

Terms Podcast: "The Hand of Our Power"

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Written by

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20th January, 10.00am.

Philip Mabley, current Director of the CIA, is in his late 50s. He's calm, measured, and almost amused by what's happening. Spence is a young man, perhaps in his 20s. By contrast he's nervous, ill at ease. He's sure he's doing the right thing, but is inexperienced and has no idea how matters will play out.

(Echoing footsteps, coming down a stairwell. They stop. a door opening and a set of footsteps at the bottom.)

MABLEY

(to someone he can't see yet)

I have to say, I was rather surprised to see an agenda entry I hadn't personally entered, or agreed to.

(beat)

Someone, it would seem, has the technical ability to make demands on my time.

SPENCE

Uh yeah, sorry. Couldn't think of. I mean. When I found...

(clears throat)

Sir, you are Philip Mabley, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency --

MABLEY

(almost amused)

Son, if you're a Walk In, just go to reception. You don't need to surrender to me, personally.

SPENCE

No, no. We - um, I - need you to read this.

(A sheaf of papers being rustled as Mabley flicks through them.)

SPENCE (cont'd)

I mean, not right here. Not...

MABLEY

I'm guessing you're NSA, son.

SPENCE

(he is)

What? No.

MABLEY

Found this in a taxi, did you? Doing your civic duty? Or, hmmm, some light -- what do you boys call it -- tailored access? As you clearly did with my calendar. That's not some casual hacking.

SPENCE

Sir! It's important.

MABLEY

I'm thinking a summer internship. Are you idealistic? Or did you join up from boredom? The romance of cyber-operations for the government, flair for the dramatic. All of that good stuff.

SPENCE

No. I mean. I can't tell you that.

MABLEY

Of course not. I'd be disappointed if you did.

SPENCE

This is *wrong*. What's in there is just... I couldn't do nothing, you understand. I need to emphasize: you're not supposed to have this.

MABLEY

Well it will fit right in, then, won't it? I take it that tradecraft isn't required NSA training?

SPENCE

I'm not --

Mabley is bluffing here.

MABLEY

You are. But the question is if they know you're here. Tradecraft, son. Better learn some. We followed you all the way from Fort Meade.

Courier gasps.

MABLEY (cont'd)
 If you run you can take the rest of
 the morning off. Watch the
 inauguration, with pizza and beer.

SPENCE
 (laughs nervously)
 N... no.

MABLEY
 If we have any further questions,
 I'll have someone call you.

SPENCE
 How did...?

MABLEY
 Tradecraft.

(Courier's nerve breaks, he turns tail and runs down the
 stairs, echoing all the way.)

(Mabley takes out cellphone and calls. It's connected almost
 immediately.)

Thomson, on the other end of the call, is telling Mabley
 that none of their security seemed to have registered the
 Courier. Whatever just happened, it was a small but
 audacious plan.

MABLEY (cont'd)
 (serious now)
 Thomson? That little wrinkle I told
 you about? I'll be damned if it
 didn't just pan out.
 (inaudible)
 Round up a couple of spare analysts.
 Senior ones. Our new contact -- Uhu.
 (inaudible)
 Yes.
 (inaudible)
 Really, nothing at all?
 (inaudible)
 Okay then, task a hunting pack to put
 eyes on a -- I guess -- on an
 extremely rattled floater who's just
 exited the North stairwell.

(Hanging up cellphone.)

MABLEY (cont'd)
 Guys? You can stand down now.

(Guns being holstered/ safetied.)
 (Radio mike)

SQUAD MEMBER
 (in background)
 We're clear. Move out.

MUSIC: Intro Sting

VOICE: Terms

MUSIC: Intro

2 INT. CIA OPERATIONS ROOM

2

20th January, 10:30am

George Delany has just turned 60, has been with the CIA for most of his working life. He's seen everything, knows everything and is cynical with it. He's old school. Sarah Platten is in her 30s, technically adept and with great career ahead of her. Both are analysts. Delany, perhaps, is more.

(Background sound of an office, with typing.)

(A computer notification beep.)

DELANY
 (sighs)
 Time to stand to attention. My calendar for this morning just cleared.

PLATTEN
 Mine too.

(Door as Mabley enters the room.)

DELANY
 Philip! In person. Great things must be afoot.

(Platten, caught by surprise, stands up.)

MABLEY
 Ah, my two best analysts. George Delany and Sarah Platten. Thomson made a good choice.

PLATTEN

Sir! Aren't we supposed to come visit you?

MABLEY

Don't want to stand on ceremony. Besides, you have more comfortable chairs.

(Platten sits down again, chair creaks.)

MABLEY (cont'd)

Sarah, great to see you again, by the way. How did the vacation in Cherry Springs go? Clear skies?

PLATTEN

Clear skies, Sir. There's nothing quite like stargazing at Christmas.

MABLEY

Hearing good things about you by the way. Don't want to say anything --

DELANY

"I deny all knowledge!"

(They laugh, small, wryly. 'not saying anything' is a standing joke.)

MABLEY

-- but I'd be most surprised if you weren't head of Technical Readiness by year's end. George --

DELANY

Counting the days.

MABLEY

Aren't you just? As for great things afoot, well. Initial impressions, please.

(Dossier being dropped on the desk.)

DELANY

Where'd this come from?

(Mabley sitting down, creak of leather chair.)

MABLEY

Ultimately, that's the question.
Right now I want to know if it's
genuine.

(Papers being handed to each other, shuffled. Click of a pen
and scraping on paper as Delany takes notes. Sound of
keyboard and mouse as Platten takes notes.)

PLATTEN

At a first glance, it looks good.
Subtle indicators like the date
format, the font choice, the
phraseology.

(Shuffling of papers. Finger tapping on paper.)

PLATTEN (cont'd)

We know "LODESTONE K" is a real
surveillance program. Not one which
got leaked in 2013.

DELANY

So it's NSA. But I don't see any
explicit reference.

MABLEY

This part particularly intrigues me.
If I'm correct, that's a traffic
analysis report?

PLATTEN

Yes. Radio and internet traffic,
increased chatter from a Voice Over
IP address in the last two months.

(beat)

Several addresses in fact. That's a
MIL IP address... All clustered
around...

(beat)

that looks familiar... from...

(Keyboard and mouse as she looks things up.)

PLATTEN (cont'd)

...from the White House.

MABLEY

They've wiretapped the White House?

PLATTEN

On the face of it, our friends in Fort Meade have been exceeding their remit.

DELANY

My memoir just got juicier.

MABLEY

George...

PLATTEN

Not a wiretap. It's more like measuring the signal strength. You can't hear words, but you know something's up if it gets louder.

(beat)

This came from a whistleblower?

MABLEY

(not giving anything away)
That would fit what I know.

PLATTEN

Why not take it to the press?

MABLEY

Assume this is specifically intended for our eyes.

DELANY

Okay. But we get shared intel through the Special Collections Service, yes?

PLATTEN

For the rest of the world, sure. You think we're supposed to do the analysis for them, somehow? Put it in context of our geopolitical knowledge?

DELANY

How would that work? This is obvious Black Propaganda. Chicken feed at best, dezinformatsiy at worst.

PLATTEN

I don't buy it. The quality and the detail of the data rings true. Anyone wanted to wind us up, we'd have something too juicy to be true, a... a... transcript of Pierce's phone calls, an exfiltrated plan. Something

(MORE)

PLATTEN (cont'd)
 showy and gauche. This is just the
 right level of bureaucracy and
 banality.

MABLEY
 Perhaps they just know their
 audience. What would your analysis be
 of the *contents*? Assuming
 authenticity. What is it saying?

PLATTEN
 That the Pierce Administration has
 been moving something big into place,
 and is ready to act on it, but I
 don't --

DELANY
 You want initial thoughts? Okay, this
 is meant to *look* like it came from
 Fort Meade. That something big is in
 place, military assets no less, and
 looks timed just to spoil Dunwalke's
 big day.

Yeah, I'll say it. A *coup*.

PLATTEN
 That... actually fits.

DELANY
 Look, I'll cut this short: it's
 bullshit. Maybe it looks good, but
 come on. The all-important *summary*
 just happens to be absent. So we join
 the dots, reach the aforementioned
 conclusion, shit ourselves, and go to
 the incumbent proclaiming doom.
 Surprise! It's bullshit. The Company
 gets another kicking in congress and
 million hot takes about how we're not
 fit for purpose.

PLATTEN
 You're saying this is designed to
 embarrass us?

MABLEY
 (snorts)
 That's the FBI's job.

(Desk phone rings.)

DELANY

Delany. Can this wait? I've got the Director in -- what?

(inaudible)

No, I hadn't heard of any planned test. So what?

(inaudible)

Well if it's a *real* emergency broadcast go tell FEMA.

(inaudible)

Well, shit. *Shit.*

(Phone's receiver being replaced.)

MABLEY

George?

DELANY

(laughs in bad humor)

I am taking early retirement. Careers are going to be made today. And you might want to strike my last comments from the record, if mine still is.

MABLEY

The point, George.

DELANY

Phil, we need to get to a television.

PLATTEN

What's happened?

DELANY

For one, Sarah, you're right as usual. And for two... we are completely fucked.

3 INT. DUNWALKE'S OFFICE

3

22nd January

McCallister is being coy about the daily security briefings. He's read them extremely carefully. Carefully enough to see hints of the big picture. He... knew... ?

(Paper being scrunched up, thrown at the wall.)

DUNWALKE

There's nothing here. Nothing! Look at this. You see anything? I don't see anything.

(MORE)

DUNWALKE (cont'd)

"Middle East crisis", like I need an intelligence agency to tell me that. "Wall Street is down a few points", "North Korea is showing further signs of having ants in its britches" --

MCCALLISTER

The daily security briefing is more nuanced than that --

DUNWALKE

How about this? Britain's trade secretary, some guy, will be *begging* for a deal at the next talks. Good to know, right? But you know the part I could really have used?

A bullet point, right at the top, underlined, in bold -- you can picture what I'm saying -- "By the way, Mister President, the outgoing Commander in Chief is about to suspend the constitution and take over the country." Do you think that might have helped?

MCCALLISTER

I don't know what to tell you, Charles.

(lying)

Nobody could have seen this. Pierce must have moved carefully.

DUNWALKE

"Carefully."

(beat)

And how carefully did you read this crap? I trust you to fill me in on what I need to know, before I need to know it.

MCCALLISTER

I don't hold anything back from you, Charles, you know that. Or you should.

DUNWALKE

Was there anything. Anything between the lines? Any hint *at all* as to what was in that sonofabitch's head?

MCCALLISTER

There's no "between the lines" by design, Charles. Just bald statements of fact with no opinion and no subjectivity. Just analysis.

(beat)

I read them carefully enough.

DUNWALKE

And then *this* delightful account of treason and betrayal gets dumped in my lap this morning.

MCCALLISTER

(surprised)

Have you pulled in some kind of favor?

DUNWALKE

Armored limo and all, bunch of *respectful* guys. I liked 'em. So this *dossier* they give me has NSA stamped all over it. Nice summary too, complete with some bullshit excuse why I didn't get it a week ago. Take a good look at it. Look at the date.

MCCALLISTER

January 18th.

DUNWALKE

Right. Someone *knew*. Wouldn't *that* have been nice to get in the daily brief? Someone screwed up. And this... this toilet paper come from the Director of National Intelligence?

MCCALLISTER

From his office, but yes.

DUNWALKE

Does he have loyalties? Some buddy-buddy thing going on with Pierce from back in the day? Just *happens* to omit details he doesn't like?

MCCALLISTER

(sighs)

It's a summary from all the intelligence agencies. They add or amend as appropriate. But the bulk of it comes from the CIA.

DUNWALKE

(beat)

Is that right?

(Another page being ripped off, scrunched up and thrown at the wall. It hits a photo frame which falls from the desk and smashes.)

4 INT. CIA OPERATIONS ROOM

4

23rd January

They're tired. Too much work to do. Never enough time.

(Entering room, sitting down, booting up computers. It's the first thing in the morning.)

PLATTEN

You look like you've had a rough night.

DELANY

I don't sleep. Personal policy.

(beat)

Any insights? Why didn't we spot this? The *trite* answer I have is it's not our mission. What's the real answer?

PLATTEN

I've been going through the archives. Not just one or two of them. Surprisingly hard to do here.

DELANY

That's confidence. Some contacts got back to me. Other agencies are going *apeshit* over this. Not the NSA.

PLATTEN

You know someone inside?

DELANY

No. But I will.

PLATTEN

Right.

DELANY

So what've we got?

PLATTEN

The NSA didn't send us this, not directly. The leaker scrubbed the NSA references, not too well. In a hurry.

(beat)

Big implication, though.

DELANY

That they never intended to tell us. So our leaker is loyal enough to protect his or her source, but patriotic enough to want us to be aware. Make sure we were up to speed. Why?

PLATTEN

Because the CIA is the only intelligence agency independent of any department?

DELANY

Maybe the NSA needs some independent scrutiny.

PLATTEN

Oh and it's a "Him". Mabley filled in some details. The immediate worry is that he was able, using NSA tools or not, to access our internal calendar and some security systems.

DELANY

That's a concern. But it's not my immediate worry.

PLATTEN

It isn't?

DELANY

They knew. We didn't. That just... burns me up, y'know?

(Thumps desk.)

PLATTEN

Yeah. I know.

(Computer notification.)

DELANY

Word back from archives?

PLATTEN

Digital ones. That... is a lot of documents... might want to order pizza if this spills into tonight.

DELANY

I really hope there's something. If we didn't know, then we need to change. If we knew and didn't realize. That needs to change too.

5 INT. CIA OPERATIONS ROOM - LATER

5

Later in the day.

(Door opens as Mabley enters.)

DELANY

Philip! What's the good word. Where do we stand?

MABLEY

Not unexpectedly, Dunwalke has just been in touch. He is coming here to "personally" discuss our intelligence failure. He's in the air right now.

PLATTEN

He can do that?

DELANY

He can't do squat.

MABLEY

Well the fact that he is calling from a bizjet borrowed from a rich golfing buddy and not, say, Air Force One or Marine One should tell you something.

DELANY

(surprised)

Phil, you're going to meet with him? What kind of signal does that send?

MABLEY

Of course I'll meet with him. More information is better than less. I the last few days have proved *that*. I've also extended a similar invitation to Oliver Pierce.

DELANY

Great! You can ask him how he managed to pull our panties over our heads.

PLATTEN

It gives the look of impartiality. I see where you're coming from Sir.

(beat)

But what do we do now?

DELANY

It'll buy us time. Gets the security theater out the way.

MABLEY

Yes, then we can focus on where we went wrong and correct it going forwards.

DELANY

You're wrong, Phil. The focus should be what do we do right *now*. On the continuity of the agency. *Then* some intern can worry about who we supposedly answer to. Sucking up to a couple of presidential wannabees is just a sideshow.

PLATTEN

So who *is* the president? What if neither of them is?

DELANY

Who cares? We're not constitutional lawyers. We don't play politics. We identify threats. We stop them. We serve America's interests.

MABLEY

As I say. We can do that by understanding where we went wrong.

DELANY

What I want to understand is did Pierce have outside help. Some banana republic we toppled, with a long memory? A cabal in Moscow with dreams of being the old Soviet Union again? I can't believe this wasn't something larger.

MABLEY

Is there evidence of that?

DELANY
(reluctantly)

No.

PLATTEN
We've barely started looking at the archives. But the *fact* is that Pierce has military support. There is no precedent for it. None whatsoever.

(beat)
That couldn't have come out of nowhere.

DELANY
I'll say it. A conspiracy.

MABLEY
Granted, other parties could have known, or assisted.

DELANY
Or pushed Pierce into it. What if someone leaned on him? Are we sure good old Pierce is *clean*? Is he a security risk? Was he always?

PLATTEN
Not the NSA, if they just found this out too.

DELANY
I'm telling you, if the agency survives this, we need to have a closer look at *us*. Someone must have given him help. Someone must have *planned* this. Those plans must exist.

The next few lines are descending into squabble, overlapping each other.

PLATTEN
We're just guessing.

DELANY
How about Homeland Security? Angling for more powers in return for supporting Pierce?

PLATTEN
That's ridiculous.

DELANY

Or the FBI? Who better than our *de facto* secret police to oversee a first world dictatorship?

PLATTEN

Dictatorship? Did you think it might technically be *legal*?

DELANY

Technically, it's a hell of a lot of things.

Until Mabley says this:

MABLEY

Did we do this?

There is a long pause.

PLATTEN

What?

MABLEY

We're world experts in supporting regimes or knocking them over. So I'll ask again.

(empathizes)

Did we do this?

PLATTEN

Sir? I... I... don't know.

Another pause.

DELANY

(sighs)

Honestly, there's no realistic way to tell.

MABLEY

There's no... My God, George. Are you telling me the agency is so damn compartmentalized, we *can't be certain* it wasn't us?

DELANY

Jesus, Phil, you're a manager. You don't *run* this place. Why do you think all our public statements are "no comment"?

6 INT. MABLEY'S OFFICE

6

24th January.

INTERCOM

Mister Charles Dunwalke to see you,
Sir.

MABLEY

Show him in.

PLATTEN

"Mister". No-one can agree on
anything.

MABLEY

They both think they are.

(Door opens.)

DUNWALKE

So you're the director of the fabled
CIA.

MABLEY

I am.

DUNWALKE

Miss, get me a coffee willya?

(Platten is startled, offended and is about to say something
cutting.)

PLATTEN

Sir, I am not --

DUNWALKE

Something unwholesome about the air
in a jet, recycled six ways to
Sunday, does something to your sense
of taste. Can't appreciate a good
coffee.

MABLEY

(whispers to her)
Just run with it. *Tradecraft*.

PLATTEN

(whispers)
Sir.

(Platten leaves.)

MABLEY

What can we do for you?

DUNWALKE

That's cute. Real nice. Bit late for what you can do, isn't it, which is to root out traitors before they fuck me.

MABLEY

I don't think you understand our mission.

DUNWALKE

Sure I do. And you screwed up. The question is what are you going to do now. Do you see yourself having a future if you can't predict the... well, you know what I'm talking about. You had nothing. Nothing.

MABLEY

Correct. We had nothing.

DUNWALKE

(caught off guard)

I'm surprised. Expected more of a vigorous defense.

MABLEY

We had nothing. But ask yourself. Why would we? It's not our mission.

DUNWALKE

Don't give me that crap.

MABLEY

We take an interest in our enemies, not in ourselves. You want an agency whose business is most definitely US citizens, you want to take a look at the Bureau or perhaps Homeland Security.

(Platten returns with a coffee. Sound of cutlery. Dunwalke just takes it.)

DUNWALKE

(sips)

That's better. So what happened is you were looking out there, not in here?

(MORE)

DUNWALKE (cont'd)

You expect me to believe that you see nothing out your own goddamned window? Those briefings, I see Iran being amenable to a deal over nuclear reactors, navy exercises in the South China Sea...

MABLEY

You want an explanation.

DUNWALKE

Oh I want way more than an explanation, but that'll do for starters.

MABLEY

Well then, *Sir*, I understand that you are against the sharing of intelligence?

DUNWALKE

When in hell did I say that?

MABLEY

Our allies can "stand on their own two feet" you once said.

Did you know the NSA has a reciprocal agreement with the Brits? Unofficial of course. The NSA doesn't spy on US citizens, no sir, but GCHQ? They do.

DUNWALKE

Our allies spy on us. With our consent? Are you serious?

MABLEY

Yes. GCHQ doesn't spy on their own, the Brits. No *sir*, because they too look outward not inward.

But the NSA sure spies on them, with unofficial consent. Do you see where this is going?

DUNWALKE

You're telling me our allies knew?

MABLEY

I don't know that. You see, word has it that the Brits, the Germans, a lot of our allies as it happens, have been curiously *reluctant* to share intelligence of late, *standing on their own two feet*. All in the last three months, but I'm sure that's a coincidence.

MABLEY (cont'd)

We try to understand the world. We look for where that world presents a threat. Would you have considered a past or future US administration to be threat to the sovereignty of the United States of America?

DUNWALKE

Well he goddamn was a threat. And you clowns missed it. Not like that shiny, *modern* NSA, who weren't asleep at the switch.

MABLEY

They're almost as old as... (beat) wait, they informed you?

DUNWALKE

Technical wizardry and Silicon Valley know-how, that's what worked. Not 1940s cloak and dagger. You guys had better up your game, we give you enough money. Start pointing that telescope inside the walls.

(beat)

Otherwise, what use are you to me? Why fund a failing agency?

Oh yeah, another thing. You will call me *Mister President*. I am sensing a disturbing lack of respect here. I want a daily brief, a different one, direct from the CIA, not the DNI, President's Eyes Only.

Nothing left out. Is that something you can do?

MABLEY

(coldly)

We already do that. McCallister gets those "President's Eyes Only" briefings. Your instructions.

DUNWALKE

(slowly)

Well you have new instructions.

Dunwalke leaves. There's a long pause before Mabley speaks.

MABLEY

Impressions?

PLATTEN

I think he hadn't seen *any* briefings until yesterday. The examples he used are all from over a month ago. He's been catching up on his reading.

MABLEY

I despair. (sighs) I have to lie to the Director of National Intelligence in the morning. So, just for us, why *did* we miss it? Why'd we have nothing?

PLATTEN

I looked back and we *didn't* have nothing. Same reason the other agencies missed it.

MABLEY

Oh? But not the NSA. Who saw it and sat on it, because spying on US citizens, let alone elected officials, is not something they do. Not officially. So, why?

Pause as they contemplate this.

PLATTEN

Tell me sir, do you know which constellation you'd find the north star in?

MABLEY

I'm afraid my interests were sports and aircraft of World War Two when I was younger. Is this an analogy to help an old man understand?

PLATTEN

Something like that. It's the Big Dipper. Seven main stars in the north sky.

MABLEY

Ah. The Flag of Alaska, in fact.

PLATTEN

I didn't know that. The Big Dipper. Sometimes it's called the Wagon. In Britain it's called the Plough. In ancient Greece they called it the Great Bear.

MABLEY

Looks like a damn frying pan to me.

PLATTEN

That's exactly the point. The same stars, the same *data*, but we see a different thing depending on our culture.

MABLEY

We saw an outgoing president ordering military maneuvers because it was the last chance to exercise those muscles, grab the news cycle, have some fun, and maybe just to piss on some egotistical chips. Make inauguration day headlines about Pierce, not Dunwalke.

PLATTEN

We had the clues, we had the hints, we ran scenarios, we did everything right. *We had all the data.*

We joined the dots, Sir, and we saw a picture. But in the end we looked at that picture and we just didn't believe it.

7 INT. CIA OPERATIONS ROOM - LATER

7

25th January

DELANY

(on desk phone)

Run as many scenarios as you can think of.

(MORE)

DELANY (cont'd)
(inaudible)
Sure. Sure. But the main one is how
and when the military splits into
factions.

(inaudible)
Well that's the question, isn't it?

(Door as Sarah Platten enters, sits down. Starts typing on
computer.)

DELANY (cont'd)
Anything any clearer?

PLATTEN
My head is splitting. I've lost count
of the documents I've read though in
the last few days, including new
reports. I don't think we can weather
this.

DELANY
I have some thoughts on that.

PLATTEN
Of course you do.

DELANY
It's our job to understand the world.
So, what do we understand about the
world after the 20th of January? What
do we do in that world?

PLATTEN
Please, George, I'm tired. I have
enough trying to put together the
report on what went wrong.

DELANY
The Director is still insisting on
that, huh? He's still wrong.

PLATTEN
(reluctantly)
Fine. The world is way more shocked
than the politicians are saying. The
usual expected public statements to
the effect of supporting the USA when
the current crisis is resolved.

None want to "interfere" in the
internal affairs of a sovereign
nation.

DELANY

Nothing unexpected there. And privately?

PLATTEN

Privately, lots of talk about martial law being utmost hypocrisy considering the decades of rhetoric we've used against others.

DELANY

I agree. See this? Germany thinks it's a feint in preparation for annexing overseas territories, part of some clever American adventurism strategy they can't figure the endgame for. And they're an ally for God's sake.

PLATTEN

The alert status of half the world's standing armies are at maximum. We know all this now.

DELANY

And right there's the benefits of having back channels. Yes, we know all of this now. We are useful. And we must be allowed to continue.

PLATTEN

Look after our own first?

DELANY

My analysis is how weak we are as a nation right now.

PLATTEN

Weak?

DELANY

Say some other state actor decides now is a perfect time to drop a nuke on DC?

PLATTEN

Do you really think that's likely?

DELANY

Have the last few days been likely? Tell me: right now, who has the launch codes? The guy who won the election but isn't sworn in, or the guy who's past his term limits? Confusion. Confusion is the point. Confusion will be taken advantage of. Confusion was someone's goal.

And we need to survive. We need to weather it, as you say, no matter who comes out on top.

We need to think about leverage. Get some big sticks. The FBI is almost certain to have dossiers about the major players.

PLATTEN

(tired)

The NSA seems to be trying to position itself with Dunwalke, maybe it's doing the same with Pierce. Establish their bona fides. They're trying to suck up to Dunwalk, after the fact? Like, they can do this if they're allowed to. So if they sat on a report because it would reveal they illegally spied on US citizens --

DELANY

No. I mean Dunwalke and Pierce themselves, their cohorts. Defund us and pay the price. Keep it from the Director. Kompromat.

(beat)

Add to my files.

PLATTEN

"Add to"...?

There's a long pause.

DELANY

Don't tell me you're surprised, Sarah. This online connected world you inhabit is neat and clean. The world of mud and dirt and pain is where the real work happens.

PLATTEN

We still have to follow the law.

DELANY

You think so? This world is more dangerous than ever and we're never more than one bill away from congress cutting our dick cut off.

DELANY (cont'd)

We have levers and we need to pull them all.

PLATTEN

And what are those?

DELANY

You weren't here during the Cold War. You want to push back against the Man, shape the world to your end? There are only three levers. Money. Guns. Sex. Worked well back in the day. Your leaker? He's our asset now.

A computer nerd with ideals, straight from Mom's basement to questionable activities? Dangle getting laid in front of him and he'll do anything we tell him.

PLATTEN

That's appalling. If that's how it needs to work, I don't know if I can be a part of this anymore.

DELANY

Can't fault you for following your conscience. I'll only say this: conscience is just fine when your world is a safe one. The Old Man is right about one thing. We need to understand the world. I need accurate analyses. And you are very good at that.

PLATTEN

Don't...

DELANY

We're off the books now. Any future conversations take place in the gap. This conversation never happened.

PLATTEN

"I deny all knowledge."
(MORE)

PLATTEN (cont'd)

(beat)

Hasn't that been the problem all
along?

(Exiting room. Door slam.)