# COWRITE WEEK 7

EXT. PARK - ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA - DAY

A park on the edge of the Potomac. All the familiar Washington, D.C. landmarks are visible across the river.

Ava's black sedan pulls up and screeches to a stop.

Ava, Harry, Jonas, Nora, and Freddie hop out. They're carrying fast food bags and beverages.

Freddie eats french fries from his bag as he walks.

FREDDIE
Oh man, finally, food. I feel like I haven't eaten in a year.

The totally buff Ava glances at the slightly chunky Freddie and shakes her head. Walters chuckles.

WALTERS
Well, eat fast, kid. We'll take a few minutes to regroup and figure out where to go from here. Then we gotta move.

They head across the grass toward a picnic table about forty yards from the car, close to the river. As they walk...

JONAS
So, I guess that was the Conquest thing shooting at us back there.

WALTERS
Yeah, seems like it. It looked just like the schematics.

AVA
It was a scaled-down version. A prototype.

JONAS
How do you know that?

AVA
Uh, briefings. The real version is much bigger. The payload capacity is enormous. Terrifying to think of it in the hands of the Chinese.

As Ava and Walters continue talking, Jonas falls back with Freddie and Nora.

He whispers...

JONAS
Shhh. Don't say anything. Nora, just nod once in a while. Freddie, keep eating.

FREDDIE
(mouth full)
'Kay.

Jonas nods toward Walters and Ava...

JONAS
We may have to get out of here in a hurry. Without them.

NORA
Why?

JONAS
I don't know. Just a hunch. There's something weird about all this. Something smells a little fishy.

Freddie opens his bag...

FREDDIE
Oh, I got the fishburger.

Nora rolls her eyes. Jonas shakes his head and continues...

JONAS
So stay alert while we're eating. If I say, "In Like Flint," get ready to move.

FREDDIE
(mouth still full)
What?

JONAS
Shhh. "In Like Flint".

Freddie grabs another fistful of fries. Nora nods.

JONAS
And when I say, "The Man With One Red Shoe," bolt for the car. As fast as you can. Okay?

NORA
Okay.

FREDDIE
But...

JONAS
Just do it, Freddie! When I say, "The Man With One Red Shoe".

FREDDIE
Okay, okay.

Ava and Walters have reached the picnic table. They sit together on the same side, facing the car, backs to the river. They open their bags, and take out their food.

Jonas, Freddie, and Nora reach the table a few moments later and sit on the opposite side.

As everyone munches on their burgers, Jonas takes the prism from his pocket and holds it up.

JONAS
There are a few things I don't get about this thing.

He twirls it slowly in his hand.

JONAS
Like, why all the fuss? It's just plans for some weapon system. If it's such a hot item, don't you think they made another copy of the plans? In fact, lots of other copies?

Walters looks from Jonas to Ava, waiting.

Ava reaches for the prism, but Jonas casually pulls it just out of her reach.

AVA
Cable only stole one copy because he assumed that's all he'd need to sell to the Chinese. He didn't figure on someone stealing it back.

Jonas holds the prism up again.

JONAS
And why <u>this</u> fancy-schmancy thing?

He moves it back and forth, watching refracted sunlight create rainbow colors on the table top..

JONAS (CONT'D)
There are a lot of simpler, more efficient ways to display stuff. A hologram? Whoop-de-doo. That's razzle dazzle for trade shows.

Ava reaches for it again. He pulls it back.

Walters looks at Ava again, waiting.

Ava hesitates, thinking.

AVA
I...I don't have any idea. I didn't design this thing. I just stole it.

Jonas holds it up again.

JONAS
You're black ops for Homeland Security, right? So why don't we just bring this to them and let them deal with it.

He points at a large building across the river. Everyone looks.

JONAS (CONT'D)
The headquarters building is right there. Five minutes away. We bring this thing to them, hand it over to the right person, and we'll be in like flint.

Nora and Freddie tense up, look at each other, then at Jonas.

AVA
Okay, kid. You're right, I probably should have done that right off the bat. I just wasn't sure who I could trust. We're playing a high stakes game here.

She reaches for the prism. She's getting frustrated.

AVA (CONT'D)
So give me the prism, and I'll take it there now. As soon as we finish eating.

Jonas starts to hand it to her. Then he stands very abruptly, points over Ava's shoulder, and shouts...

JONAS
Oh my god! Look! There's a man with one red shoe!

Startled by his shouting, Ava and Walters turn quickly and look behind them.

Nora and Freddie leap up and start running. Freddie's "run" is more of a waddle.

At the same moment, Jonas lifts his side of the table, dumping Ava and Walters on the ground. He flips the table on top of them. And runs.

Ava quickly recovers and launches after them. Walters, still in pain from his earlier injuries, is slower to react.

Jonas quickly catches and sprints past Freddie, then Nora. He yanks the car door open, dives in, and starts it up.

Ava, running full tilt, is gaining rapidly on Freddie.

Freddie, huffing and puffing, is fifteen yards from the car. Ava is three steps behind him.

Ten yards from the car, she's two steps behind him.

Five yards to go, and she reaches, stretches, and just touches his shirt tail. She grabs for it, gets a handful, and in her peripheral vision she sees...

Nora rushing toward her, doing a series of perfectly executed forward handsprings, terminating with a loud thud as the soles of both shoes crash against the side of Ava's head, knocking her for a loop.

Freddie leaps into the back seat of the car. Nora follows him.

Jonas floors it, and the car screeches away.

INT. CAR

Freddie exhales hard, trying to catch his breath.

FREDDIE
Whew, thanks. Geez, what are you, anyway? A ninja?

NORA
Nope. Cheerleader.

EXT. PARK

Ava struggles to her feet, draws her weapon, and aims, just as the car screeches around a turn, through a thick stand of trees, heading toward the main road.

AVA
(screaming)
You little shits!

Walters limps up to her. Grabs her wrist and lowers the gun.

WALTERS
Whoa, kimosabe. What're you doing?

Ava's enraged, veins popping out of her forehead.

AVA
I knew I shouldn't have trusted that kid.

Walters watches the car exit the park and disappear down the road.

He smiles.

INT. CAR

Nora climbs over the seat and sits next to Jonas.

NORA
Okay, Jonas, it's not that I'm not glad to get away from those creeps, but what the heck are we doing?

JONAS
The first thing we gotta do is figure out what we gotta do.

FREDDIE
Brilliant. You're like Eisenstaedt sometimes.

NORA
You mean Einstein, Freddie?

FREDDIE
Whatever.

JONAS
We don't even know what we're dealing with here. And I don't trust Ava.

NORA
Me neither.

JONAS
First, she tells us she's black ops for Homeland Security. Well, when she stole this thing, why didn't she just bring it to them?

FREDDIE
Yeah, right.

JONAS
Then, she tells us her boyfriend, that Cable guy, is Director of Science and Technology for the CIA. He's building a super weapon, and the Deputy Director doesn't even know the plans are finished?

NORA
Yeah, that <u>is</u> weird.

JONAS
And who's flying that Conquest thing? Does the Cable guy have his own private army or something?

EXT. ARLINGTON MEMORIAL BRIDGE

The car crosses the bridge, enters Washington.

INT. CAR

JONAS
Walters sends us to see "Julian" McMann, who turns out to be some weird artificial intelligence robot thingy, created by a creepy old lady who turns out to be one of the bad guys. What's up with that?

FREDDIE
That robot is the coolest thing I've ever seen.

JONAS
Yeah, maybe, but the real question is...why did he send us to “Julian” McMann, the robot? Why not send us to Helen McMann, the human? I don’t get it.

NORA
I hate Walters. I knew he was bad. I don’t trust him.

JONAS
It’s Ava that I don’t trust. Remember when I pointed out the Homeland Security building across the river?

NORA
Yeah.

JONAS
I don’t even know where Homeland Security is. I was pointing at the Watergate Hotel.

EXT. NATIONAL MALL

The car drives along a street adjacent to the National Mall. They pass the Smithsonian “castle.” The US Capitol Building is in the distance.

INT. CAR

Jonas fishes the prism out of his pocket.

JONAS
And then there’s this thing...what the hell is it, anyway? She says it’s a fancy gizmo to store the schematics for “Conquest.” And the Cable guy’s trying to steal it and sell it to the Chinese.

Nora takes the prism from him. Holds it in the sunlight and makes rainbows.

JONAS (CONT’D)
Why go to all this trouble just to store plans? Why not just store them on your laptop and e-mail them to the Chinese when they pay you?

FREDDIE
Okay, it's true, a lot of this doesn't add up. But what can we do about it? We've got the thing, but there's probably a thousand people chasing us. And they're all scary.

NORA
Aren't we gonna just turn it over to the police or somebody and get back to our normal lives? Remember? Acne and test scores?

JONAS
I think it's too late for that. At least for me. Look, a house mysteriously blows up and the guy who lives there disappears. And who lives next door? Me.

FREDDIE
So what? You live next door, big deal.

JONAS
Then another house gets shot up by a flying instrument of death, and whose car is found outside, full of bullet holes? Mine.

FREDDIE
Whoa, I see what you mean. Anybody got an ink pad? Let's just take your fingerprints now and save them the trouble.

JONAS
Exactly. I can drop you guys off somewhere. I think you'll be okay. But I gotta figure some stuff out.

He takes the prism back from Nora.

NORA
Jonas, you saved my life back there when the evil hag had me. If you think I can help, then I'm with you.

FREDDIE
Me, too, dude. Acne and test scores don't really interest me, anyway. But where to next?

Jonas pulls up to the curb and parks.

EXT. SIDEWALK

They exit the car in front of a modern office building. A large sign reads, “WaverlyCorp”.

They climb the steps.

JONAS
First thing...I’m gonna take this gizmo to a real expert and find out exactly what we’ve got here.

NORA
Who?

JONAS
Someone who I never, in a million years, thought I’d be bringing this to.

FREDDIE
Who? Who?

JONAS
My mom.

INT. SUSANNAH BERNSTEIN’S OFFICE - DAY

A computer geek’s office. A mess. Computers and pieces and parts everywhere.

The walls are decorated with photos of Susannah with Jonas at every age, from a toddler on up. There are several diplomas on the wall, including a PhD in Computer Systems Design from MIT.

Jonas, Nora, and Freddie sit before the desk. Jonas’ mom, Susannah, paces behind it.

SUSANNAH
Are you kids crazy? Of course we’re gonna go to the police with this. Or the FBI. Or whoever. You’re teenagers, not secret agents. You’re supposed to be sneaking beer and cigarettes, not getting shot at.

JONAS
But, Mom...

SUSANNAH
No, Jonas, no buts. We're gonna call the police. Right now.

She reaches for the phone.

JONAS
Just take a look at it, Mom. Then, we can go to the police.

He takes the prism from his pocket. Holds it up.

JONAS (CONT'D)
Just help us figure out what this thing really is. Right now we don't even know what to tell the cops.

She takes the prism from him. Examines it. She's fascinated.

SUSANNAH
This is a storage device?

JONAS
Seems to be.

SUSANNAH
It's obviously based on some optical principle. But nothing I've ever seen before. And I thought I'd been keeping up to date with all the latest technology.

Staring at it, totally enrapt, she walks to the door and leaves the office.

Jonas, Nora, and Freddie look at each other, shrug, and then follow her out the door.

INT. COMPUTER LABORATORY - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

An ultra high-tech computer laboratory. Computer equipment, electronic gear, and test stations fill the room.

The prism sits on a round brushed-steel pedestal, suspended above a table at one of the test stations. Several intense laser beams are focused on it.

Susannah, Jonas, and Nora stand around the table wearing eye protection. Freddie is asleep on the floor in the corner.

The test table is surrounded by large plasma screens. Data and images flash by on the screen at an incredible rate.

SUSANNAH
This is amazing technology, Jonas. It's based on quantum mechanics. The lasers stimulate bazillions of tiny quantum packets of energy within the crystalline structure of the prism. The energy packets store and manipulate the data.

She points to the data flashing by on the screens.

SUSANNAH (CONT'D)
The amount of data this one small prism can manage is incalculable.

JONAS
But what is it? It's got to be more than storage for some engineering drawings.

SUSANNAH
Oh, it's much more than that. But I don't know exactly what it is, because I don't know how to focus the lasers coherently enough to tap into the data. I guess that's what the obsidian bar did.

Suddenly, flashes of light from the prism. Susannah tweaks some dials on the test equipment and an intense white beam projects from the prism on to the wall just above where Freddie is sleeping.

The intense light wakes him. He squirms away from it.

FREDDIE
Whoa.

The spot of light on the wall spreads into a rectangle. It's filled with fuzzy moving images. They come into focus.

It appears to be a movie, shots of people working in a cavernous computer control center, a 1970s version of the lab they're in now.

A title appears on the screen: "*Colossus: The Forbin Project*."

FREDDIE
It's a movie. Sweet!

Everyone else watches in stunned silence.

After a few moments...

JONAS
It is a movie. We've been duped.

SUSANNAH
No, Jonas. The lasers have just stumbled into this packet of data. This prism holds a lot more than a movie. Let's keep probing.

Abruptly, the movie clicks off, and the beam of light disappears.

Instead, a fuzzy silvery glow emanates from the prism. It coalesces into an oval shape, and as it comes into focus it becomes the face of "Julian."

JULIAN
Hello Jonas. Enjoying the show, so far?

Jonas' jaw drops.

No one speaks. Everyone is transfixed by the talking holographic image.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
*Colossus: The Forbin Project*, one of my favorites. A computer rules the world. Too bad there's no time to watch it. But no matter, because thanks to you and your friends, it will all be coming true very soon.

Susannah attempts to adjust a dial on the equipment, but --Z-A-P-- sparks fly as she gets a nasty shock and jumps back.

JULIAN
We need one more thing, Jonas, before we can achieve our goal. We need the original prism. And we need it now, if you please.

JONAS
No way, Julian. I'd have to be kind of a fool to just hand it over, don't you think?

JULIAN
I don't know about that, Jonas. The stakes have become rather high. For example, take a look out your window.

Freddie opens the blinds. It's pitch black outside.

JONAS
What, Julian? I don't see anyth...

Just outside the window, a blue light comes on, illuminating a full-sized Conquest hovering a few feet away.

Then, beyond it, in the skies over Washington, more blue lights come on illuminating dozens of Conquests patrolling the city.

JULIAN
And just so we're perfectly clear, Jonas, let me show you some live pictures of what these weapon systems are targeting.

A live picture of the White House appears on one of the plasma screens. It's followed by pictures of the Capitol Building, the Pentagon, the Lincoln Memorial, etc.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
And here are two of the more interesting targets, Jonas.

On adjacent screens, two ordinary suburban homes appear.

NORA
Oh my god! You son of a...

With a balled-up fist, she takes a swing at Julian's head. Her fist passes harmlessly through the holographic image.

JULIAN
The Sinclair residence and the Biggs residence. Delightful homes.

JONAS
You robot freak! If I ever get my hands on you or that...that...bitch who built you, I'm gonna...

JULIAN
Mrs. McMann? You can see her momentarily, Jonas. She wants a word with you. With you...and the rest of the world. Just turn on your TV. It doesn't matter what channel.

No one moves.

JULIAN
Go on. Turn your TV on.

There's a big screen TV in a far corner. Freddie rushes over and flips it on.

The screen is filled with electronic snow, and then an image comes into focus.

It's a close up of Helen McMann, smiling sweetly.

She looks directly into the camera. Then in a very sweet, grandmotherly voice, she says...

MCMANN
Hello. My name is Helen.

She clears her throat.

MCMANN
But in twenty-four hours, you may all call me "Your Excellency".