

Episode 3, *Stanton 2017*: “A New Technic”— by Joey Madia

Scene 1. The Technology Wing, Ravenskald Towers

[We hear laughter from a guy and two girls, slightly intoxicated, in their early 20s. Sound of a security scan and beep. Door opens.]

MALE VOICE: Welcome to the nerve center, ladies, of what “Solomon the Wise”— president and CEO of The Ravenskald Group—likes to call “the New Technic.”

FEMALE VOICE 1: Ooh-la-la, very fancy!

FEMALE VOICE 2: I’ve never been on this floor before. Receptionists aren’t permitted up too high in Ravenskald Towers... That’s *strictly* for executive secretaries.

FEMALE VOICE 1: Or, as we like to call ‘em, executive leg-spreaders...

[the girls both laugh, a little too loudly for the joke. Or the place]

MALE VOICE: Hey now. You girls are gonna hafta keep it down... We don’t want security up here, do we?

FEMALE VOICE 2: That depends—you have a camera on a tripod, or do we need someone to hold it?

MALE VOICE: No worries about that—as soon as I pop the cork on this very expensive bottle of champagne, I’ll show you the camera set-up in this place. It’s toppa the line. Designed it myself.

[sound of cork popping]

MALE VOICE: There we go. Ladies—present glasses!

FEMALE VOICE 1: Mmmm... I like it when you show authority...

FEMALE VOICE 2: Me too. *So...* just how much authority *do* you have around here? Word is, Solomon Ravenskald runs a very tight ship.

MALE VOICE: He does. But a captain’s only as good as his executive officer, and I’m Mr. Spock and Commander Riker all rolled into one.

FEMALE VOICE 1: Commander *who*?

MALE VOICE: It’s a *Star Trek* reference. Don’t you girls do Netflix? Sci-fi channel?

FEMALE VOICE 2: I like “America’s Next Top Model.” And I use-ta watch *X-Files*. That David Duchovny’s a major fox. Get it? A *Fox*??

[the girls both laugh, way too loudly for the joke. Or the place]

MALE VOICE: You really are gonna hafta settle down. This room is totally soundproof, so no one in the hallway can hear anything, but the security cameras have high-end mics and are EMS—enhanced motion sensitive.

FEMALE VOICE 1: Enhanced motion sensitive? So if I stand on this console like this [sound of her climbing up on a metallic and plastic surface] and shake my moneymaker like this, the security guys are gonna get a good view? Angie—come on up here and let’s show Mr. Tommy Sicari, Vice President in Charge of Corporate Technology, just how much we wanna work on the upper floors.

FEMALE VOICE 2: Here I come. [sound of her getting on the console]

MALE VOICE: Hey, watch the champagne bottle. You’re surrounded by wiring and battery packs...

[sounds of bottle tipping over, followed by electronics popping, screams and panic from the three people as we hear little explosions in the equipment and the sounds of flames]

FEMALE VOICE 2: We gotta get out of here!

MALE VOICE: What the hell’s going on? The security door won’t open. Security’s gotta see us. Help! Hey, somebody help us in here! Why aren’t the sprinklers coming on?

[the girls begin to scream as the sounds of electronics exploding and fire get louder]

Scene 2. Uriel Stanton’s apartment

[sound of door opening, cat meowing]

URIEL: Hey there, Orson. Hey kitty. You glad to see daddy? Of course you are—you haven’t eaten in 24 hours. Sorry ‘bout that. Maury’s got me chasing down about five different stories. Ah-hah... A message on the home answering machine. And to think I nearly threw this antique out.

[answering machine beep].

ELECTRONIC VOICE: “You have one new message. Message one, today, 2:48 pm.”

[beep]

TOMMY ON TAPE: Hey, Uriel. It's Tommy. Listen, man, I hope you get this. You gotta be the last non-senior-citizen on Earth that still has a home phone and answering machine. I didn't wanna risk leaving a message on your cell. Too easy to intercept. I need your help. There's some heavy stuff going on at The Ravenskald Group. Real heavy. I mean, I don't mind creating dummy corporations and moving around electronic funds to keep cash out of the hands of Uncle Sam, but this whole New Technic business is a little out of my league. *Way* out. I can't talk to Samuel, for obvious reasons. He didn't want me working for his old man in the first place. So who knows—if I get out of this with all my parts and pieces intact, you might just win that Pulitzer you're always jawin' about. This is crazy big. New World Order type stuff. Call me, man. Better yet—meet me at the Stargazer Café near the campus at 11. I'm gonna be entertaining a few girls from the secretarial pool after work, but it'll be the old in and out, if ya got me. Ravenskald gave me a bottle of good champagne this morning, and I can't let it go to waste. Okay man, see you then. [beep]

URIEL: Dammit. It's 11 past 11 already. By the time I get across town...

[his cell phone rings]

URIEL: Maury? Listen, it's late. I gotta feed my cat.

SKINNER: Your *cat*? Cut it loose, rookie. You're a newspaperman now. Cats are like women—they're nice to pet and all, but you don't let one *live* with you.

URIEL: That's good advice, Maury. I'll keep it in mind. But just so you know—Orson's a boy.

SKINNER: Whatever floats your boat. Now listen to me—there's been a fire over at Ravenskald Towers. Eighteenth floor—the Technology Wing.

URIEL: Any fatalities?

SKINNER: Three. Two girls and a guy. Haven't been ID'd yet. The bodies are burned to a crisp. They're waitin' on dental records. It must have been some inferno in there. I expect a full report on my desk by 9 am. Have a good night, rookie.

[sound of phone disconnecting]

URIEL: Jesus, Tommy. How heavy did it get?

Scene 3. Prof. Joshua Stanton's office at Pinelands State University. Four days later.

URIEL: I still can't believe it, Dad. I was standing at his grave, watching them lower his casket... Tommy had Samuel and I convinced he'd outlive us both.

JOSHUA STANTON: I've lost too many friends too young, Uriel. I know what you're going through. Believe me.

[a knock on the door]

JOSHUA: Ruth. Perfect timing. Come on in. Uriel, I think you two have met. Ruth heads up the forensics lab at the university research center.

URIEL: Just briefly. It's good to see you again.

RUTH: I was shocked to hear about Tommy. We had some classes together. Professor Stanton told me you guys grew up together.

URIEL: I can't remember not knowing him. Listen, I don't want to interrupt a faculty meeting. I have to get over to the *Standard*. Mr. Ravenskald's granting me an interview this afternoon and I have to get my head together.

JOSHUA: Solomon's going on the record with you about the supposed accident at the Towers?

URIEL: *Supposed* accident? Come on, Dad—What haven't you told me?

JOSHUA: You first.

RUTH: Now I feel like the one who's interrupting...

JOSHUA: Not at all, Ruth. Have a seat. Well, son?

URIEL: Tommy left me a message the day he was killed. On my home machine. He was worried about someone intercepting it. He wanted me to meet him at the Stargazer, but of course he never made it. He said there was some heavy stuff happening at TRG. Something he called the "New Technic."

JOSHUA: And you don't find his death at all suspicious given that message?

URIEL: Sure I do. And I intend to ask Mr. Ravenskald about it. In a roundabout way, of course.

JOSHUA: Don't underestimate him, Uriel. Too many others have made that mistake. What do you know about the death of Dr. Jonah Marsh?

URIEL: He was shot on the steps of the University library about 10 years ago, right? They said it was a drive-by. That some gang-bangers thought he was the District Attorney.

RUTH: He was my father. And the people who killed him knew *exactly* who he was.

JOSHUA: It wasn't my intention to get you involved with this so soon, Uriel. And I'm not sure we should tell you any more. Solomon Ravenskald is an incredibly dangerous man.

URIEL: What are you saying? That he had Tommy killed? And Ruth's father?

JOSHUA: And many others. There's no proof of course—his network is extensive and he's made a high art of covering his tracks.

URIEL: Did your father work for him, Ruth?

RUTH: Not directly. My father was working on a number of government weapons and future warrior projects. Ultra secret. Very hi-tech. And The Ravenskald Group had several of the production contracts. They were actualizing my father's ideas. When he had a change of heart they killed him. A very public execution.

JOSHUA: As a warning to any other researchers who might be thinking of quitting.

URIEL: So that's what Tommy was talking about with the New Technic? Weapons development?

JOSHUA: That's part of it. But there's plenty more. Mind control, physical enhancement research for the Department of Defense, weather manipulation... And Solomon's at the center of it.

URIEL: I'm not canceling the interview.

JOSHUA: I'm not asking you to. Sooner or later you were destined to become a part of this. I hope to hell you're ready.

RUTH: Uriel, I need you to get inside the technology wing at some point during the interview. I'm sure it smells terrible in there. Use this handkerchief to cover your nose. And make sure you get some of the residue from the scene on it. Without Ravenskald noticing.

URIEL: No worries. I get it. So what're you looking for?

RUTH: I'll know when I find it.

Scene 4. The Technology Wing, Ravenskald Towers. Later that day.

URIEL: I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me, Mr. Ravenskald. I can't imagine how busy you must be with all of this.

SOLOMON: Anything for a friend of Samuel's. And Tommy's, of course. Congratulations on your position at the *Standard*, by the way. Very impressive. But not surprising—you've got news ink running through your veins...

[Sound of a security scan and beep. Door opens.]

SOLOMON: I don't mind letting you in here, Uriel. But I have another appointment in a few moments, so let's be quick.

URIEL: Ugh, the smell is really something, isn't it? Mind if I cover my nose?

SOLOMON: Go ahead. It's a smell I know all too well from my time in Gulf War One. There's something memorable about the combination of electrical wiring and charred flesh that stays with you.

URIEL: [tripping into a table] Jesus! Sorry about that. Caught myself just in time.

SOLOMON: Perhaps we should go.

URIEL: Yeah. Thanks again for speaking with me, Mr. Ravenskald.

SOLOMON: It's Solomon. And Uriel, if you speak to Samuel, tell him to call me. He rushed off from the funeral without saying goodbye.

Scene 5. The Forensics Lab at Pinelands State University. The next morning.

[sound of ringing phone]

RUTH: Pinelands State Forensics. This is Dr. Marsh. Uriel Stanton? Send him right in.

[sound of electric door lock]

URIEL: Ruth. Hey. I got your message and came right over. You find something?

RUTH: A few things. You did a great job getting residue on the handkerchief. It gave me plenty to work with.

URIEL: Was it arson?

RUTH: Absolutely. But it's complicated. Whoever did this sure as hell knew your friend's habits.

URIEL: How do you mean?

RUTH: I not only found a chemical accelerant, which explains why the fire spread so fast, but also trace amounts of a poison used by the Intelligence Agencies of several countries for assassination.

URIEL: They were covering all the bases...

RUTH: Exactly. If they drank whatever contained the poison, they would die within minutes, and someone could enter the room and start the fire. If the assassin got lucky enough, the accelerant would find its way to some pre-exposed wiring on its own.

URIEL: Champagne...

RUTH: Could be, given the circumstances.

URIEL: There's no "could be" about it. Tommy's phone message said that Ravenskald gave him a bottle of champagne that he was gonna share with the girls before we met at the Stargazer. Sonofabitch!

RUTH: You don't have anything, Uriel. Not really. The bottle's long gone, and even if we had it, there's no proof where it came from.

URIEL: So who do we tell about the accelerant and the poison?

RUTH: That's not up to me. I just do the lab work.

URIEL: What're you talking about? We have proof of murder here. I have to call Maury...

JOSHUA: He won't use it, son.

URIEL: Dad? How long have you been standing there?

JOSHUA: You don't think Ruth would tell you about what she found without consulting with me first, do you? You're going to have to trust me on this, Uriel. Things will have to run their course.

URIEL: If I can't do anything about it, why tell me?

JOSHUA: You're part of this now. And Solomon Ravenskald knows it. File your story on the fire, just as he explained it to you. Pay tribute to your friend and let Ruth and I decide how to handle it from there.

Scene 6. Solomon's office. Ravenskald Towers

[sound of a secure phone ringing]

SOLOMON: Yes? Did you follow Stanton after our meeting this afternoon? The Research Center. Yes. Jonah Marsh's daughter. The little bastard must have swiped the table with his handkerchief. No, I'm not concerned. It proves nothing. But he's trouble. Just like my dear old friend, his father... They'll be checking for tails. Let him be until I give the word. Joshua won't let him run with this. He knows better. We have to proceed with caution. The New Technic is in a most fragile state. Have you spoken to the General since we got his grandson back? He damned well better be pleased. After the unfortunate "correction" needed by our doctor friend I'm not in the mood for any more mistakes. The priest could have ruined our plans. He'll prove useful to us yet, now that Tommy's gone. You told me he was solid. Long haul. I should have known better than to trust a Sicari. They've always been the weakest. Always. But Vincolare's little experiment will provide us with a new third. A stronger one. And the first suitable female in a very long time.

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