BD Mission 01: Track a Leader
Name: Valentin Lacroix

On receiving the mission details from Nimue, I hadn’t had any personal preferences of which target to do, so I made the decision based on a little game of fate of which I think the details are too small to be of any importance to you. Yasuo had left the apartment to his own matters, and so I had the privacy I needed to work efficiently.

The results were that I was to track down Eleanor R. Cole first. So be it, I thought. One of the few details given about her was her paranoia problem, and I took the whole situation as a game.

‘Well, then, Miss Eleanor.’

[ CCTV system: Login Success. ]

‘Shall we begin?’

A blur of figures appeared on screen; People conducting their everyday pleasantries, their everyday routines. I quickly scanned about areas in the main city, as those few details mentioned her being about these areas frequently. After scanning roughly three areas covered by the security system, I found her.

I held up the photo supplied to us against the screen. It was a perfect match.
However I was caught off guard as she stared straight into the lens of the city’s security camera. Her gaze seemed to pierce through the monitor which, frankly, scared me quite a bit.

She eyed the camera as though looking at an enemy; like she knew very well I was watching her. Until all of a sudden, she pulled out a gun from her jacket and pointed it straight at me... –Euh..  at the camera, rather.

There wasn’t anybody else around to witness this utter madness. She looked like a criminal about to erase any trace of herself, grinning like that. She wore this disgusting mocking smirk smeared all over her face, and I despised looking at it. I had nothing to worry about however, a busted camera in the near outskirts of the city wouldn’t be able to threaten My security or blow My cover.

Still, it would be very troublesome not to be able to see what the hell she’s up to, I thought.

I said softly, ‘Watch it, Eleanor.’

And as the words left my mouth, her expression changed to a small smirk as she withdrew her gun back into her jacket pocket.  Then she briskly walked off.

But she was going somewhere I didn’t want her to. ‘Ah, wait—‘ I said again, as force of habit.

‘..That’s.. the slums.’ I grimaced. But she was long gone into an area void of surveillance technology. It was frustrating, but I suppose it could not be helped ; I’d have to get involved personally for this one.

I didn’t doubt that she wouldn’t return again to that same alleyway since she looked accustomed to the visit. So after a night’s rest I set out again, around mid afternoon, and with me I carried a shoulder bag (Yasuo’s, I think. ).  To note, I heard him mumbling something about me not being able to find my way around before I left the apartment. And unfortunately, it was the truth.

I took a long good stare at the surrounding area outside the apartment building, and slowly made my way to the hotel I was previously staying in before moving to Yasuo’s place.

I took the elevator up to flat 204, grabbed my stash of personal things from below the bed, and took a few modified wireless microphones, a headphone receiver, and a camera attached to a USB. Putting them into my bag, I then returned my stash back under the bed and took the elevator back down.

From there, I didn’t know what to do, so, very much like a tourist I checked signposts and signboards to navigate my way to the area where I lost track of Eleanor. When I reached the place, I compared my view with the camera view I had seen the other day to enter the alleyway she disappeared into. And on reaching my destination, I found how disadvantageous the setup was.

It was practically a land of just empty space as a little into the distance there was the above ground metro rail, a solitary street light towards the centre of the area, a garbage can towards my right by the buildings, and that was it. I distributed the small button sized microphones, one by the garbage can, and another around the base of the street lamp, and figured that Eleanor wouldn’t get too far from there; It was a long way before reaching the main slums, and I'm sure anybody in their right mind wouldn't walk all the way across that large stretch of land.

With that I looked for a place which was good for laying low, and found a stairwell by one of the building walls. From the lamp, It was difficult to see anything placed on the first floor and so thought it sufficient for me to observe from without being seen. Plus it was from a height and thus more likely that I get a better view of whatever happens below.

I looked a while at the ladder leading up and sighed. I was never accustomed to climbing up things like trees as a child, or actually, any form of exercise whatsoever besides walking and maybe running a bit as and when required. So I rolled up my sleeves and began the climb up, and soon noted that I would never do the same again. The experience and strain was enough for me to possibly develop a phobia of ladders, and I, plainly out of breath, looked to the metal railing to help me drag my body to a more favourable view of the streetlamp area. I thought that perhaps I should have made somebody else like say, Yasuo, do this kind of work, but dismissed the idea as I wouldn’t get the quality as I had liked. Plus I wouldn’t want to endanger anybody else’s health or reputation in things that I’m supposed to handle myself.

I looked in the direction of the streetlamp only to find somebody already there. He looked familiar, but I didn’t try too hard to remember. Then, as though playing by a script, Eleanor came walking toward the man just a few moments later. I taped the scene with the camera I had taken with me from the hotel. It simply consisted of a wire with a camera lens at its end connected to a USB drive and so was good for maintaining the low profile I needed.  I hooked up my headset to the microphone placed at the base of the lamp and listened closely.

‘Good evening,’ the man said.

‘Good evening, James.’ Eleanor replied.

‘..Well, I assume you have what I need.’ He briskly continued, and with a slightly laughing tone, she said ‘Straight down to business as always, I see.’

‘Oh But of course, the boss isn’t a very patient one, and I wouldn’t want to disappoint.’

‘..Hm? New boss?’

‘It would appear so.’

‘Secretive as usual, too. Ah well, I still honestly think those cameras are following me.’

‘What?’ the man cut in, almost simultaneous with my thoughts.

Eleanor smirked again. ‘Heh, but I didn’t bust it up this time.’

His voice seemed to trail away, ‘Good.’ He said. ‘Applaudable self control, Eleanor.’

When suddenly she pulled out her gun and pointed it to his face.

‘I was this close.’ She said, sounding much more serious.

His voice too, had become serious in turn, but not as quite. He still maintained a frightfully calm and confident tone of voice as he replied ‘Is that so.’

‘..Aren’t you scared? I could blow your brains out at any moment.’ She said, sounding confident herself.

‘Not Really.’ He replied, followed closely by the clack made as Eleanor readied her gun for firing.

‘Oh? Do Tell why.’ She said.

‘Three reasons.’ He calmly said, and continued ‘One; I’m a stable source of income’, hinting at the suitcase he carried. ‘Being so obsessed with shopping, you wouldn’t be content even with this sum of money. Basically, because—‘ He was cut short by Eleanor.

‘Because that would be like cutting open the duck that lays golden eggs.’
He then continued , ‘Second, you’re paranoid.’ I slightly smirked at how haplessly this man was throwing his words around, even whilst staring down the barrel of a gun.

‘But you wouldn’t make stupid, rash decisions like that.’
I was surprised she hadn’t shot his smartass mouth just then and there. Still, he continued.

‘Third,’ he slowly said, ‘You’re holding that gun in your right hand.’ He paused a while and administered the last sentence of his reasoning, ‘You’re a lefty.’
She wasn’t surprised nor amazed in any way. ‘So what?’ She said, quite mockingly. ‘It doesn’t matter at point blank.’

His light tone of voice returned. ‘Au contraire, it does,’ he said, and explained. ‘A good hitman wouldn’t die, even at point blank.’

‘..and I just happen to be one.’ He ended, very much full of himself.
‘Well, aren’t you a confident one.’ She said, smiling. Then reverted back to seriousness. ‘..You make me want to try and see if that’s true.’

‘..that smug look of yours is starting to piss me off;'

'..If it were not for a waste of bullets, I would have.’ She added, and ended saying, ‘Anyway, here’s what you needed.’

‘Likewise.’ He replied.

And through the headset I could hear the man shuffle through the papers in the bag Eleanor brought.

‘Satisfactory?’ She cut in.

Putting away the papers, ‘Quite so. Pleasure doing business with you,’ he replied.
But as soon as he turned his back to leave, Eleanor half-shouted to him. ‘Oh, one last thing.’

‘Hm?’ he said, seeming quite irritable at this point.
As I peered slowly from my spot, I saw that once again, she was looking toward me. ‘Over there.’ She said, my eyes widening thinking that my cover had been blown.

She clacked her gun pointing up toward me. James asked, ‘Aiming for the--?’

‘Yeah.’ She briskly replied, and took fire.

I winced as though by instinct, closing my eyes in defeat as I felt moist droplets fall on my face.

‘Direct hit.’ She smirked.

There was a short moment of silence until, smelling fowl fertilizer, I opened my eyes quite surprised, wondering where the dirt came from.

‘Pretty good shot,’ the man mused.

Now apparently smiling contentedly,  with her voice that by now I was sick of hearing. ’Sorry. I just wanted to show I’m not shabby with my right, either.’
And with that they said their goodbyes and parted. ‘Till next time.’

Just then I saw the remains of a flower pot which used to sit on the railing of the stairwell, and I waited in place to give the two time get far enough for me to avoid them completely. Retrieving the microphone and stating the time of the end of session, I packed my things and walked exhaustedly back to the apartment, reeking of manure. On entering the place I now call ‘home’, I was greeted warmly by Yasuo, peering from his newspaper: ‘Oh you’re home. God, go take a shower, you smell like fuckin’ crap. Literally.’

So I took his advice, grabbed a towel and headed for the bathroom.

On noticing that the towel belonged to him, Yasuo mumbled, ‘Damn teenager.’
I took the shower, and Yasuo snarled ‘Stop dripping all over the damn floor,’ as I splotched my way across the room, too annoyed, too tired to act well mannered, and made my way to his room to grab a change of clothes. I roughly put on a polo shirt and some pants which were a little loose on me, but thought to myself that they would have to do for now. After forcing—no, persuading Yasuo to get off the couch, I tried to get some rest to recover the energy I had used up and begin my research the following morning.

I had slept quite deeply, and by the time I woke up I discovered that I had been sleeping for almost an entire day. So I quickly jumped from the couch, pulled Yasuo from his comfortable seating next to me, and pushed him out the door.

‘You can’t lock me out of my own apartment--’

But I did. I walked toward Yasuo’s computer, letting his key fly around my finger like a helicopter propeller.

Loading the USB I had in my pocket to his computer, I copied my personal bot installer to the drive, and watched my little creation take form on the screen.
A small human-like figure with black hair under a hoodie, wearing a short skirt, and boots appeared, opened her eyes and brightly greeted ‘Good morning~’
‘Morning, ‘Tina.’ I said into the headset’s microphone. ‘Conduct a search on Eleanor R. Cole, please.’ I requested of the little piece of artificial intelligence.
‘Right away sir,’ she said obediently, scanning through internet files. ’48 results, sir.’
‘This looks interesting,’ I said to myself as I clicked on one of the results, a government file.

It was an employee record, and contained data such as her name, age, and various details:

[Department: Logistics
Allowed access to secure files]

Reading the record, I remembered Eleanor’s little rendezvous with the other.
Other results provided some interesting information. Eleanor used to be a lieutenant until she had been removed from the army for a severe miscalculation in strategy which costed the country hundreds of lives. In her years of duty, she was noted as ‘Queer but Pure Genius,’ and one of her greatest battles was in due to the fact of having noticed a small, otherwise unnoticeable difference within the battlefield which allowed her to make a prediction which turned what was accepted defeat into success. I thought to myself, ‘..So the paranoia is not what is seems, but simply a nature of ‘being sure’ and being highly observant, or, dare I say, a matter of controlled paranoia.’ And at the moment she works as a clerk for the government.

‘Tina.’ I then said.

‘ Yes sir?’

‘New search.’ I continued, comparing the target info picture with the man in the video I had taken.

‘James Fitzgerald.’

Valentina nodded and produced 2 search results. She then asked, ‘Shall I perform the custom search, sir?’

‘Yes, please.’

‘One result added sir. It’s from the ------------ files.’

‘Read it out please.’

‘As you wish’ she said, then proceeded. ‘[filtering content]James Fitzgerald; Freelance Hitman. Minimum Fee: $50,000 per head.’

‘So the hitman rumor is true. Copy the accessed files to the USB, Tina.’

‘Two down.’ I thought, quite content with the information I had managed to gather. I’m not sure if this is the kind of information needed, but it’s something I suppose. I looked at the other three targets, and the one called Rickey Sullivan interested me the most. I asked Tina to search up information on him, and the search revealed no useful information in regards to being a potential leader of the Military team. It had turned up a few blogs about himself, several different e-mail IDs, and numerous photos of him in clubs and discos, among others.

Nonetheless he looked the part of a soldier and so I was inclined to see the party addict for myself. I followed the lead of his latest blog which said he frequented the central metropolis disco from around 8 in the night to 5 in the morning. Looking at my watch which ticked 10.10pm, I set off for the place.

I opened the door to see Bella arriving from the elevator, and I gave her the keys asking her to stay in the apartment to wait for Yasuo, then I continued on my way, somehow managing to find the disco.

It was a disturbing mix of dim orange lighting and neon flashes of light with smoke suspended in mid-air. Techno music was deafeningly loud and the bass made the entire hall vibrate. I just sat down at one of the stalls trying to look like the surroundings weren’t making my head spin, and watched as Rickey stole the show in the middle of the dance floor around a crowd of girls.

‘This is going to be a long night.’ I noted to myself.

The man dressed in soldier uniform danced about for at least 8 hours, sometimes taking a break by the bar, or hitting on girls.

All the way until 6 in the morning, I was disappointed that nothing relevant to my mission happened. I wondered why he was one of the targets, and so continued this regular lurking, practically turning into a vampire as I was awake all night and asleep all day.

A week passed slow and redundant as I saw the same scenes day after day. I finally gave up and set off to try a different target. Perhaps staying up late nights had clouded my brain severely as I chose to gather information on the rumored shotacon named ‘Robert Deardroff’. I relied on Tina to supply me information yet again, and turned up information of him being a commercial director working for the ‘Channel 7’ station in town.

However, checking with the station, the receptionist said that Robert Deardroff was already dead.

‘Dead?’ I asked.

The station janitor who was just a little behind cut in.

‘Yeah, Din’tcha hear? You must live under a rock. He’s been long gone for a week now.’

‘..What happened to him?’ I asked on impulse.

‘..Awh, heck. I’unno. People just suddenly found ‘im in his own office with a bullet dug in his then brain. Them police’d managed to find the spot from whur the assassin wus, but they haven’t gotten far with the investigation.’ He said, leaning on his mop. ‘Heck, they saids it didn’t even look like the apartment had ever been used. Pretty durn good clean up job they did, whoever it wus.’ He ended, then continued mopping the floor.

I connected the event with the meeting between Rigby and Fitzgerald. It seemed highly plausible, but too good to be true. Nonetheless I returned back home and did some further research on James’ little information gatherer. And there it was.

[Last file accessed: Channel 7 employee data.]

I was surprised at how easy it was, and surprised at how ignorant the government started to seem.

With that, I noted the target as deceased, a target lost, and so I continued on to the last target left on the list, Lamar Gilliam.

‘Another slums target’ I sighed, and a contact well versed with Black Market happenings told me that  Lamar was much more than a drug addict, he’s a drug trafficker, and he’s doing a pretty good job of it; He’s been in the business for a good 5 years now. So I decided to get some solid proof of this, more dirty work for me.

I went by the same route to the slums; Eleanor’s way, I started calling it. The familiar scene with the lamp post, and metro rail, and I looked at the garbage can, suddenly remembering that I had left one of the microphones there.

I felt around the back of the can, held it in my hand, and found its LED blinking. It had picked up sound and had recorded it. My lazy side kicked in as I gave up the idea of going further into the slums. It was late and I wouldn’t get anything done without any good leads.

Back at the apartment, I checked the microphone chip. I wondered why I was so hopeful. Playing back the contents, It was the regular sound of garbage hitting the walls of the can, somebody close by hurling from what could be a hangover after a long night at a bar, the regular tapping of shoes from people passing by..

Then, voices. It was faint, but there were people talking. I amplified the volume of the audio file. The quality wasn’t crystal clear, but it was evident that it was in fact, Rigby and Fitzgerald talking. The audio cracked from time to time as the device was slightly dented, but it wasn’t difficult to understand what they were saying after raising the volume. It was the usual chat, until:

Eleanor: ‘So James, any plan on telling me about this ‘new boss’ of yours?’

James: ‘Persistent as ever, hm, Eleanor?’

Eleanor: ‘But of course. Especially with how long you’ve let yourself be his dog for this long. Could I at least get why you’re working for him in the first place?’

James: ‘I’ve got my reasons. Firstly revealing his identity would potentially put him in jeopardy.

Eleanor: -sighs- ‘Well, now, I have to know where my work’s going. I can’t have it drifting off to some figure I don’t have a clue about, it’s dangerous for me too.’

James: ‘Well if you must know then, he sells drugs. Happy?’

Eleanor: ‘Not really. A lot of people are in the drug business, you know.’

James: ‘You know I don’t deal with small names. He’s got a lot of respect in the market. He’s got people backing him up from all over the city. How do you think he’s still around?’

Eleanor: ‘Connections, hm?’

James:  ‘Well back to the point. I don’t see why you care as long as the money comes rolling in, and he’s got plenty spare, I can tell you that.’

From there the conversation drifted back to irrelevance, but I was content with the lead that Lamar could potentially be the ‘new boss’ James was talking about. I edited the audio and video files for suitable replay, arranging them neatly and placing them on a CD to send to Nimue. I rewarded myself with some cake Yasuo brought home that day, and hoped that the information prove quite useful.