

SEATTLE.

IF I EVER GOT LOST,  
MY FATHER USED TO  
SAY, I ONLY NEEDED  
TO LOOK UP.

THE QUEEN INDUSTRIES  
SKYSCRAPER WAS MY  
COMPASS POINT. VISIBLE  
FROM EVERY CORNER OF  
SEATTLE. THE HEART OF  
THE CITY, THE HEART  
OF OUR FAMILY.

WELL, I'M HERE.  
AND I'M LOST.

BY DAY, THE  
WINDOWS  
CATCH THE  
LIGHT, MAKING  
THE BUILDING  
SHINE LIKE AN  
IVORY TOWER...

...ONE I'VE  
BEEN CAST  
OUT OF.





PRESUMED DEAD, FRAMED FOR MURDER, FROZEN OUT OF MY ACCOUNTS, ABANDONED BY MY FRIENDS, MY FAMILY, MY COLLEAGUES.

AND IT ALL BEGAN WITH A SHIPPING CONTAINER FULL OF KIDNAPPING VICTIMS, A SHIPPING CONTAINER OWNED BY QUEEN INDUSTRIES, BY ME, THAT LED ME DOWN THE RESEARCH AND I MOLE, AND MY ASSISTANT AND I DISCOVERED DIVERTED FUNDS, SWELL COMPANIES, TROUBLE.

AN HOUR AFTER I CONFRONTED MY C.F.O. CYRUS BRODERICK, MY ASSISTANT WAS DEAD AND MY LIFE WAS ALL BUT OVER.

WHY?

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# The Ninth Circle

THE FIRST THREE FLOORS ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC, BUT OTHERWISE THIS BUILDING REQUIRES LEVEL-FOUR SECURITY CLEARANCE.

A FORTRESS FOR TECHNOLOGY THAT COULD CHANGE, SAVE AND THREATEN THE WORLD.

THE INTERIOR IS A GAUNTLET OF CAMERAS, ALARMS, LOCKS, KEY CARD SENSORS AND GUARDS TOTTING ASSAULT RIFLES.

YES, I'M BREAKING INTO MY OWN BUILDING-- BESIEGING MY OWN SECURITY FORCE-- BUT I'M DOING SO AS GENTLY AS I CAN.

MY TRANG ARROWS ARE DOSED WITH A SYNTHETIC OPIOID, ETORPHINE...

...THAT-- UNFORTUNATELY FOR THIS GUARD-- YANKS PEOPLE INSTANTLY INTO A NIGHTMARE THEY WON'T WAKE FROM FOR HOURS.







THE FLOOR IS ALARM-TRIGGERED. ITS SENSORS COMMUNICATING WITH CHIPS NESTED IN THE GUARD'S BOOTS.

IF ANYTHING ELSE—HEAVIER THAN A SHEET OF PAPER—TOUCHES THE FLOOR, THE BUILDING GOES INTO LOCKDOWN AND BLARES WITH sirens.



THERE IS AT LEAST ONE GUARD PER FLOOR.



AND AT STAGGERED TIME INTERVALS, THEY SHIFT POSITIONS BY ELEVATOR...

...THEIR KEY CARDS RESETTING TO MATCH THEIR NEW LOCATION.



THESE GUYS AREN'T TO BLAME. NO MORE THAN AN ALARM OR A FENCE IS TO BLAME. BUT I HAVE TO GET PAST THEM.

SORRY, MAN.



I PROMISE TO MAKE UP FOR THIS WITH A VERY HEALTHY SURGE TO YOUR PAYCHECK WHEN I GET MY FORTUNE BACK.



THE VENTILATION SHAFTS ARE BARRED EVERY TWENTY METERS. SO THIS IS THE ONLY WAY UP...




...OR DOWN.



THAT'S WHERE I'LL GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS. ONE FLOOR BELOW ME, IN BRODERICK'S OFFICE.







I'VE SNUCK MY WAY INTO THE BUILDING SO THAT I MIGHT FIGHT MY WAY OUT OF HELL.