



Northern Ukraine. Pripyat. The amusement park.
 Alone, you stride between the abandoned, decaying grey buildings. A light snow is falling. Ahead, the ferris wheel looms, a haunting reminder of the promising city this once was. The Geiger counter on your wrist crackles occasionally, and you hope it doesn't get any faster.

Commander Joseph - officially promoted following your recount of the old commander's fate - waits in a military helicopter five hundred metres behind you, hidden between the apartment blocks. Vivian and a crack team of commandos are spread out around the park, taking sniper positions and waiting to intervene if anything goes wrong.

You can see a solitary figure, facing away from you, standing beneath the ferris wheel. As you get closer, you can see it's a dark-haired man, wearing a black trenchcoat not dissimilar to your own brown one.

He hears your footsteps in the grass and turns around. He is much older than you had expected - sixty years old, at least. "Detective Xyzzy. I'm not surprised to see you here."

You stop. Even though the masked Decoder had voice-altering software, you can tell it's not the same. "You're not the Decoder."

"No. I'm a friend. The one who sent you those case files."

That comes as a shock. "I thought they were the commander's!"

He shakes his head, slowly, sadly. "Your commander intended to pass them on to you at my behest, but it seems I had sent them too late. The mastermind behind all of this struck first, banishing him and everyone in a five-kilometre radius. Everyone except you." He smiles. "I went back to your headquarters. The commander managed to send you one final message before he was abducted. Scratched into the wood."

"But why me? And who are you?"

"You proved yourself last year, Xyzzy. But as for me...I would rather not give that away just yet. I was once part of E.V.I.L. - that much I must admit - but I left long ago. When I heard about the end of the world."

"I don't understand," you breathe.



“The apocalypse. It’s tonight, Xyzzy. Well, it starts tonight, and it will continue until the Earth is destroyed. In nine weeks, on December 21.”

“The Mayan calendar?” you say with incredulity. “The 2012 apocalypse? It’s real?”

“E.V.I.L. uncovered the Mayan inscriptions that predicted it would start today. The same inscriptions also described it as some kind of energy source. Naturally, they decided they would try to capture that energy and funnel it into their own doomsday weapons.” He sighs. “It was only today that I discovered the truth for myself. E.V.I.L.’s underground lair here at Pripyat has been working on such an energy-absorbing device since the city was abandoned in 1986.” He motions behind him. “The ferris wheel. Even after I fled E.V.I.L., taking the Mayan inscriptions with me, construction underneath it continued. The Decoder joined the syndicate long after I left. He was kicked out soon enough, but must have pieced the Mayan prophecy together himself, because I tracked him here today.”

A new voice - or rather, a horribly familiar one - booms out across the park. “And I will forever be grateful to you both for delivering yourselves to me.”

You can’t see the Decoder. The voice seems to be coming from megaphones attached to the ferris wheel.

“I couldn’t be sure which of you had the inscriptions,” continues the voice, “but I knew if I let you both wander around for long enough, they would turn up. Where are they, old man?”

“Far away from here,” says your companion loudly. “I’ll see the world end before I let you enslave it. You’re not getting the tablets.”

A sigh echoes between the buildings. “Very well. It doesn’t matter. I pieced together enough from E.V.I.L.’s records of the inscription. The apocalypse will start today, as some sort of massive energy burst. I will absorb it here, and use it to carry out my master plan. I would have let you in on it if you have brought the original tablets, but it seems it is not to be. You’re a bigger fool than Xyzzy.”

A bigger fool...the Decoder said something like that in Taiwan. Something sparks in your memory, and suddenly, everything falls into place.

“I know who you are,” you say suddenly.



The Decoder doesn't speak for a moment. "Really? Well, don't keep it secret, Detective. Tell your old friend, and your friends on the rooftops."

"You called me the world's biggest fool. And you were missing in the Winchester house. I saw your name on the list. Our chief cryptographer. Sergeant Hale!"

The voice laughs. "A good effort. But why bother trying?"

But you know you're right. And while you were talking, you put the rest of it together. "You want to take over the world. The massive robots at the Devil's Triangle would be the way to do it. You could teleport them out, but they wouldn't budge an inch until you overrode their safeguards. How could you do that?"

"This is a waste of your final hours of freedom, Detective."

"The Easter Island statues," you continue, confidence growing. "Their wireless infiltration capabilities had already infected the robots with a virus, Penny told us. You're probably seizing control of the island from Cosmo Snake as we speak. But you'd only be able to teleport one robot out before security systems at the Devil's Triangle destroyed the rest. Would one be enough?"

"No, but as I found out, one of me wasn't enough either." You pull out a piece of paper from a pocket. It says 'Bryan smells like roses', because you were the only one who got close enough to the big man to realise that. "You could use the Spacetime Spinner at Area 51 to loop as many times as you wanted, giving yourself unlimited robots. And there's your plan for world domination."

The voice sighs again. "Very well, Xyzzy." There's a fiddling noise, and a burst of static. The voice that follows clearly belongs to Sergeant Hale. "You've caught me. It would've been brilliant, if it weren't one week too late, because you can't stop me now."

"Maybe he can," says the older detective next to you. He pulls out three strange stone objects from his own coat: a disc, and two smaller rings. "I lied," he says simply. "These never leave my side. Xyzzy, I haven't been able to solve this thing for twenty years, but maybe you can." He presses the ancient stone artifacts into your hands.

You think about everything you've seen on your journey. All the pieces you've put together, and the strange occurrences along the way. Time is running out, and the wheel is turning...



