

Natasha listened as Sitwell described a long record of corruption, infiltration and manipulation. Hydra had been growing inside Shield since day one, living off of it like a parasite, twisting its purpose and using it for its own gain. By the end of his tirade he was smiling, proud of what his organization had achieved.

“It doesn't matter that you know.” He said, sneering through his pain. “You can't find us all. No matter how many times you cut us down we will just grow in the shadows! Cut off one head and two more shall take its place!”

Slowly Natasha stood from her chair and walked closer. Sitwell flinched when she pulled something from her jacket, expecting a knife or a weapon. Instead it was a tablet, the screen tilted toward him so he could easily read it.”

“This is something that Maker made for us. Do you know what it does?” Natasha asked, her voice cold and teasing. “This is a map. A map with the location of every Hydra member on the planet. It updates in real time, has a global range and is accurate to the nearest foot. It even shows their names.”

“That's... that's not possible.” Sitwell said, stuttering as he looked at the tablet, his eyes widening as he read the names. “How-”

“I have no idea.” Natasha said honestly, shrugging casually. “But with this it's only a matter of time before we wipe Hydra off the face of the planet. The only thing up for debate is the death toll in the process. But that's not something you need to worry about. You have a different problem.”

“Wha- what?”

“You need to decide if you're going to help us or not.” She explained like she was talking to a child. “If you tell us everything, every project, every bunker, every plan you know of, I won't kill you horrifically. You know my history Sitwell, you've read the reports. Do you really want to witness me getting creative first hand?”

Sitwells eyes went wild in fear, looking between Fury and Coulson, desperate for some sort of pity, anything.

He found none.

After one last struggle against his bindings he slumped, his head hung down.

“What do you want to know?”

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An hour later Sitwell was unconscious in his chair while Natasha, Fury and Coulson were all standing in a small separate and secure room. The room was silent, heavy with what they had learned.

"I want you to take one of the tablets and clear this location. Go floor by floor, clear the entire building and then lock it down as quietly as you can." Fury finally ordered, gesturing to the tablet Natasha was still holding. "Once it's clear each of you'll take a handful of agents you can trust, test them and move to the next location. Coulson will be leaving to clear the Fridge, while I want you to wait for Barton before moving to clear the Iliad."

"I would like to take a tablet as well sir, the Iliad seems to have a massive concentration of Hydra." Natasha pointed out, looking at her tablet. "It's almost fifty percent."

"Fine, I will be taking the other two with me to give to Agent Hill. She can coordinate and provide intelligence from the communications center at the Triskelion."

"How many locations do you think we can clear before they catch on?" Coulson asked.

"I don't know." Fury admitted, biting back a curse. "I want as many major locations cleared as possible using stealth. Once Agent Hill is set up at the Triskelion, I'll be moving on to the Helicarrier as losing that would be devastating. Once the Triskelion is secure and I'm done on the Helicarrier I'll return to the Triskelion to help coordinate."

"How many armbands, rings, phones and trackers do we have?"

"Thirty five bands, forty rings, six phones and four tablets." Fury answered, his eyes shifting to double check the box Maker had made for them was still on the table. "I want them divided evenly. I know we can't get them far for now but I'll be leaving some here for you to distribute."

"You know we won't be able to get everywhere Sir." Natasha pointed out quietly. "At some point it's going to get out."

"When it does, I'll be able to get ahead of it." Fury assured her. "As long as I have access to the Triskelions network I can override anyone, even Pierce. With any luck I will be able to get enough information to the places we can't get to to keep it from being a bloodbath. After we are forced to go loud we can send clean strike teams out to clear other places. The Triskelion is key to that."

"What about the other agents?" Coulson asked, double checking his gun. "There are groups that aren't Shield locations. Even the World Security Council is infiltrated."

“It’s going to be an uphill battle.” Fury admitted. “But once we have control over a proper foundation we can send squads to arrest individuals and secure high value assets.”

“What about Captain Rogers, Peggy and Maker?”

“Peggy and Captain Rogers are understandably upset. According to Ema, Maker was able to convince them that they wouldn’t be able to do much at this stage, but once our cover is blown their first strike will be rescuing Bucky. After that they will be connecting back with us to take out the targets we were unable to clear and are now alerted. Maker has his own tracking tablet so we can even send them straight out to a target.”

“I still can’t believe he handed over so many unbound objects.” Coulson said, touching the ring on his finger.

“I’m not.” Natasha said, shrugging when the other two looked at her. “His note said he made the tracking tablet first...”

“So he would have seen the absolute cluster fuck of a problem we are facing.” Fury finished, looking back down as he examined his revolver, the now black and blue colored pistol glowing slightly from the cylinder.

“Ah, that makes sense.”

“In any case we are being loaned these items.” Fury reminded them. “If we manage to return them all, Maker claims he will bind a third of them to our agents as well as arm an entire squad to the teeth. Full package and free of charge.”

“That... seems like a good deal.” Coulson admitted, Natasha nodding as well. “I guess he is paranoid about losing track of these things.”

The group spent the next fifteen minutes planning out and troubleshooting a strategy to clear out the New York headquarters while Fury contacted Maria Hill and a few others. With a hasty goodbye Fury left on a helicopter, heading to the airport. With orders to wait for him to access the Triskelion before starting their mission, the two had nothing else but to wait. Natasha managed to discreetly get Sharon Carter’s attention, explaining the situation with Coulson’s help before explaining the plan.

One hour and forty five minutes later Coulson and Natasha both the go command on their Maker made secure phones.

They started slowly, singling out Hydra agents as they stepped out into break rooms, bathrooms and single offices. Any time they could isolate them they struck. A quick question, usually casual to keep from spiking suspicion before a single touch knocked them out into a deep sleep. According to Maker, anyone they put to sleep with the knockout shockers would

stay out for at least eight hours, unable to be woken up until then. They still zip tied their hands and feet together, just in case.

Somehow, by some miracle, they managed to work their way through the entirety of the New York office before locking it down. The explanation took a while, but signed commands from Nick Fury, as well as proof that the rings and lie detecting bands worked was enough to convince the people in charge of the seriousness of the situation. They were to keep the facility locked down while preparing squads of Agents to perform a quick and brutal arrest of any Hydra agents they could find in the city. While waiting for Clint to arrive Natasha made a list using the tracking tablet of people they needed to arrest.

Natasha, Sharon and Clint left the moment the archer arrived, Natasha filling him in as they traveled. The Iliad was just off the coast of Maine, but their window of opportunity was closing with every minute that passed.

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Collectively Shield was in a mad scramble, starting slowly but picking up speed as locations were cleared, anomalous items were handed out and Triskelion Command coordinated dozens of strike teams at once. Clearing safe houses, arresting politicians and locking up hundreds and hundreds of traitorous ex Shield agents. They were cleaning house, and managing to do so using the Hydra tracking tablets and lie detecting bands.

It wasn't long after they managed to cleanly take the Triskelion that Hydra agents began to realize something was up. Hydra's loyal scientists left research facility looted to the ground before loyal agents could clear it, with nothing left but a few dozen cooling corpses. Shield assets were commandeered, safehouses destroyed and thousands of deep cover Hydra went to ground all over the planet. Plenty were left behind of course, but plenty more attempted to vanish.

Shield facilities in the U.S. were almost all cleared by the end of the next day, but dozens of overseas and more remote locations were lost or destroyed as Hydra abandoned a venture that took almost seventy years to set up in an attempt to hide and rebuild.

Of course they couldn't, as every single one of them was being tracked, but they didn't know that. Instead of pushing for locations outside their control Nick Fury ordered Shield leaders to consolidate, to continue clearing out their own locations and nearby cells that still riddled the world. Shield had managed to wrestle control over itself back from Hydra by midnight the next night. It was only then that Fury left the control room he was manning to address the Security Council, which was missing a handful of members. Some of them had been Hydra agents, others had just been injured in the process of arresting them. All of them looked haggard and anxious.

"We became aware of the threat at around noon yesterday." He explained, calmly addressing the computer displays. "Maker, in the process of creating a method to track Bucky Barnes, accidentally discovered a way to track those who sent him after Captain Rogers in the first place."

Fury, telling the truth as he knew it, held up one of the tracking tablets before sliding it under a camera so the members of the council could see the screen clearly.

"It tracks, in real time, the location of every Hydra member on the planet. It's accurate within a foot and even supplies the names of each member it is tracking. As you can see, some members seem to be congregating, while others are dispersing, no doubt attempting to disappear."

"How did this happen?" One of the female members asked after a long pause. "Such a systemic infiltration... it boggles the mind."

"We believe that Shield is the original vector. They infiltrated our ranks, in part due to Operation: Paperclip, though also through simple osmosis. From there they were able to manipulate Shield assets and agents to help other agents infiltrate and hide."

"Why aren't you tracking these traitors down!" Another member all but shouted. "You have their locations, so get the bastards!"

"We are currently running at our operational max." Fury explained. "Further, we just arrested almost a complete fourth of our membership. I have made the decision to scale back operations before my agents start making mistakes that cost lives."

"What about these large concentrations?" Another council member asked. "They are clearly congregating in specific places."

"We are communicating with the countries those bases reside in. Operations are already being planned as joint actions."

"This... this is a disaster."

"It is." Fury agreed. "But because of good luck and Maker's creations it is a manageable one. I won't lie to you, we got damn lucky. We have managed to minimize casualties by coordinating with foreign militaries and alerting them to traitors. We managed to keep the fighting off of the streets for the most part and any open combat was mostly on a small scale. The public is wondering what is going on, but is not in any sort of real panic. This could have been a lot worse."

"What do we do next?" The first member to speak up asked. It was rare the Security Council asked him for advice, and he wasn't about to pass the opportunity up.

“We need you to work with the UN to set up extradition and get permission for Shield agents to enter countries not part of our founding treaties. You need to set up a precedent to allow for Maker’s items to be acknowledged as legitimate in certain circumstances, enough that the UN and individual governments can charge individuals we find using these objects. Without that a large amount of Hydra Agents will go free. We are starting to put together the network of corruption they used to hide each other’s crimes, but quite a few come up clean to anything but Makers lie detection bands and his trackers.”

“Are...Are we sure they are one hundred percent accurate?” One member asked, her voice surprisingly fragile. “Is it possible that Thomas...?”

“Both the rings have been proven correct nearly three hundred times, and that is only the members who are willing to tell us about their organization in exchange for leniency.” Fury explained, before wincing, even managing to look sympathetic. “Ex Security Council member Thomas Colvert is one of those captured who agreed to give information.”

The woman, pale and anxious, simply nodded in response, looking particularly broken. It was not a secret that her and Colvert had been getting closer. There had even been talk about her standing down so that they could ethically pursue a relationship. Her replacement had also been arrested for being a Hydra agent.

“We are still sending fresh teams out to capture singular Hydra members, the ones who attempted to fade into large populations with new identities.” Fury explained after a long pause. “Once we have cleaned them up we will begin larger scale operations, once our Agents have a chance to recuperate and we can coordinate with the U.S and other governments.”

Fury spent the next thirty minutes assuring the council, answering their questions and explaining what Shield was doing. When he was finally done he headed straight back to the communication room. They had managed to pull something vaguely resembling a victory out of what should have been an unmitigated disaster. It could have been a lot worse.