

ACID@SAGE AND THE RANSOMWARE EARTH

"Pilot"

"SAGE INVADERS"

written by Jaimie-Lee Wise

(excerpt)

SUPER - "TIME UNTIL ALIEN INVASION OF EARTH: 10 minutes"

INT. TRIGGER BAIT ASMR CLUB

The over-capacity room rolls with euphoric static-tingles, to a dance mix of whispers, lip smacks, finger nail clips, and other ASMR sound triggers.

At the front, MARK, THE BARTENDER, notices **SAGE JANE (24/F)** smiling at him and fixes her a drink.

She glances at a MindVoyage device flat on someone's nape. Her eyes roam nape to nape, most folks wearing a MindVoyage, and past the ocean of CROWD to a BACK-BAR ENTRANCE.

BEHIND AN ALCOVE

CONCH DAROSI (33/M) pretends to watch a screen embedded in a Black Glass Alcove wall that he eye hunts the crowd through.

Sage walks past the glass. Conch follows.

DANCE FLOOR

Conch is close behind but not catching up with Sage. She seems to have a sixth sense for which gaps in the bodies to take, and he loses her again.

She ducks a drink-swinging arm, turns diagonally, and avoids streams of HARD-PUSHING BROS.

Only Sage sees a glowing 6-pack of Augmented Reality Arrowheads tilt and turn when one blinks. She fills a gap between the bodies it points to.

Conch rubbernecks to see her enter a door to Back Rooms when the loudest and most distinct pickle crunch anyone has ever heard resonates!

Everyone stops and turns to its source, creating a wall of people Conch can't pass.

He looks where the crowd does. **DJ MAMA CRUNCH (31/F)**, stands in an Elevated Booth. She chews the pickle into a microphone. The crowd shivers with delight -- Crunch-Slurp...

INT. BACKROOM BAR - TRIGGER BAIT - CONTINUOUS

No bartender. A TV over the bar shows muted news-footage covering the life and death of Sage's mother, RORY JANE.

Empty except Sage and **LI JUN (30/F)**, at a booth.

LI JUN
My condolences.

SAGE
I keep hearing that.

LI JUN
From me, it's sincere. You holding yourself together?

SAGE
Fan-fucking-tastic, Li Jun. You? Any rowdy parties at the consulate?

LI JUN
A few.

SAGE
Let's talk about the People's Republic. Tell me the "highly probable" MindVoyage ban was the product of your paranoid mind.

LI JUN
Sage, I'm sorry. A MindVoyage ban could happen in days.

SAGE
What's the plan? Send in the Army? Go house-to-house? Rip them off people's necks?

LI JUN
Where there are necks, there can always be nooses.

SAGE
... Nooses?

LI JUN

The People Behind The Ban are MindVoyage Users too. They've seen the world through its interface. Seen how it pales, even people like them, in comparison. Influential, vivid, powerful people. No one's paying attention to them. They look as ordinary and uninteresting as you or me on the other side of a see-through Web- page. Their desire to stop MindVoyage is a desire to survive as what they once were.

SAGE

Give me something I can act on.

LI JUN

In situations like this, what works isn't in your tool chest.

SAGE

What's not in my tool chest?

LI JUN

A War Chest.

SAGE

What chest?

LI JUN

Guns, Sage. This isn't time to act. It's time to pause.

SAGE

Fuck pause, what's best for me is a War-Chest.

INT. BACK-BAR - TRIGGER BAIT - MINUTES LATER

Sage alone in the room, in the booth, in thought.

Conch enters and without a glance at Sage fixes on the TV over the bar showing Rory Jane crossing a White House lawn with a US President.

Sage looks him up and down.

Without turning to her at first -

CONCH

What friends she had.

SAGE

Skip the preamble and just tell me what fucking Jag in Big Telecom sent you to bully me.

CONCH

Yeah, I bet you see guys like that about once a week. But with Mom gone, some people you see in days to come will be closer in Caliber to me.

SAGE

My mother didn't protect me a day in her life.

CONCH

Au contraire, SJ. When you guard the passwords of the most influential people in the world, it's protection for the whole family. Case in point - it's been almost a year since you posted Oscar Weston's MindVoyage on a pirate site, and only today do we meet. She made you untouchable, but if it makes you feel better, my employers really resented her for that.

SAGE

Why would you think that'd make me feel better?

CONCH

I don't do anybody without doing thorough research.

SAGE

"Do" anybody?

CONCH

You're threatening industry making things scarier than phones.

SAGE

Name one.

Conch laughs.

CONCH

I come from folks in, well, a more complex industry...

SAGE

What does that mean? On second thought, never mind.

CONCH

The big shots in telecom are small time compared to some circles. Let's just say some influential people take a wider, more cautious view. But enough shop talk - please accept my condolences for your loss, SJ.

SAGE

I'll pass, thanks.

CONCH

This isn't business, just paying respects.

SAGE

Bullshit it isn't business.

CONCH

No, really. The job on you hasn't started. That light turns green when Mom's put to rest. But I did my research in advance. I had to come while things can still be personable between us.

She goes, but before she exits, the doors close and lock.

SAGE

Unlock the fucking doors.

CONCH

You've done more than lock a few doors. Haven't you? SJ? I seldom meet an equal ThingStinger.

SAGE

I don't ThingSting.

CONCH

Like I said, I do my research. And ain't nobody Thingstinging like you except for me, SJ.

SAGE

Open the doors.

CONCH

You're the girl who redirected morning rush hour into an impossible-to-breach concentric wall around her high school, just so she didn't have to go. Who made all those Smart Vacuums eat the curtains in Pacific Palisades. You're one of two whose identity the wannabe ThingStingers are always trying to uncover when they should be Thingstinging. Like I said, one of the two. That's right, I'm the Black Cat. Meow.

SAGE

Not my fucking ThingStings, but how the fuck would you know if they were?

CONCH

Click the link.

She closes her right eye shut, squeezes her left, and opens both as a lens on her MindVoyage Tech-Strip turns green.

Six square images appear floating in the air they both see. Each shows a room.

All LIVE VIEWS from Cameras in the home of Jane family attorney, **TONY POLLAN (44/F)**

CONCH (CONT'D)

Guess you recognize the place.

SAGE

Tony isn't involved in MindVoyage.

CONCH

Showing you my stuff here. Trying. Now, scoot, so we can both enjoy the show.

She scoots as far as the wall as she can get. Conch sits deep and slides to recline with hands behind his head. Both fixed on the images of Tony's place.

CONCH (CONT'D)

You'll love this. Eight separate programs working in concert. Now, all we do is enjoy the show. And hope the weather folks got the wind right.

SAGE
Wind? Right?

CONCH
You'll see. Equals.

SAGE
You stinging Tony with her THINGS
or ThingStinging her THINGS?

CONCH
SJ, which cat am I?

SAGE
What are you going to do to her?

CONCH
Wow, SJ, look how excited you're
trying not to get.

The image of Tony's place changes to one of an UNDERGROUND
UTILITY CORRIDOR.

CONCH (CONT'D)
Oh, that's right. My ThingSting --
It starts in a Utility Corridor
under Santa Monica.

INT. UNDERGROUND UTILITY CORRIDOR - SANTA MONICA - NIGHT

SMART PIPES -- internet-connected and application controlled.

A ring locking two Blue Water Pipes together brightens orange
and spins. The Pipes disconnect. Water pours. A Gray Pipe
imprinted "GASOLINE swings to lock with a blue one.

INT. BATHROOM - TONY'S HOME - SANTA MONICA

Tony showering rinses her hair.

TONY'S BEDROOM

A SMART VACUUM backs up, revealing a hole in a pillow.
Feathers rise from the hole to a SMART VENT, sucking them in.

TONY'S KITCHEN

A SMART VENT SPITS THE FEATHERS OUT TO BURNERS clicking
aflame on Tony's Stove. They land. Light. Black. Curl away.
CLICK -- the Smart door in the back of the kitchen opens.

Santa Ana winds blow burning feathers bathroom bound.

TONY'S SHOWER

Eyes closed, Tony showers on. Her nostrils flare like she smells something. Her eyes open just in time for SUDDEN GAS to fill more than her mouth.

She coughs, spins away eyes closed, gags, spits, and trips out of the tub to the floor. She sits hard on the floor. Burning Feathers blow down the hall toward the open door.

Smelling them, she turns. Her gas-shot-red eyes widen.

Tony SLAMS the DOOR before the feathers enter.

The Feathers drift down the door to the floor and smoke out.

CONCH (V.O.)

See, didn't hurt her. Then there's Oscar Weston's fire.

SAGE (V.O.)

White Kitten, asshole. White fucking Kitten.

INT. BACK-BAR - TRIGGER BAIT

Sage, in the booth with Conch, looks sick.

SAGE

Oscar's fire was a manufacturer's defect in his Smart home's battery.

CONCH

But Oscar's more than proven he has a mind for making connections that don't yet exist, hasn't he, SJ? And who knows what thoughts run through the mind of a vengeful man...

SAGE

A vengeful man? I wouldn't describe him that way.

CONCH

If it wasn't a vendetta against your mother that made Oscar say yes, then what? How come he said "sure" when you pitched him on the idea of you two partnering up on MindVoyage?

Sage's eyes flicker to the TV over the bar, still showing footage of her mother.

SAGE

I thought you weren't here working.

CONCH

I start, there'll never be an "us"... A shame, really. Both single and good-looking. The world's greatest ThingStingers. SJ, we should date.

The doors all unlock. Conch looks surprised.

CONCH (CONT'D)

Smooth, SJ.

SAGE

There'll never be a fucking "us."

CONCH

Well, in that case...

All the lenses on Conch's Tech-Strip strobe blue and ALL THE SPRINKLERS POP raining water. Sage reflexively slides down her seat and under the table --

Where she watches water assault the floor around it. Sees a READOUT on the booth displays "SMARTER BOOTHS."

The table rises flat to the wall.

Sage lifts onto her feet and forward over wet linoleum. She slips and slides into a double-handed palm-down SLAM of an alley door's metal push handle and bangs out.

EXT. ALLEY - TRIGGER BAIT ASMR CLUB - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

The door SLAMS -Sage jumps.

A Text Message materializes like a hologram in front of her:

"CALL IF U FEEL LIKE THINGSTINGING 2GETHER - CONCH"

SAGE'S EYES reading it as **ACID, ANTIVIRUS PROGRAM**, female-identifying body-snatches her, taking possession of Sage INVISIBLY EXCEPT in both Sage's eyes where red-blue-lit letter "A" appears. Each "A" strobes twice and out.

SUPER - "ACID@SAGE"

ACID@SAGE brings her new body - Sage's body - from hyperventilation into steady breath.

She runs her newly gained fingers down the back of her newly snatched head until she feels a curving rim on a black device sticking flat to her nape.

Acid@Sage fixes her gaze up and blinks random sequences as if trying out "blinkable" passwords UNTIL a Drone descends.

The Drone, branded in green, "MindVoyage SELFIE-DRONE" hovers filming Acid@Sage, who leaves Sage a message.

ACID@SAGE

Ms. Jane, my name's Officer Acid. I commandeered your body via your MindVoyage. Sorry for not getting consent. I'm an antivirus program from an interstellar internet in trouble. I need your help keeping it from Virus control. We have to work together on this or all your people and millions of years of wisdom shared between worlds alien to each other dies. -- I was first, now another program can't possess you. I can't stay. I'm coming back. -- Stop selling MindVoyage.

END EXCERPT

Thank you. For a full script, discussion, or pitch, please contact me. Jaimie-Lee Wise: jaimieleewise@jaimieleewise.com
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