't go to prison but could put more people in jail.”

She snorts. “And look how that's turned out.”

“The law doesn't make things good or evil, Inspector,” Bentley says, taking his hand off her shoulder. “You've just seen it that way. And now you're having more luck doing good by being illegal, and that's a hard change. But what doesn't change is that we need to get into that tower to figure out what's going on, and the only way to do that is through the sewer. And you're going to be a vital part of that exercise.”

Carmelita smiles, just a little. “You're right,” she says, standing up. “Those two couldn't manage without me.”

“If you really think you need to, you could stay behind, and—”

“No,” Carmelita says. “No. I'll go.”

“We're all set!” The two look to the street below. Murray waves his arms. “Come on, Carmelita! Wait until you see this thing, it's awesome!”

Carmelita glances at Bentley. He gives her a thumbs up.

After a moment, she returns it, then jumps off the roof and follows Murray.

With the flash of a **LOADING** screen, she's in the sewer. And Carmelita has to stop and stare. “Okay, I wasn't expecting that,” she admits after a moment.

“Isn't it awesome?” Murray asks. “Otto invented it!”

Carmelita nods, still staring. Because what she's looking at is a speedboat. A motor boat. In sixty years or so, Sly Cooper will find it in the Cooper Vault, and crawl underneath it to defend himself against Dr. M's death laser. But right now it sits low in the murky water, propellers idle, in absolute pristine condition, blue and yellow and beautiful. Just waiting for someone to drive it.

And it won't be Murray.

Murray holds the boat so Carmelita can climb in, then jumps in himself. The cabin is surprisingly spacious, though it doesn't have enough chairs. “Please take the seat next to the door,” Otto says to Carmelita. “We're about ready to float.”

Carmelita's groan can be heard outside the boat. Which, apparently, is what we're playing as. Well... logically, it's Otto driving the boat, but still.

“Before we go deep into this sewer, let us practice our... spelunking skills. Carmelita, you can fire
with the R1 button. Could you please destroy those stalactites blocking our way? We'll be able to move out after they spelunk into the water.”

Carmelita audibly growls, but she gets the job done. Her shock bolts seem to be coming from one of the speedboat's windows.

“Excellent. I can control our speed with the X button, and turn with the joystick.”

“Why did you write the letter X on that button, anyway?” asks Murray. “You didn't label most of the others.”

“Because X marks the spot, of course.”

Carmelita groans louder, and the boat begins to move.

Play goes in a rather predictable manner here. There are obstacles to dodge, things that can't be shot: rocks, mostly, but occasionally whirlpools and currents as well. Mines can be shot, and shooting also gets rid of low-clinging stalactites, making them plunge into the water ahead with harmless spelunking noises. More interesting are the red catapult traps that have to be deactivated with shooting, only to reactivate themselves after ten seconds or so, requiring repeated shots while navigating past some obstacles; just as irritating are the blue catapults, which turn off with one shot but can be turned back on if hit a second time, and always seem to be next to other catapults. And the whole thing is made infinitely more annoying by the number of places where the ceiling has been shored up or patched, cracked walls or wooden pillars clearly advertising that, if they're hit, the consequences will be... unpleasant.

Bentley was right: if Carmelita wasn't such a good shot, they'd never make it through. But, after an interminable age, they emerge into a wide, dank cave, the base of the tower before them.

This close, they can see that the outside is styled differently from the others, yet again. It looms tall and imposing, like each of them have, but with its own unique flair. This one features a thin ramp around the outside, just big enough to stand on, spiraling up steeply enough that even Carmelita couldn't possibly jump from one level to the next. Walls and other obstacles stick out from it at regular intervals, preventing anyone from climbing.

“This looks like a job for...” Carmelita says, looking at Murray, waiting for him to finish.

“A job for THE MURRAY.” Murray pounds one fist into the other hand and starts his way up.

Otto and Carmelita follow in Murray's wake, but this is clearly Murray Time. The obstacles in his path fall before his mighty blows; some fall to pieces, leaving chunks behind he can pick up and throw at sturdier obstacles. The higher he gets, the tougher the items are. By the time he's near the tower's central landing, about halfway up, he has to resort to special moves he's learned, like the breaking blow. No chance of getting past the landing, though; the way beyond is blocked by swinging axes, moving far too fast for anyone to get past.

Murray's panting for breath by the time he reaches the landing itself. “Nice job, Murray,” Carmelita says.

“Sure... The Murray... reigns supreme,” he gasps out. He pulls a piece of pizza from nowhere and scarfs it down, then wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. “Is the door open?”

“No, but it does not seem to have a keyhole,” Otto replies.

“And it's not an electric lock, either,” says Carmelita. “Think you can pry the door open? Then we
Can The Murray pry open a door? Of course he can! He can do it in a matter of herghk.... oof.... uh.... whew. No problem, just a few grunts of effort.

Until they're swarmed by dozens of mechanical foxes the size of Murray's fist. They're fast and they bite, and the next few minutes devolve into a frenzy of swatting them off. When they're finished, they can look around properly.

This tower resembles Rajan's: halfway across the landing is a wall, dividing the area in half. Unlike Rajan's tower, though, this wall is clear: something much stronger than glass, but just as see-through. On the other side is a lab, the likes of which Bentley has only... well, okay, if he'd dreamed about it he would've made it already, but it's pretty darn close.

The way further down is secured with a hatch and a trapdoor, secure enough only bombs could get through. The way into the lab is that way as well; there's no obvious way to continue upwards. But near the glass wall is one curious thing: a protective laser barrier.

In the center of the laser barrier is what appears to be a computer chip. A big one.

“We may as well turn back,” says Carmelita. “We can't do anything without bombs.”

“But we have made some valuable discoveries.” Otto grabs both the others and pulls them into a group hug, to Murray's joy and Carmelita's comical shock. “Let's celebrate on our return. It's all smooth sailing from here!”

**JOB COMPLETE**

_Carmelita and Murray look at each other, then book it back to the speedboat without waiting to see if Otto's following._
Bentley's just starting to get bored when movement from the front of the hotel catches his attention. He's on high alert at once, wheeling to the edge of the roof and pulling out his binoc-u-com to get a better look.

Winthorp just left via the front door.

Bentley makes a face and uses his hover-pack to leap over the river. Everyone else in the gang is busy, so it's up to him to tail this guy. He doesn't want to leave—Penelope's still in there, and according to Otto, she takes every opportunity she can to sneak out. But keeping this guy from causing any problems is also high priority.

That, and it goes against everything Bentley's done for the past five years to leave an Interpol agent in the field and not keep an eye on them. Or have his phone bugged, his e-mails automatically forwarded to Bentley's inbox, and a tracking device placed inside his badge.

Tampering with Carmelita's badge took two months of planning and over an hour of surgical precision, but she hasn't caught them completely by surprise since before the vault job. Worth every minute. And he is never telling her he did it.

Winthorp waits for a pair of guards to lower the bridge for him, so Bentley waits for him to cross, then takes advantage of a passing boat to follow. There isn't much cover here, so Bentley stays well away, ready to dodge behind a scarecrow or a barn or whatever else it takes if Winthorp turns around.

But Winthorp—unlike every other criminal Bentley has ever tailed in the history of the Cooper Gang—doesn't check behind him. Doesn't look around at all. I mean, sure, the route he takes is downright stupid, and features him backtracking and going left then right, but it doesn't seem to be Winthorp trying to catch anyone as much as it seems like Winthorp is lost.

Good gravy.

Winthorp at last stops at the windmill nearest the safe-house. He beckons a guard over; the fox pulls a key out of his pocket and unlocks a small door in the base. Winthorp ducks inside.

Bentley uses the roof of the safe-house barn to observe, using his binoc-u-com to zoom in. “Based on the readings I'm getting, I believe they're using the windmills for power... but that one's giving off extra signals. That one's for communications. Now that's interesting.” He rubs his hands together. “Be a real shame if something happened to it.”

“Hey Bentley, I just left the guard house. Where are you?”

“I'm tailing Winthorp, Sly.”

“Is he giving you any trouble?”

“I'm fine,” Bentley says at once. Winthorp leaves the windmill and the guard locks it up behind him. “Can you take my post, though? There's still a chance Penelope will leave the hotel, and with the
others still in the sewers, I'd rather be prepared."

"Sure, sounds fun."

Bentley taps the button that makes his wheelchair retract his binoc-u-com and continues tailing Winthrop. Winthrop leads him to the airfield, an area thick with guards... ugh. Bentley spends a truly ludicrous amount of time trying to dodge them, and succeeding, as Winthrop circles two of the buildings and actually climbs up the ramp before realizing it isn't where he needs to go and climbing back down again.

Bentley fights the urge to scream.

"Good thing you had me watch, Bentley. Penelope just came out."

Bentley gulps, loud enough to be heard over the microphones. "She left the hotel?"

"No, the castle."

"That's strange," Bentley says. "She was in the hotel last, and I was under the impression she wasn't being allowed out."

"Yeah, me too... I'm going to follow her."

"Right, I'll stay with Winthrop." Winthrop is currently entering one of those buildings. Bentley waits outside, eyebrows raised. It appears to be locked via a computer near the door, now isn't that interesting. Certainly something to check out later.

Winthrop leaves the building, and Bentley continues following. He goes over the bridge to the wooded area, with Bentley wheeling along behind... then towards town again, and into the central square with the well. Bentley's all ready to jump back on a rooftop and declare himself finished with surveillance when Winthrop circles around the well and leaves town again from the other road.

Winthrop has the directional sense of a squirrel playing with a pinata. But with less swinging.

Still, once he's back in the wooded area, he gets himself turned around yet again. Bentley eventually just hides behind a tree while Winthrop circles one area once, twice, three times, FOUR TIMES before figuring out where he's supposed to go. And then he backtracks again because of the wolf pack.


"She's hiding from the guards more often than she's checking for followers."

Bentley lets out a low whistle. "That's..."

"Look, buddy, I don't care if she was brainwashed or what, I'm not believing it until we have enough proof that Interpol would tear up all their files on her."

That surprises a chuckle out of Bentley. Winthrop finally seems to have found his way; Bentley trails him up the path to the castle. "That's an awful lot of evidence..."

"Yeah, and I still wouldn't trust her. I've got your back, buddy."

Bentley nods absently, watching as Winthrop stops in front of the castle. Someone inside lowers the drawbridge, and he goes in. "All right. Are the others done in the sewers yet?"
“I don't think so. Why?”

“Winthorp's in the castle now. I want to keep an eye on him, but this may be my only chance to check out what was going on in the building by the airfield he was so interested in.”

“Do it,” Sly says.

“I agree,” says Bentley. “It's worth the risk of leaving him unwatched.”

With that, Bentley backtracks. Because Bentley actually knows where he's going, it doesn't take more than a couple minutes for him to wheel up in front of that building. He cracks his knuckles and sets to work.

Hacking is always relaxing, and just like—

Wait.

There's no 'Hello, Bentley' when he begins. There's no... this wasn't programmed by Penelope.

“What the—who did this?” Bentley demands as he tries to navigate. “My controls are reversed! The right analog stick moves and the left analog stick shoots now.”

Hoo boy, this is gonna be 'fun.'

Whoever programmed this (Winthorp, maybe?) wasn't particularly creative. There's a large room with a switch protected by a firewall, but Bentley's dealt with that a million times. And there are defensive drones being released from all sides, fast ones, but they don't shoot or lay bombs or anything.

But there are a lot of them.

A whole lot of them.

A truly ridiculous amount of them.

Trying to get through this without shooting those drones is like trying to stay dry in a rainstorm by dancing between raindrops, and just as effective. It takes Bentley three times as long to make the progress he should just because he's being swarmed on all sides. No wonder they don't shoot or leave bombs: they'd only hit each other.

It's a good thing all Bentley has to do to finish is hit that switch, because by the time he's finished, he's spent longer on that hack job than he has any since he was a teenager. He shakes out his hands when he's done, glancing at the door; it pops open.

Finally. This had better be good.

Unfortunately, when Bentley wheels his way in, he sees that it is. In the worst way possible.

All four walls are covered in large blueprints. Bentley can read them. I don't have any idea how to read a blueprint, and most text is too small for players, but it doesn't need to be big. Half of them show images of Clockwerk; the few pieces of readable text on those are about the composition of the metal alloys, the types of gemstones needed to control such a creature, and a close-up of the hate chip. The other half are covered with blueprints of a similar design, but showing different species. Namely, foxes. But others, too: butterflies and snakes, badgers and polar bears.

One of Clockwerk's blueprints has a note pinned to it. Bentley wheels himself closer and reads it.
While you were undoubtedly correct that such a creature would terrify thieves, its motivation would render it just as much a problem for law enforcement. Further, it can be defeated through any amount of teamwork, rare though that is among the criminal element. See the notes re: Scotland.

Lastly, the amount of hate required in the AI would render any attempts to control it useless. Recreating this owl will have no overall benefit to our goals.

I would like to continue cooperating, as the immortality aspect is rather appealing, but if our partnership ends here, I understand.

Dr. (Scribble)

Bentley swallows hard and pushes himself away, wheeling instead to the center of the room, where there are several crates marked 'DANGER'. Bentley pries one open and peers inside: “There are enough weapons in here to start World War Three. And they're our time’s weapons. What in all the world is going on here?”

JOB COMPLETE

Bentley wheels himself out the door, then pauses, wheels over to the computer, and starts tapping in a better lock—one that'll keep Winthorp from using the weapons he brought.
Sly stands on the same building Bentley was using as a post, fighting back yawns of boredom. He glances at the sewer cover, where the others went, and scratches at his back with his cane. Standing on watch is important, sure, but boring. He fights back another yawn, glancing up at the castle—

A small figure in yellow appears on top of the castle, looking over the side to the drawbridge. Even from this distance, the ears make it clear: that's Penelope.

And she's rappelling down the side.

“Good thing you had me watch, Bentley,” Sly murmurs, putting his binoc-u-com away. “Penelope just came out.”

Bentley's gulp echoes in the earpiece. “She left the hotel?”

“No, the castle.” Sly glances around for guards and takes off at a run.

“That's strange,” Bentley says. “She was in the hotel last, and I was under the impression she wasn't being allowed out.”

“Yeah, me too...” Sly uses wall-hooks to get up the side of the hill faster, and reaches level ground before Penelope's finished coiling her rope. He ducks out of view. “I'm going to follow her.”

“Right, I'll stay with Winthorp.”

With that established, Sly peeks out, watching Penelope. Penelope's glancing around, checking on the guards, but no one's noticed her... Sly excepted, of course. She starts down the hill, then backtrack back up. Sly waits.

She shadows the guard patrolling the mountain path, keeping just behind him, close enough to pick-pocket if she knew how. Even so, she stops to turn around twice, just on that path. Sly stays on the slope overhead and watches until she gets down among the trees, then paraglides on top of one to join her.

Penelope's scarce taken two steps before she uses the tree Sly's standing on to hide from another guard. In fact, between the guards and the wolf pack, Sly spends several minutes just standing in the tree, waiting for her to move. But she gets out of the woods at last, and heads towards town.

Sly follows. His blue outfit blends with the shadows much better than her yellow one; and she's never been the best at getting to the rooftops.

“Sly? How's Penelope?”

Sly climbs back to his original look-out post as Penelope jumps in a barrel to wait for the tank to go by. “She's hiding from the guards more often than she's checking for followers.”

Bentley lets out a low whistle. “That's...”

“Look, buddy, I don't care if she was brainwashed or what, I'm not believing it until we have enough
proof that Interpol would tear up all their files on her.” Penelope follows the tank over the bridge, and uses bouncy cheese to get to a roof at last; Sly ducks behind a chimney.

Bentley chuckles. “That's an awful lot of evidence...”

Whenever the tanks are out of view, Penelope works on the winch, lowering the bridge on their side. “Yeah, and I still wouldn't trust her. I've got your back, buddy.”

“All right. Are the others done in the sewers yet?”

“I don't think so. Why?” Penelope walks across her half bridge; the remaining distance is short enough for her to jump. Sly follows, perching on a boat to stay out of sight.

“Winthorp's in the castle now. I want to keep an eye on him, but this may be my only chance to check out what was going on in the building by the airfield he was so interested in.”

“Do it,” Sly says.

“I agree,” says Bentley. “It's worth the risk of leaving him unwatched.”

And Penelope is watched. But still being cautious. Whatever she's setting out to do, one thing's clear: the guards aren't supposed to know about it. And Sly would bet his cane that means she's working against this group.

The empty field doesn't give much to hide in, but so long as they stay out of the guards' flashlight beams, neither of them will be spotted. By the guards. Sly finds himself perching atop scarecrows, ducking in barns, and just plain lying in the narrow ditch between rows of tiny baby plants as Penelope continues her winding, wavering path. It's almost like she's going this way deliberately; as though she's trying to throw off anyone who may be following her, or prevent herself from being followed to begin with.

Following her this long also gives Sly a chance to study her. Her yellow jumpsuit and goggles are gem-free, but every now and then, she reaches back a casual hand to shove at her hair, or clutches at the side of a building as she peeks past it, and her sleeves slip down. Bracelets show then, studded with dozens of gemstones, the openings too small to fit over her hands and without any visible clasps.

Sly's hiding in a barn when she runs towards it to hide, and Sly scarce has time to climb the ladder to the hayloft before she's in. She hides in an empty stall while a guard comes by, shining his flashlight through the door, inspecting the area with interminable slowness that isn't the slightest bit thorough. As he does, Sly holds still, his toes still on the ladder, waiting, watching.

Penelope pushes down one sleeve and fiddles with the bracelet, tugging on it, scratching at it, with an absent-minded air that says, more than anything else, that she can't get it off.

The barn seems to be the last detour, however. She still backtracks and moves around guards, but she heads straight for the airfield in a beeline. Sly perches on a rooftop as she continues forward and starts up the ramp.

“Trying to escape again, Penelope?”

Penelope freezes at the voice; spotlights turn on from all sides, making her cover her eyes as she's thrown into sharp relief. Winthorp walks out of the darkness, frowning at her. “Now what, oh what, should we do to Bentley to punish this?”
“Don't do a thing to him,” she snaps, pulling her goggles down over her eyes. “My actions; my responsibility.”

Winthorp smiles, all teeth and no happiness. “No, I don't think we'll take it out on you. You haven’t finished your work. You don't get to be stranded here to try to eke out some happiness until you do.” He grabs her by the arm and pulls, so hard Penelope yelps as she stumbles after him.

Sly acts purely on instinct, moving closer, a frown touching his features as Penelope's dragged from the spotlight none-too-gently. No one should do that to another person—

Penelope looks at him.

Straight in the face, her eyes widening, one arm moving to point before Winthorp yanks again and she gives another cry. She scowls hard and moves to keep up. “You don't even know how I got out, do you?” she demands, though she keeps her eyes on Sly; they move through the wooded area, a direct path back to the hotel. “It's not like there's a secret passage between the hotel and the castle or anything.”

Winthorp sighs. “I don't care how you're getting out, so long as it stops.”

“No secret passage between the hotel and castle,” Penelope repeats as they enter town and pass the well. “The only place I can get to, from that tower, is the hotel. And this time, I just came out because I wanted to fly. Honest. I—”

“You don't get to fly,” Winthorp says, giving her another yank, “until I'm sure you're under control.”

And then they're inside, and all is quiet. Calm. Peaceful.

Save for Sly's clenched fists and grinding teeth.

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly stays on a rooftop, trembling with rage, glaring at the hotel through the job complete screen.*
“You sure took your time down in that sewer,” Sly says.

Carmelita snorts and jumps to the rooftop beside him, leaving Murray and Otto to deal with the boat. “And I wish I hadn't. Did anything interesting happen while we were stuck down there?”

“A bit,” Sly says, “but we can discuss it later. There's another job to pull off first.”

The two of them pull out their binoc-u-coms in the same motion. “Bentley, if you ever make me get into a sewer again I'm going to feed you to it.”

“Charming,” Bentley says dryly. “Does that mean you're not up for another mission?”

Oh, she's up for it. Glaring Bentley into submission, yes, but she's up for it. “What. Do you need. Me to do?”

Bentley removes his glasses to rub his eyes, then puts them back on. “The hotel—and the tower, through it—are drawing a lot of power. The local windmills seem to be generating it. Sly, you should go and pickpocket a few guards; we're going to need the keys. Once you've got the keys, Carmelita can go in and take out the systems.”

“Sounds easy enough,” Sly says, but he glances at Carmelita. “Are you okay with this, Carm?”

She growls under her breath. “Fine,” she says. “But I want it on the record that there's no other way.”

“Believe me, there's not.” Bentley looks away to type out a few notes. “You'll need to do it five times; don't destroy anything you don't have to. The windmill by the airfield is being used for power and communications. I still have to figure out how to handle that.”


“Now, much as I'd love to have you two work together on this, it just isn't possible right now. We need to keep someone on that roof as much as possible, monitoring the situation. Since Otto and Murray are... busy... that means that whichever one of you two isn't working on the job, should be up there.”

Sly twirls his hat on the end of his cane. “You're not coming out again?”

Bentley groans and lifts a thick stack of blueprints into view. “I'm trying to make sense of this mess. There's something going on, I'm sure of it, something other than time travel for personal gain, but I can't figure out what.”

“You know, I think that's half the reason I became a thief,” Sly says, flipping his hat back on his head. “I didn't want to do paperwork.”

“You do it now that you're a cop, Ringtail.”

“And we can't get away from it here, either,” Bentley says, dropping the papers; they make a loud
thud when they hit the table, even through the binoc-u-com. “Though at least it's all necessary in trying to figure out what's going on, instead of trying to justify our every move for the irritated public.”

Carmelita disconnects her binoc-u-com and shoves it in her pocket. Sly does the same, albeit less violently. “You okay, Carm?” Sly asks.

“I'm fine,” she grumbles.

“You don't sound—”

“Go get those keys, Ringtail,” she says, crossing her arms and looking away from him, ears flat to her head. “Just... remember that this is only okay because there's no other way, understand? We are cops.”

Sly stares at her, then shakes his head. “Right. I'll just, uh, be going, then.”

Play switches to Sly. Key guards have taken up locations around the level, but the nearest one is doing nice little circles around the well. Though, naturally, the tanks are going by often enough to make things irritating. And it's in full view of Carmelita.

Sly tries not to let it bug him, but even without her stopping him, there's an itch between his shoulder blades as he feels her watch him. Only a few months ago, they had to lie and hide any pick-pocketing they did on missions; had she known about it, they may never have dealt with The Contessa. Now she's watching him and not even doing anything.

Truth be told, Sly isn't sure he likes it. But he gets the key and climbs back up to the rooftop, handing it over to Carmelita. “You're up.”

Carmelita scowls, taking the key from him, and play switches to her. She navigates to the nearest windmill and finds the door in the base, pops in the key, turns it, and enters in a flash.

The inside of the windmill is... impressive. Stretching up the tower of the windmill is a vertical conveyor belt of sorts, stretching from a spinning shaft that goes out of the windmill—no doubt to the windmill blades—through the floor in a long oval. Wobbly platforms are connected to the conveyor belt, places to step on, though when Carmelita jumps on one experimentally it tips and dumps her off almost at once. The only breakable part is right near the top, the spinning shaft itself; there are no wires to be seen, although they must be there somewhere.

“Next time you jump on one of those platforms, try balancing your weight,” says Bentley over the binoc-u-com. Carmelita scowls, but this time, as one comes out of the floor, she steps on it. Play turns motion-sensitive (though for players with motion sensitivity turned off, it becomes minute adjustments of the joystick) as Carmelita shifts her weight this way and that to avoid being dumped off.

The important thing is that it works. Carmelita reaches the top and steps onto the small platform there, the spinning crankshaft at her mercy, thick metal that's too powerful to be hit but nothing before her shock pistol. All too soon, the spinning stops, the conveyor belt dies, and she can jump to the floor and get out of there.

She locks up behind herself automatically, and flips the key in her hand as she walks back to the spot where Sly waits. “Here,” she says, handing him the key when she returns. “Give this back.”

Sly laughs, but as play returns to him, you learn she's serious. Sly... has to give the key back. Reverse pick-pocketing. Will wonders never cease.
Then Sly's off to find the next guard, this one wandering the wooded area and—it seems—deliberately trying to get in trouble with the wolves. Or so it seems. How one guard can wander into the path of a single wolf pack eight times in two minutes without it being deliberate is... difficult to consider. But Sly eventually manages to get the key.

Yeesh.

Sly returns to Carmelita and delivers the key with a bow. “There you are, inspector,” he says, a teasing grin on his face.


“You treat criminals with more fairness than anyone else on the force,” Sly retorts at once. “Innocent until proven guilty is your life's motto, not just your work. Any doubt these guys are guilty?”

“Not the point, Sly,” she says, jumping off the roof. She stalks away from town, heading for the next windmill. And she may take her feelings out on the guards in the area rather than avoiding them, as she did last time.

The inside of this windmill is a bit different from the last. Two conveyor belts make their way up, though the design is otherwise similar. The only platforms that can be stood on are moving down, however, and collapse after being stood on for a second. To reach the top, and the piece she has to destroy, Carmelita has to jump back and forth between the two belts, never hesitating for a second.

The exercise may even improve her mood a little. Not that it seems to help any; she's still scowling when she returns to the roof and thrusts the key back at Sly. “Return it,” she orders.

Sly raises his eyebrows. “You're not okay, are you?” he asks.

Carmelita kicks at the roof. “I'm not having this discussion, Sly,” she says.

“But we need to,” Sly says. “If we never talk, then—”

“Go return the key and steal something, why don't you.” Carmelita deliberately turns her back on him.

Sly frowns, but returns the key to the guard he stole it from and goes after the next guy, who's wandering around at the base of the castle. Nothing Sly hasn't done before; Sly's barely climbed the hill before the key's in his hands. He heads back to Carmelita.

Carmelita snatches the key from his hands and jumps off the roof before Sly can say a word. She doesn't encounter any guards on her way to the next windmill; perhaps they can sense her bad mood and are avoiding her on instinct, even better than they do the wolf pack. Unfortunately, it means she doesn't have anything to take her mood out on.

This windmill is set up like the last, but with added laser security. Just wonderful. She misses a jump and falls back to the bottom four times, due to laser-dodging shenanigans. None of it puts her in a better mood.

Sly is waiting at the door when she leaves. “Why are you—”

“Murray's watching,” he says. “Look, Carm... since you wouldn't say anything, I asked Bentley if he had a clue why you were in a bad mood. Does this really bother you that much?”

Carmelita actually growls at him, then turns her back and crosses her arms. “What's it to you? You're
“It matters to me because it matters to you.” Sly puts a hand on her shoulder. “I thought my stealing didn't bother you anymore, well, not as much, since I only steal from criminals. But—”

Carmelita shakes him off. “It's not you stealing that bothers me, Sly,” she says. “It's me. I'm an honest cop. Or... I was.” She looks at the ground as she says the last bit.

Sly frowns. “You still are. The best sort of cop.”

She rolls her eyes and thrusts the key at him. “Return this,” she orders. “At least I can pretend I'm not really stealing this way.”

Sly takes the key and does as she asks; she follows him at a distance, now that she doesn't have to return to the rooftop. The two cross the river together but she waits by the next windmill while he pickpockets the guard in the airfield.

Sly unlocks the door for her and bows her inside. “Have you ever done a sting operation?” Sly asks, shutting the door behind them. “Sent a cop in to infiltrate a suspected criminal gang, so you can get enough evidence to actually do something?”

“I was never even considered,” Carmelita replies. “I have too much of a temper to be good at it.”


Woah is right. This windmill is set up a... little differently from the others. Between the pennants hanging from the walls (orange with white tips again, this guy is so not creative) and the sealed door keeping Carmelita from the part she has to destroy, this one is a bit tougher.

Until Sly spots something. “Those things look like the dial for a safe,” he says, pointing to a pair of small knobs sticking out near the top.

“If you turn them, maybe the door will open up.”

With that, the two of them have a plan. Carmelita climbs up first, of course, bouncing and jumping and darting between the conveyor belts that are determined to drop her to the floor. Once she reaches the thin wedge of a platform available on this side of the door, play switches to Sly, who climbs to the top as easy as ninja-spire landings. Literally.

Unfortunately, once he reaches the top, Bentley has to jump in. “This is a tricky mechanism, Sly; you're going to have to open them both at the same time. Spin both analog sticks in opposite directions until you feel them vibrate; then, switch directions. If you have vibration turned off, you can also use the light cues.”

Yep. Both sticks at once. This makes things just a tad trickier; Sly has to take his time and focus.

“Hurry it up, Ringtail!”

Or, you know, get yelled at by Carmelita. That too.

The second both knobs click into place, though, the door slides up, and Carmelita shock-pistols the living daylights... wait. Bad choice of words, there. The light is NOT alive. It's just shocked until it's even more not-alive. Forgot for a second the sort of craziness that can happen in a Sly game, folks.

With that accomplished, the two return to the ground. “You know, Sly,” Carmelita says as they
emerge into the moonlight, “if this were a sting operation, then I'd be trying to infiltrate their group and not let them know I'm here.”

“Which is why I'm returning the keys,” Sly says. “If you want, I could get you a disguise, too. Or you could be my handler, so we're in contact.”

Carmelita actually smiles, just a little. Sly grins back and goes to return that key.

The last guard Sly has to pick-pocket is patrolling the fields around the safe-house. This one is possibly the easiest pick so far. He returns to Carmelita with a grin, brandishing the key. “If this were a sting operation, we'd be making a copy of it before putting it back.”

Carmelita snorts as he unlocks the door. “Do we need to?”

“Nah.”

The two head inside, and have to evaluate this newest room. There's no nice conveyor belt to let Carmelita get to the top this time. Instead, the communication array sits near the top of the building, and to get up to it... well.

Logically, the guards who enter this building, and the people who take care of the communication satellite, must use long poles with hooks on them to get up. Set into the walls all around are wall-hooks; Sly grabs one, and a small section of the wall peels out, making a platform and leaving him parallel to the floor. It retracts into the wall when he releases it, but when Carmelita jumps on top, her body weight holds it into position.

An odd jumping challenge follows, as Sly climbs around the edges of the room with crazy acrobatics and tricks, finding things to grab hold of that'll make Carmelita platforms, and having her jump to them before dropping to the floor and finding his way to the next jumpable location. It's a full-body workout, no doubt about that. And he has to do the double-handed safe-cracking technique again at the top.

With a last few blasts of the shock pistol, this windmill, too, is destroyed. “That does it,” Bentley says. “They may still have power, but they’ll have to deal with a lot less of it now. Head on back to the safe-house. Oh, and bring the key; I may need it later.”

Sly drops to the floor and glances at Carmelita. “Maybe I should make a copy of it.”

Carmelita smiles, then shakes her head. “Nah. Come on, Ringtail. Let's go before we give Bentley a heart attack.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

_The two of them stroll out of the lighthouse together and, on a whim, Sly throws his arm over Carmelita's shoulders. She doesn't shrug it away._
Bentley:

Okay team, we've made some good progress so far. In addition to locking away numerous illegal weapons they brought from our time (picture) and discovering how their communication array is set up (picture), we've accomplished a number of things. Chief among them is information we can use going forward. We have enough information from the tower to determine that Penelope is making something electronic for them (picture of the large chip), and, based on the information gathered by tailing Winthorp and Penelope independently, we've learned she is not a completely willing participant. We can use this to our advantage.

But there are other issues to keep in mind. (picture of the fox guards). While undercover, Sly discovered that, with the exception of the rat troopers, every guard working in this area is a cop—

Carmelita:

What?

Sly:

There wasn't a good time to tell you. (picture of Sly in his fox disguise.)

Carmelita:

Of all the—there's no way.

Bentley:

I've been hacking police databases world-wide and identified many of them for you, if you'd like to look through a list, Carmelita. The majority were recruited from local police departments, with the higher ranks coming from national security organizations and the highest, well, (picture of Winthorp) more than one Interpol officer.

Carmelita:

You cannot be serious! There can't be this much corruption in—
Bentley:
Can your disbelief wait until after the slideshow?

Carmelita:
Fine. But I'm going to want to look through those files. *picture of a police badge flashes by*

Bentley:
I would expect no less. As I was saying, this is a problem you'll need to bring up to Interpol when we catch them; with this level of corruption unearthed, you can bet there'll be an internal investigation after. *picture of Carmelita standing in an interrogation cell, growling at someone.* Furthermore, there seems to be some discussion on creating robots--including a recreation of an old foe, which was fortunately already cancelled. *picture of the note*

Sly:
**Good.** But we still need to look into that.

Bentley:
Both of those are things we can't deal with until we handle the situation here.

Otto:
Are we turning the handle, then? *picture of a door.*

Bentley:
I thought I told you to never speak again.

Otto:
I wasn't speaking, I was talking. There's a difference. The difference involves—

Bentley:
Okay, okay! Yeesh! Right now there **are** things we need to take care of. With all the information available, it seems clear that Penelope is not working for them of her own free will. We need to, um, arrange for Sly and Carmelita and Murray to **have a conversation** with her. *picture of Penelope.*
Otto:

Will it really be a conversation, though?

Bentley:

Before we can do that, we have a couple jobs to pull off. Depending on what we learn from them, we'll be able to hatch a proper plan.

First, while Sly was tailing Penelope, she strongly hinted there was a secret passage between the castle and the hotel, and outright stated that it was possible to get inside the tower from the hotel. *(picture of the trapdoor on top of the castle).* Sly, you climb to the top of the castle and knock down one of the catapults; that'll give the rest of us a way up. Then sneak inside. I want to know everything about that castle—and where that secret passage comes out. *(picture of, well, the inside of a secret passage.)*

Sly:

This is gonna be fun. Do you have any idea how much time I spent trying to find secret passages as a kid? *(picture of Sly as a kid.)*

Bentley:

In our orphanage years alone, you spent a combined total of two months, three weeks, five days, seventeen hours and eight minutes.

Sly:

Wait, you counted?!

Bentley:

While Sly's doing that, the rest of us will have to work together to disrupt their communications. *(picture of the windmill).* After analyzing the signals, I came to the conclusion that it works by bouncing signals off of special tracking collars placed on all the wolves. If we can get the collars off the wolves, they can be set up in a transceiver array that will let us eavesdrop on all their conversations.

Once we've pulled off these jobs, we should have enough information to deal with this mess. *(picture of Winthorp).*
Thiefnet Computer.

Murray: Legs of Steal. Run while carrying an object.

Carmelita: Precision Goggles. These goggles, based on Otto's design, allows Carmelita to snipe enemies from further away.
Sly leaves the safe-house with a cheery wave back at the others and swings himself out the window. The moon shines high overhead as he makes his way through the fields, just barely avoiding the urge to whistle; even the guards around him aren't a problem at this point. Sly wall-hooks up the hill and makes his way up the castle with ease, though he has to pause and make sure no one's in the meeting room with the large windows before easing past them.

Once he's on the roof of the castle, he pulls out his binoc-u-com. “I can't believe I get to do this, Bentley.”

“I can't believe I'm letting you,” Bentley gripes. “You're going to be insufferable for weeks.”

“Oh come on, pal.” Sly tosses his cane from hand to hand. “A real secret passage! This is almost as good as stealing a pirate ship!”

“Just be careful in there,” Bentley says. “The guards know their way around that place, but you don't; if anyone sees you, we won't get another chance. Plus, unless you find that secret passage, there are only two exits: the trapdoor and the front door.”

Sly frowns and crosses his arms. “You mean I could get cornered down there.”

“That's exactly what I'm saying. The second anyone notices you in there, or thinks there's anything wrong, this mission's a bust. I don't want you within sneezing distance of those guys, Sly.”

“Oh, I won't,” Sly says. “Not even to pick-pocket. Now relax, Bentley. Any last-minute advice before I go in there?”

“Well...” Bentley consults the blueprint in front of him. “Based on the most common model for buildings of this time period, there should be an upper floor, the ground floor, and a cellar. You should probably explore the top floor first, since you'll be able to get back out the trapdoor; then locate the exit on the ground floor before searching the cellar, and make sure you can get back up the stairs or ladder and away when you do.”

“I'm on it.”

Sly tucks his binoc-u-com away and lifts the trapdoor. A ladder awaits him, with no one directly below. He climbs down to the flash of a LOADING screen.

When the screen clears, Sly is standing in a rather small hallway, the staircase to one side, and doors—closed, their locks huge and perfect for skeleton keys or lock picks—on the other three sides. On a hunch, he creeps first to the one directly in front of him and cracks it open.

Sure enough, it's the room in the front of the castle, the one with the two large windows where the Black Baron would pace while discussing his strategy. Where Penelope, in disguise, would discuss her strategy. However it's described, it's a large room, with three deep red, plush carpets covering the ground and fancy hangings on the walls. It's also completely empty.

Sly leaves that door cracked open and exits the room. As he approaches the next room, Bentley can
be heard saying, “Hold the circle button when you approach to look through the keyhole.”

Good advice, Bentley. Sly does so, and can see a fox going in circles around the room. Sly waits until the guy's back is to him to slip in. Sly tails the guy around the room. Like guards everywhere, he doesn't notice that the door is open now, just keeps going. This room is simpler than the audience chamber; it has a couple couches, one rug in the middle of the wooden floor, a fireplace in one wall. If castles had living rooms, this would be one.

In his three circuits of the room, Sly uses the circle button to check under the couches, under the rug, and pull on the candle holders set into the walls. No secret switches, no trap doors. It's not here. Sly slips out and shuts the door behind him.

On to the last room on this floor, then. A glance through the keyhole reveals... weird flashing lights, but no guards. And, when Sly tries it, it's locked.

But there's a rotating lock above the keyhole, instead of it taking a, you know, actual key. Which is good, because Bentley's forbidden Sly from even touching these guards.

Which, if any of them had anything valuable, Sly would immediately ignore.

Not that he'd tell Bentley that.

A few moments of turning the dial this way and that and feeling for the vibration of falling tumblers later, Sly pushes open the door.

He closes it behind him and takes a moment to pull out his binoc-u-com. “Hey, Bentley?”

“You're not here,” says Carmelita. “You got something?”

“Take a look at this,” Sly says, pointing his binoc-u-com around the room. It is impressive. The row of computer monitors, the desk with electrical components tucked underneath, the security cameras monitoring the door to the hotel, the airfield, and all the bridges... It's really quite impressive.

“There is no way that's legal,” Carmelita mutters. “Only, we learned this by breaking and entering, and—”

“Sting operation,” Sly reminds her. “Just the way you need to get proof of stuff like this. I'll snap some photos.”

“Try not to get any of the camera images that show things that are—well—from now.” Carmelita groans. “I don't know how we'll explain that to Interpol.”

“Nothing that shows the time period but lots of images of illegal surveillance, coming right up,” Sly says.

Based on the labels of the pictures he takes, they include a computer array, a weapons control switchboard, a Spice dispensary, and more mind-control gems. Terrific. Just what we want to see pictures of.

With that accomplished, Sly peeks out into the hallway and lets himself out, quiet and unseen as a shadow.

That does it for the upstairs. He makes his way down the stairs slowly, even though rail sliding down the banister would be much faster and significantly more fun. A guard's on the ground floor, pacing up and down the hallway the stairs empty out on; Sly waits halfway up, watching him. A switch to
control the drawbridge is right next to the door leading outside, no problems there, and four other
doors. No way to go down further, so even though Bentley said to go to the cellar, Sly waits for the
guard to turn his back and presses his eye against the closest peephole.

He can't look long, not with the patrolling going on, but he does see that the room's empty. He lets
himself in and shuts the door behind him.

From the looks of it, this is another meeting room, like the one Penelope used as the Black Baron
upstairs. It's smaller, and less formal, but still very similar. And like the last one, it's unguarded, the
 candles unlit. Sly tests them all, even jumping on the couch so he can reach the chandelier and tug on
that. Nothing even wiggles.

Not this room, then. Time to move on to another.

Sly watches through the keyhole until the patrolling guard turns around, then ghosts out of the
meeting room and presses his eye to against the keyhole across the hall. There's movement in this
one, another guard; Sly waits for them to move away before letting himself in, just missing the guard
patrolling the hallway. He finds himself in a kitchen, a fireplace—no fire in it, but still—set in one
wall, cupboards underneath all the counter tops, and a hatch in the floor in the corner. The guard here
is another fox, walking in slow, steady circles around the central counter.

Sly moves past him, to the trap door, and lifts it. No light, no nothing down below, so he drops down
and looks around.

It's a root cellar. Cans and jars line the shelves on the walls; there's scarce room between them to
swing a cane. Sly tries, and makes enough noise that the guard above stops patrolling with an audible
yelp. Sly doesn't move, barely breathes, until the guard relaxes again and continues on his way.

So, this is the cellar. But there's no passage down here.

Sly climbs halfway up the ladder and waits until the guard's not looking to climb the rest of the way,
than systematically explores the rest of the room, checking every cupboard and even poking his head
up the fireplace. He emerges with a hat blackened in soot and has to fight the urge to sneeze, finger
 jammed against his nose, until he makes it back to the door and peaks out into the hallway, waits his
chance and slips out, darts down the hallway and into the next room without checking for guards.

He's in such a hurry that it almost gets him caught, but the fox in there is... sleeping. Not even the
sort of dozing, been-a-long-day thing that they've seen some guards do in the past, where they'll
close their eyes and lower their flashlight for one or two precious minutes, leaning against the wall
behind them, then jerking awake. No, this guy is taking full advantage of guarding a bedroom at
midnight: he's sacked out on the bed, limbs spread in all directions, flashlight loose in one hand,
mouth wide as he snores. He isn't using any blankets, but that doesn't seem to impede him any.

Sly shakes his head and checks the armoire, the closet, the clothes chest, and the bedside table before
getting on his hands and knees and crawling beneath the bed. It's almost as dusty down here as it was
in the chimney, and Sly lets out a sneeze before he can stop it.

On the bed above there's a snort.

Sly sighs and settles in to wait until the guy is snoring again. It doesn't take long. That's this room
clear, unless the passage is triggered by moving the bed... but that seems unlikely, given the canopy.

One more room to check, the room across from the bedroom. Sly waits for the patrolling guard to
turn his back and checks the keyhole this time, but the last room seems to be empty. Sly lets himself
in and glances around.

A dining room, it seems like. There are hangings on the wall, a long table, and chairs—twelve of them, four on each side and two each at the head and foot—pushed in neatly. The dangling edges of the long tablecloth, white patterned in green spirals, brush the floor; on top of it, not even covering the table all the way, another cloth was thrown, the familiar orange tipped in white pattern covering it and clashing horrendously with the rest of the room. A dumbwaiter is set into the far wall, almost large enough to be a full elevator.

And Sly doesn't remember seeing anything like that in any other room.

Seconds later, Sly climbs inside the dumbwaiter and pulls the door shut. It's almost too dark to see. It should be completely black, but it's not, because when the door closed the roof opened. Sly stands up, his head and shoulders poking out, and looks around.

There's a rope there, like a clothesline, attached to his little box. He grabs it and pulls; the dumbwaiter moves.

The **LOADING** screen covers up the sight of Sly pulling himself along, grunting with the effort. It goes back as, with a last heave, Sly pulls the dumbwaiter to another hole in the wall, a place designed for it to come out. “Have you found the passage yet, Sly?” asks Bentley over the binoc-u-com.

“I think so,” Sly says, looking around in the dim light. “Pretty difficult to move the thing, though.”

“Penelope probably uses a portable engine of some sort, and hides it when it's not in use,” says Bentley. “I should be able to put one together here.”

“Great. I think I'm at the hotel. I'll take a quick look around, then head back to the safe-house.” Sly puts his binoc-u-com away and sits again, so he can listen at the dumbwaiter's sliding door before he opens it; as the door slides open, the roof slides closed.

Sly emerges in a kitchen patrolled by another fox. He slides the dumbwaiter closed and shadows the fox around the room, looking in all directions. Spotless counters, cutting boards lined up and ready to use, knives gleaming in wall-mounted knife racks, cupboards galore, stoves and ovens and everything you'd need or want or expect in a kitchen in this time period.

When the fox passes the door, Sly pauses by it—the keyholes here aren't near big enough to look through—and slips out. He emerges into a room recognizable to anyone who's played Sly 3. He's behind the bar in a large hotel lobby, empty now, though tables are set up as though expecting an influx of guests at any moment; once closed, the door looks like just another wall panel. To one side is the hotel entrance, and near it, flights of stairs; hallway balconies, one side against the wall and the other with a railing, line three sides of the area, with hotel rooms leading off from them.

There are no guards on the lobby floor, though when Sly moves across it, he can see there are guards by the entrance. Three of them. Making sure no one comes in... or, presumably, out. Like the spotlights were supposed to.

Sly examines three separate (empty) hotel rooms before Bentley comes on the line. “Sly, you can explore more later. You have to get back to the safe-house.”

“Why?” Sly asks, even as he leaps over the railing and lands soundlessly on the lobby floor. “Do we have another lead?”

“No, but—there's been a bit of a problem.”
Sly's fur stands on end. “Bentley, if anyone else has gotten captured, or—”

“No, no, nothing like that, but if we don't figure out a plan now we're going to be in serious trouble.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly practically sprints into the dumbwaiter, closes the door, and starts hauling on the rope like his life depends on it.*
Bentley leaves Carmelita at the binoc-u-com station and heaves himself up and out the window. The night is still clear, the moon high overhead; Sly's only been inside the castle for a few minutes. If anything goes wrong in there, they'll know it soon enough, but it's not worth worrying about. Sly is a professional, after all; by Bentley's calculations, there's only a 0.28% chance of him getting caught. Provided he doesn't try anything stupid, like playing in the dumbwaiter or something.

...make that 8.6%.

Bentley dodges around the airfield and goes over the bridge to the wooded area below the castle. Otto and Murray are waiting there, on one of the hills below a tree; Bentley joins them. “All right, time to take care of those wolves.”

“I don't understand what I'm doing on this job,” Otto says. “You don't seem to enjoy my company, after all; it just doesn't work.”

“You're going to play a vital role here, Otto,” Bentley says.

Otto coughs into his fist. “That was a joke. Job, work. Get it?”

Bentley rolls his eyes. “Believe me, I get it. Now, in order to get those communication devices off the wolves, we need to separate them and put them to sleep. My sleep darts will be fine to put them out, but if they're in a group when I shoot one, the others will come running and attack, and we'll lose our chance.”

“So you need us... why?”

“Otto, your unsteady gait is perfect to lure off the wolves.”

Otto laughs out loud. “I get to be bait!”

“Murray, you stay out of the wolves' way, but close enough that you can help Otto if he needs it.”

“You got it, Bentley! I won't let those wolves chow down on my chum!”


Bentley groans. “Once you've got the wolf out of sight of the rest of the pack, I'll hit it with a sleep dart Then Otto can lift off the communicator and get out of there.”

“That sounds—”

Bentley's wheeling away before Otto even gets to finish the sentence, probably because Bentley is afraid of more puns. Murray shrugs and bounds out of sight as well, leaving Otto alone on the tiny hill in the woods.

And a way-point on the wolf pack.
Now, for the first time, players play as Otto—not his boat or anything like that. A few things quickly become apparent.

One, Otto limps. This makes running impossible... and walking quietly. Sure, he's not as loud as Sly is running, but there's no way to get close enough to a guard to pickpocket them without them hearing you.

Two, Otto is actually very good at climbing. He can manage the trees around here, which Sly and the others can't climb (though they can jump from branch to branch), and many other maneuvers. He can even use his wrench to do a rock-climbing maneuver instead of fiddling around with wall hooks.

Unfortunately, his cane-wrench is also point three... because he doesn't have much distance with it. In a fight, he's as useless as Bentley, maybe more. His specialty was technology and inventions, because of his disability; and, under normal circumstances, that would be more than enough. But 'working with Bentley' doesn't qualify as a normal circumstance. Hoo boy.

Now for the fun part. Otto locates the wolf pack and gets close enough that one or two see him... and runs. Er, limps. Two give chase, breaking off from the rest of the pack; Otto has to climb a tree to stay safe.

By the time they're done sniffing around, the rest of the pack is over the bridge and almost to the airfield. Otto waits until they're a distance away before climbing down, then walking in their—well, one's—line of sight. Only one chases him this time.

Soon as they're far enough away from the others, Bentley shoots the wolf with a sleep dart. Otto retrieves the collar around the wolf's neck and climbs back up the tree as it wakes up. “We should raid the hotel kitchens when we're done with this,” Otto says. “Perhaps then we can give the wolves a bone.”

No one even dignifies that with a groan. Instead, Otto watches as that wolf scampers back to the pack. “The wolves we've already done are a bit slower and unsteady; the sleep darts take a while to wear off all the way,” Bentley says over the binoc-u-com. “The ones we've already done won't chase you again.”

Well, at least that's helpful. On to round two.

There are six different wolves in the pack, all told. Otto's climbed every tree (and building) in the area by the time they retrieve the collar from the sixth. Murray's only had to come to Otto's rescue, literally picking up the raccoon and running for their lives, once.

Otto meets up with Bentley on a rooftop, panting, and presents the six collars. “Excellent,” Bentley says, adjusting his glasses. He puts one hand to his ear. “Carmelita, you there?”

“Almost through those files, but yeah.” Carmelita's sigh fogs Bentley's glasses, even through the maskpiece. “They're all good cops, too. No red marks on their files.”

“I know, it stinks,” Bentley says. “Listen, you can finish this up later. I need you to set up a transceiver array by planting these collars at specific points. When I get to the safe-house, can you be ready to go?”

“I can manage that,” says Carmelita.

Bentley nods and breaks the contact. “All right, your part's all done for now, Otto. You can go... somewhere.”
“To the safe-house?” Otto asks, grinning. “But if I'm there, is it really safe? You seem to be having some trouble holding your temper.”

Bentley mutters something indistinct and pointedly wheels away.

Play picks up again as Carmelita outside the safe-house. There are six spots to place the collars. Some, like on top of the safe-house, Bentley could have done himself; others, like the top of a tree, could have been handled by Otto. It's almost as though Bentley wants Carmelita too busy to dwell on anything.

Funny idea, isn't it?

But as soon as Carmelita's placed the final collar, Bentley gives a happy sigh over the binoc-u-com. “This is perfect. And he's mid-conversation. This is great. This is... what?”

“Bentley?” asks Carmelita, but she's ignored. The player's left to do what they want for several minutes, so naturally, Carmelita starts back towards the safe-house. “Are you okay, Bentley? What's going on?”

“We've got a bit of a problem, Carmelita. Head on back to the safe-house, and I'll fill everyone in.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Carmelita completely ignores any and all ideas related to 'sneaking' and sprints out of the job complete screen, heading for the safe-house at a run, before anything else bad can happen.*
Bentley:

(picture of the communicator windmill ) Well guys, I have some bad news. Carmelita finished setting up the receiver array just in time for me to overhear something drastic. (picture of Bentley with gigantic headphones on, looking horrified) . Winthorp was on the phone with someone—meaning he isn't the person behind all this—and being alerted that, and I quote, 'Every other field agent has been compromised.'

Sly:

You mean he knows we've been going around kicking their butts?

Bentley:

Yes, and in order to guard against that possibility here, they plan to break into every building in the area, including the barns, and search them top to toe at dawn. (image of the safe-house: one of those barns. ) There's no way we can be ready to take them on by then, so we have to figure out something. But I don't know what.

Carmelita:

Couldn't we operate out of the van, like we did in Egypt? (picture of the Egypt 'safe-house'. )

Bentley:

We only managed that because we could camouflage it in sand. That won't work here. (picture of the fields ). Even if anything had grown high enough to put it out of sight, they're going to be combing the fields and haystacks—everything they can think of that might hide someone.

Murray:

Do we need to go back to our time for a couple days? (picture of the time machine)

Otto:
I know a location we can reconvene.

Sly, Bentley, Carmelita:
You do?

Sly:
Where?

Bentley:
Please keep in mind, we're going to need to put all our equipment there, too. (picture of their thief gear piled in a corner.)

Otto:
Not to worry; I guarantee it can all fit. And as for where, Sly, you should know it quite well.

Sly:
I should?

Otto:
Certainly. Weren't you the one exploring the innards of the hotel?

(gif of a record spinning and spinning and stopping with an abrupt screeching noise. )

Carmelita:
You have to be joking.

Otto:
Certainly not. Why would you think I am?
Bentley:
Because you're always joking. *(picture of a clown)*

Otto:
I do enjoy my work, yes. Haven't you learned anything in your work as thieves? *(picture of a blackboard, teacher pointing at it with chalk.)* Your enemy is never more vulnerable than where he's secure. That mouse has been able to sneak out again and again—why? *(picture of Penelope).* Because there are places, such as the castle, where he is certain he's in control, so he doesn't even bother to reinforce it.

Sly:
So, what, you think we should move the safe-house inside the castle? *(picture of the cellar)* I mean, there are guards all over, but I guess it could work.

Otto:
Not the castle, the hotel. *(picture of the hotel).* He has the doors blocked from the inside and a spotlight watching every 'possible' entrance or exit; why would he bother searching all the rooms?

Carmelita:
There's no way that would work.

Bentley:
Actually, that's not a bad idea.

Otto:
Believe me, if I could live in police headquarters undetected for three months, the lot of us can live in a hotel being used as an enemy base for a few days.

Sly:
You didn't put that story in the Thievious Raccoonus. *(picture of the book)*.
It didn't seem important, or remarkable, enough. Now, are we going to do this or not?

LOADING

The scene re-opens with a sweeping shot of... what appears to be a pair of hotel rooms, joined together by an open door between them. The room they're in has two large beds, two nightstands, and two tables pushed together, with eight rather plush chairs set up around them; through the door, it appears the other room is set up much the same, though it has no tables or chairs... but does have the van. I have no idea how, but it has the van.

Bentley is fiddling with a projector on the table, while Murray and Sly wrestle curtains into position over large balcony windows, preventing any spotlights outside from getting a glimpse of them. Carmelita's checking her weapons, pauses, picks up Sly's cane from the side of the cable, and starts polishing that; apparently all her guns are in good condition.

The slideshow resumes!

Bentley:

Is everyone ready? Everything here?

Sly:

It's a good thing you put that engine on the dumbwaiter, otherwise we'd still be hauling stuff along. (picture of the dumbwaiter thing)

Murray:

You look good as a fox, Sly. (picture of Sly in disguise.)

Carmelita:

I don't think it was very convincing.

Bentley:

Well, he knew the passwords, so as far as the guards are concerned, that area was guarded perfectly all night without incident. Now, the sun should come up in just a few minutes. Given our nocturnal exploits (pictures of the last few jobs flash by) , we should probably go to bed soon. But we need a plan of attack for the evening.

Sly, you'll be up first. We have a decent idea of the hotel's basic layout, thanks to your earlier scouting and our familiarity with it, but there will be areas we can't access. (picture of a sliding door-panel opposite the bar.) I've identified several guards carrying keys; you'll need to pickpocket them.
Due to our current situation, it's best if no one knows we're here, so you should do it while still in disguise.

_Sly:_

Sure, I can do that.

_Bentley:_

Excellent. Use every key you get as soon as you can find a keyhole for it, and remember those passwords. (*picture of Sly eavesdropping while pretending to be a scarecrow.*) We need to know how this place connects to the tower, and where Penelope and Winthrop are.

The rest of us will stand by. I have no doubt there'll be jobs to pull off once we have a better idea of what we're getting into. Everyone, make sure you're in top shape. (*picture of a cooler stashed with food.*) Get some sleep, eat something, and check your abilities from Thiefnet. Carmelita, you may want to get the Precision Goggles; I have a feeling those will be useful.

_Thiefnet Computer_

_Sly: Paraglider Dive Attack_

_Bentley: Gas Bomb. Knock out all enemies in range of this gaseous attack._
Sly puts on his fox disguise before stepping out into the hallway. “Remember Sly,” Bentley says in his ear, “this is a stealth mission. Do not, under any circumstances, do anything that stands a chance of letting someone know you're not one of them.”

“Relax, Bentley,” Sly says, wrapping his scarf more firmly around his neck. “I'm a cop too, remember?” A snort that may have been Carmelita echoes in his ear. “I’m just a thief first, where they're criminals second.”

“They could still get you put in prison if you're caught,” Bentley says. “Or worse. No one knows who they are, but they'll sure know you, buddy.”

“You're forgetting one thing, Bentley.” Sly makes his way down the stairs to the main room, where a lone, bored guard patrols. A way-point flickers above him; he's got a key. “These guys are sub par cops and average criminals. And I am a master thief.”

Carmelita takes over from Bentley. “Doesn't matter how good you are, Sly. They're still cops and you're outnumbered.”

“If the best cop in the history of law enforcement couldn't catch me, what do I have to be afraid of?” Sly asks.

“You think I couldn't catch you?” Carmelita demands. “If you recall, I caught you—”

“Well, you did catch my eye, I admit,” Sly says. Carmelita's sputtering echoes in the maskpiece as Sly relieves the guard of everything in his pockets, including a very plain key. “And eventually, my heart.”

“Okay, I'm stopping this before it gets gross,” Bentley says. “Just... take some pictures if you see anything interesting. Sheesh!”

Sly chuckles to himself as he steps away from the guard and over to the wall panel Bentley thought contained a secret door; it's a slightly different color than the rest of the wall, noticeable to anyone who thinks to look (which most people never do). He was right. And the key fits perfectly. Sly turns it and lets himself inside.

...Sly is just a little disappointed when it turns out to be a laundry room. Four rats are working there, in their gas masks and hazard suits, two hunched over tubs of water while one carries dripping clothes from the tubs to the wringer, where the fourth rat takes care of them. They all grumble while they work, irritated at having to do menial labor; it seems the foxes get the better jobs. Sly snaps a picture anyway; knowing what's behind the door will be useful for Bentley's plans.

But there's another door Sly can slip through, and he does so, ignoring all of them and closing the door behind him.

Sly appears to be at the top of a staircase, and he heads down it at a trot, tail swishing. It leads to a hallway with five doors: two to the left, two to the right, and one straight ahead at the end of the hall. There'll be no peeking through these keyholes; they're not big enough. Not that it matters, because all
but one of them are locked.

Sly shrugs and opens it.

It seems to be some sort of office, meant for a hotel manager or... something; to Sly's eye it looks more like the principal's office where he spent far too much of his early years. An imposing desk, important-looking plaques and diplomas and degrees on the wall, a filing cabinet, and a very large, comfortable chair facing a rather plain straight-backed wooden chair. A rat trooper is dusting the desk, grumbling, pocket gleaming invitingly with a key.

Sly helps himself to it, snaps a photo, and exits the room, looking for the best spot to try that key out. The door straight ahead doesn't open still, but the one across the hall does, and it opens... into a very plain, ordinary conference room. Blackboards and chalk stand where whiteboards or projectors would be in his time, and the long table sits empty, all the chairs pushed in. A single fox walks around it in endless circles, stopping every now and then to yawn.

Sly moves around the room, not bumping tables or chairs, and claims the contents of that fox's pockets. Not much, really; a few coins, enough for a soda but not a meal, and a key. Perfect. Time for another photo.

Sly slips back out, still unnoticed. The first door on the right opens this time. Sly slips inside.

Bingo.

Sly isn't an expert on flying. He isn't an expert on a lot of things, really; he knows the underworld as well as his name, and he's got a decent idea of the law, but he relies on Bentley for most solid knowledge on stuff. So, while he can fly a plane, he has no idea about the wisdom of storing them underground.

But there's no doubt: this is an underground air hangar of some form. A huge door, like a garage door, is built into one wall; targets, set high out of sight, out of even Carmelita's normal range, need to be hit to open it. A biplane launcher sits to one side, one plane already in it, ready and waiting. A handful of other planes wait here, mostly biplanes, but one is a modern day fighter jet.

Sly takes pictures of it all: the targets, the launcher, the door, the planes, and the guards walking in lazy circles around the planes. Bentley hums in his ear, responding for the first time since he got in the laundry room. “That air base is awfully close to completion.”

“No kidding,” Sly says. “But why are these in here, then?”

“Possibly because they're used by Winthorp and Penelope,” Bentley says, “and other guards. Didn't he mention something about flying being a reward?”

Sly grimaces. “Guess so. Look Bentley, I hate to say this, but... it's looking more and more like Penelope isn't acting of her own free will.”

Bentley's voice cracks as he says, “I agree. But...” He takes a deep breath. “There's no doubt we'll get a lot of information by questioning her, maybe get to the bottom of this whole mess.”

“Do you think we could get that from Winthorp?” Sly asks. “It'd be easier.”

There's a commotion in the background. “Winthorp received Interpol training, so no, it wouldn't,” Bentley says. “Please don't say that sort of thing where Carmelita can hear, it never ends well.”

“Sorry.”
“I've been considering for a while, but it might be possible to create a device that'll prevent the disruption of the dimensional anchor from affecting her. Then we could get rid of everyone else and she'd have nowhere to turn.” Bentley taps his fingers together. “I'll have to think about this.”

“Take all the time you need, buddy. And remember—you're not alone.”

Sly puts his binoc-u-com away and sets about picking pockets. He gets some good stuff, including a very nice ring that doesn't have a brainwash stone, but has to pick every pocket before he finds the guard with the key.

Sly tosses it up and down in his hand as he leaves the room. To his surprise, the room at the end of the hall opens next; it would seem logical for that to be last, since it practically has 'IMPORTANT' emblazoned on it by its position, but no.

Sly opens the door to find him in the large open chamber the tower is in. The sewage drain is visible, as is the tower itself, and of course, the single guard patrolling the area. Another fox.

Sly snaps a picture, just so Bentley knows what's down here, and relieves the guard of his key, then retreats. One more room. Given the way his night's gone so far, what are the odds it's something useless, like a pool?

Sly steps in and stops.

It isn't a pool.

It's a security office.

A wall of monitors showcases places around the area: the front door of the hotel. The tower: both the tower base and its workstation, on separate screens. The entrance to the guard compound. Several on the airfield. One overlooking the fields; one watching the wooded area. There's even one watching the base of the castle.

None of which matters to Sly right now. No, what matters to Sly is three very basic things.

One, the fox wearing headphones and watching the screens. Sly doesn't need Bentley to tell him they must be able to listen in on one station or another.

Two, the top central screen. The room is unknown; they've never been there, they haven't found it. But the flashing lights, restraints, and mouse in the center of it, twitching slightly, all say 'Brainwashing Central' rather eloquently.

Last, the bottom central screen. Showing the castle's communication area. With Winthorp currently in residence, and using it.

“Sly,” Bentley says in his ear, “take out that guard and put on the headphones. We need to know what he's saying.”

Sly's already moving, has the fox unconscious on the floor before Bentley's finished speaking, ties the guy's hands and feet and pushes him in a corner. Headphones on, he looks at the mass of buttons before him and sees a likely-looking dial, turns it slowly.

The rattle of machinery he hears comes from the airbase. The whimpering isn't something he wants to think about; he can't do anything now anyway. The rumbling tanks are from in front of the hotel. The coughs and quiet gossip of the guards comes from their building.
“—finally finished. We'll do our test flight in the morning, and have the contract signed by the end of the week,” Winthorp says. Sly glares at the bottom screen. The grainy image shows the weasel nodding, everything in his bearing and manner smug. “I have a dozen planes in the air right now, ready to defend it from the air. Nothing can touch it.”

Carmelita growls through the binoc-u-com. The dial seems programmed to cycle through stations on its own; Sly has to work constantly to keep it in position, a nudge one way, then the other.

“Your device is finished as well. We'll pack it up shortly and deliver it on your next visit.”

“Visit?” Bentley mumbles, scarcely heard over Carmelita's growling.

“This thing doesn't have a volume button, guys,” Sly says.

“When will you arrive on your blimp?... Excellent! In addition to my jet, I'll have my best fliers escort me in biplanes at noon. The mouse can stay behind; leaving her here will tie up any loose ends. The authorities will need a target, after all.”

Sly's tail thrashes with anger, but he keeps his hand steady on the dial, not letting it move to another station, listening intently, over Bentley's angry mutters and Carmelita's growls and, heck, even Murray can be heard through this, being Rather Unhappy.

“You'll authorize my promotion? Thank—I mean, it's an honor, sir. I know I'll make you, and Interpol, proud.” Winthorp hangs up the phone.

Now Sly growls. Winthorp leaves, going off camera, with the entire Cooper gang knowing exactly how much they hate him.

“Head on back to the safe-house, Sly,” says Bentley. “We have three things to do now, and once you're back here, we can get started.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Sly continues glaring at the screens, even though there's no sign where the room Penelope's in is located, or way to tell where Winthorp is, until it fades to black.*
Carmelita ducks out of the hotel room, Otto at her side, and glances around. Being in a hotel without lights in the lobby, with only a very few candles lit, is creepy. I mean, she knows at this time period, electric light still isn't everywhere; she also knows that, if it weren't for her efforts destroying the windmills earlier, there likely would be electric lights set into the walls and dangling from the chandeliers.

She's still having a hard time seeing the dark as an advantage, though. The darkness means hiding places, and secrets, and criminals. Law enforcement that travels in the dark does so with flashlights and noise, either on the chase or as soon as their prey is in sight. Waiting in the dark is one thing, but traveling through it...

Carmelita shakes her head and reminds herself to think of it as a sting operation.

She travels through the dark, Otto mercifully quiet, through the laundry room—the rats still at work, still grumbling, still not looking over—and into the short hallway beyond. All the doors remain unlocked, courtesy of Sly; a glance into the security room shows that it's empty, the guard who was there not having been replaced yet... if anyone noticed they were missing at all. Carmelita smiles and walks to the room she's been aiming for.

Otto nods to her once they're at the door. “What's your experience with planes, Miss Fox?”

“I've flown in several,” she says, “and flown several helicopters, which are similar, but I've never flown one myself. Or been in a biplane.”

“I am an ace pilot,” Otto says, “known for my years of flights and my perfect record. But a tail gunner would make my work significantly easier. Once we enter the room, I will work upon acquiring one of the planes while you take care of the guards. Use your new goggles to shoot the switches keeping the door closed, then join me in the plane.”

“And then we take out everything in the sky before really destroying that airfield,” Carmelita says with distraction. “Are you feeling okay? You haven't made a bad joke yet.”

“Flying is a very serious manner, Miss Fox.” Otto adjusts his scarf. “Almost as serious as breaking bad laws.”

“Hold up.” Carmelita crosses her arms. “Bad laws?”

“Laws that hinder more than they help, or are created solely for greed.” Otto favors her with a small smile, the first satisfied smile any of them may have seen. “It may be legal to treat my neighbors as slaves, but it isn't right. Based on what I've overheard, in your time those of us who help our neighbors are considered heroes. You've forgotten that in the eyes of the law, I'm the lowest sort of criminal for it.”

Otto opens the door and steps in the room without giving Carmelita a chance to respond. Not that she'd know what to say. She goes in, too, and just catches sight of Otto clambering into the biplane that's already in the launcher. Time for her to get to work.
Taking out the guards before they can set off any alarms takes less than a minute. With that done, she aims her shock pistol and holds triangle to use her new Precision Goggles to tighten the square of her aiming sights. With it focused that way, she can hit targets that are even further away than normal. Which is useful, because those targets are really flipping far away.

The second she hits the last target, the wall starts creaking open. She runs to join Otto in the biplane launcher; he's already got the propeller started and is waiting for her. She straps herself in and accepts the hat and goggles he hands her, then braces herself as the plane takes to the air.

“Allow me to fly,” Otto murmurs as they circle the skies over Holland. “I'm a master at it, after all. Use the left analog stick to aim your guns and the square button to fire.”

“Um, there may be a problem,” Bentley says once they've done some practice shots. “Those planes Winthorp has patrolling out here are equipped with some sort of... tracking bullets. You'll need to shoot them down before they can hit you.”

“Oh, don't worry about that, Bentley,” Carmelita says. “I think I can manage...”

“Flying has certainly put you in high spirits.”

Carmelita groans. “I thought you weren't going to make any more puns?”

“I lied.”

Well, give the guy points for honesty. Kind of. In any case, the mission that follows should be very familiar to anyone who played Sly 2. Otto handles the flying, so all Carmelita—and so the player—has to worry about is hitting the darn things. And this is Carmelita. Even if she isn't using a shock pistol, she's still a crack shot. The last plane's crashed to the ground very quickly.

“All right, now it's time to take on the airfield,” says Bentley. “You should aim for that building. It's full of things from our time, including weapons. Getting rid of it will be enough to take out the entire airbase!” Bentley sounds breathless with excitement at the thought.

“I'll have to make short passes, to avoid being caught by the anti-aircraft guns,” Otto says. “You'll have to shoot fast.”

“Oh, don't worry about me,” Carmelita says. “I can manage.”

And indeed she does. Very well.

Take that, airfield!

“Nice work, guys. Otto, find someplace to park that plane. We're going to need it for the heist.

**JOB COMPLETE**

*Otto and Carmelita do a few loop-de-loops with their plane, purely for the fun of it.*
PoB: Job 11

PROGRAMS OF BETRAYAL

Job 11: Tower Terror

Based on the myriad noises coming from behind the door, Carmelita and Otto are almost finished stealing a biplane. Sly grins and nudges Murray as they continue down the hall. “Think we can finish before they do?”

“I don't know, Sly,” Murray says. He takes a moment to adjust his belt, pulling it up higher on his belly. “That wall looked pretty tough; The Murray is strong, but his fists couldn’t break it.”

“Oh, don't worry about that.” Sly tosses a small object from hand to hand. “Bentley's running the coms, but he did give me some... assistance for that door. We get inside the lab, steal that thing Penelope was working on, and get out. It'll be fine.”

With that, Sly opens the door at the end of the hall, and the two enter the wide-open area before the tower. The door on the main level is still shut tight, and they don't have any spare bombs, so they sneak around the fox patrolling on the main level and climb the outside ramp. Once there, Murray has to pry open the door again.

A fresh wave of robotic creatures, owls and foxes alike, are ready to swarm them. By this time, though, everyone in the gang has taken these things on at least once. And Sly and Murray are ready for an all-out brawl.

Once that's accomplished, Sly fixes the tiny bomb to the heavy door to Penelope's lab in a short cut-scene. “Let's book it, Murray,” he says, and the two rush outside, press themselves to the wall on either side of the door. Sly puts his hand to his ear. “We're all set for you, Bentley.”

“All right, harsh amounts of exothermic activity will occur in three... two.... one.” Boop.

The unmistakably gleeful sound of an explosion comes from the room behind them, followed by a rush of hot, orange-colored air and robot parts. Sly grins as the wind slows to a stop, a single metal feather drifting to the ground far below. “That did the trick.”

“That was AWESOME!” Murray shouts, leaning away from the wall. “Come on, Sly, we get to destroy stuff!”

“Remember the list of parts,” Bentley says in their ears. “Get those and that computer chip Penelope was working on; I want to examine it.”

“And the parts will be used to make something that could keep Penelope here,” Sly says, grinning as he surveys the room.

“And then we get to DESTROY EVERYTHING ELSE!” Murray shouts. “This mission is the best.”

Play resumes as Sly. The room is covered in laser security and spotlights, with such a solid amount around the computer chip that Sly can't actually see the chip through it. To make it worse, a solid stream of mechanical animals are still coming in from Penelope-knows-where, enough that Murray takes up a spot by the entrance to dismantle them. Various items around the room have way points on them: computer parts, gears, what in the world is this, a length of chain, and is this a stuffed
animal. Getting to them requires a fair amount of finesse, ranging from spire jumps, to wall hooks, to using the laser slide.

Does Penelope even know Sly can laser slide? She may not. He only learned it in the Cooper Vault, then he spent time with Carmelita until the time travel incident with Le Paradox, so they wouldn't have had any time in between to chat or learn about it, and it's not exactly a move Sly needs to use very often. With that in mind, even Penelope, knowing everything else about what Sly and the gang can do, may have thought this room impossible to steal from.

“The controls for the laser generators are those knobs in the corners of the room,” Bentley says. “Try turning them all off, then you should be able to get at that computer chip.”

“Already working on it, Bentley.” There are two knobs in each corner, and they have to be turned... just like the ones in the lighthouses. Sly's grateful Murray is there; this requires a lot more concentration than opening one at a time, and he's not sure he'd notice someone sneaking up on him. Having Murray around to watch his back means a lot.

As soon as he's dealt with the last set, all the lasers power down. On the pedestal where the computer chip was before there's... nothing.

“Bad news, buddy. Looks like that chip's already been taken somewhere.”

“Winthorp probably has it,” Bentley says. “Look around, but we may have to retrieve it during the heist. You may as well start destroying the room now.”

Play switches to Murray. Sly is climbing the walls, literally, in an effort to locate that chip... but Murray has other things in mind. With the laser security off he can move around, but there are still mechanical birds and foxes coming in, one every few seconds. And now he has an ENTIRE ROOM of things to throw, punch, and thunderflop.

The Murray proceeds to be a kid in a candy shop... wait, maybe that's not the best metaphor for this. Bull in a china shop might be closer, but still not right. No, what occurs can best be described as a stampede of wrestlers competing for the honorary title of 'Most items dragged into the ring and broken over someone's head.'

Murray wins.

“That should do it,” says Bentley. “Now get out of there. We're almost ready for the heist.”

**JOB COMPLETE**

_Sly and Murray high-five each other, then get out of the tower while they still can._
Bentley:

The pieces are in place and we have the element of surprise. It's time for Operation: Pop That Weasel. (picture)

We have several goals for this heist, and in order to accomplish them, we'll have to split into groups. Sly and Murray, you two are up first. (picture of Sly and Murray)

Murray:

What do you need us to do?

Bentley:

Winthorp plans to deliver whatever Penelope was working on to their boss on a blimp around noon today, guarded by several biplanes. (picture of the jet flying, surrounded by biplanes). Penelope is being kept in an unknown location, and we need to, uh...

Otto:

The young lady has information that you're going to find essential, yes?

Bentley:

Good way of putting it. Now, based on Winthorp's profile (picture of Winthorp), established from Interpol's database and Carmelita's experiences with him (picture from The Adventures of Sly Cooper, where Winthorp attempted to flirt with Carmelita), we know he won't be willing to fly without backup. He just isn't that comfortable in the air. If we limit his options for pilots, he'll take Penelope along to fly one of the biplanes. (picture of Penelope flying a plane.) To accomplish this, we need to destroy the top floor of the guard barracks. (picture of the barracks).

Murray:

A whole floor? But... they'll be sleeping in there, won't they?

Bentley:
Don't worry, Murray. There's only one floor above ground, used for leisure activities and vehicle storage; the rest are below it, and that's where they sleep. Collapsing the top floor won't hurt anyone who can't escape. Besides, you'll have to steal a tank. *(picture of a tank).* Sly will use his guard disguise to smuggle you in.

**Murray:**

**Awesome!** In that case, **bring on the destruction!**

**Bentley:**

I thought as much. Their guards double as pilots; Winthrop's options will be limited to the useless, the sleep-deprived, and Penelope.

**Carmelita:**

So he'll have to take her along.

**Bentley:**

Right. While Sly and Murray are doing that, Otto, Carmelita, you have to get back in the sewers. *(picture of the sewers).* There seem to be a number of structural faults along it: cracks, bad shoring, and so forth. We need to limit their options.

**Otto:**

I agree. It would be a **crime** if all our hard work were **flushed away** by them taking an alternate route.

**Carmelita:**

Do I **have** to work with him?

**Bentley:**

Yes. When you're finished, get back in the plane. I'll be in the security room while all this is going on. *(picture)*. In addition to keeping an eye on everything so I can warn of any unexpected developments, I'll be able to hack the spotlights on the doors and balconies of the hotel. The only exit I won't destroy will be through the balcony of our hotel room. They'll leave through the plane, or not at all.

Once they're confirmed to be in the air, it's time to move again. I'll go to the tower and bomb my way
through the doors, then destroy all but one line holding the anchor; I'm going to need my trap sabotage move off Thiefnet to get close. The last one I'll rig to go off at your signal, Sly. (picture of one of those glowing black balls.)

Sly:

Sounds like I'll be having fun, then.

Bentley:

I'll get to your part in a minute. Carmelita, Otto, the two of you will take the biplane and shoot down Penelope. (picture of Carmelita and Otto in flight). Do not shoot down Winthorp. Follow him. Otto, with your piloting skills, you should be able to get into whatever landing bay that blimp has. That's when the two of you split up.

Carmelita, you take out Winthorp. (picture of Carmelita shooting Winthorp.) That should only take a couple minutes.

Carmelita:

Less than that.

Bentley:

Once he's subdued and you've gotten that chip off him, go after Otto. Otto, you start exploring as soon as possible; you may not be in top shape as a thief, but any advantage will help. I want to know who's on that blimp. (picture of a blimp.) And if you can take them out, so much the better.

Carmelita:

I'm going to need more handcuffs.

Otto:

You can borrow mine. (picture)

Murray:

You have handcuffs? I didn't know you were a cop!
Oh, handcuffs may be used by the police by day, but they have many, many more uses at night.

Bentley:

**Please** don't list them. Sly, Murray, while the planes are in the air you two are going to split up. There's no telling where Penelope's plane will come down, and someone has to be close enough to subdue her. *(picture of Penelope in a robot suit gearing for a fight.)* I only managed to make the one temporal stabilizer—

Sly:

Tempy what?

Bentley:

Explaining would take lots of multi-syllabic words. It's this thing. *(picture of a... rather absurd necklace, made up of the things stolen from the lab earlier.)* Time travel won't work on anyone wearing it, so she'll be safe from the anchor. Sly, you're faster, you take it. Get whatever mind-control gems she's got off her, slap that on, and contact me. I'll take out the tower, and everything except Penelope and the blimp should be taken care of. *(picture of the tower.)*

If need be, I'll pump Penelope full of sleep-darts, Sly will steal another biplane, and you and I will go help Carmelita while Murray keeps an eye on Penelope. *(picture of Sly flying a biplane.)* Remember, team, as... much as it pains me to admit it, Penelope may be innocent. *(picture of Penelope fiddling idly with a gemmed bracelet, back when Sly was tailing her.)* Once we get those bracelets off, she may help us willingly, so try not to hurt her. Just... don't make me be the one who has to talk to her.

Get some rest, everyone. We'll start the explosions at dawn.

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