

The Experiment

Prologue.

The bright lights of the hallway seemed like spotlights, centering on him as he pushed the wheeled trolley down to the loading bay. The bored security guard glanced up from his dirty magazine as he approached.

"Morning, doc." The guard said cheerfully. He was a former high school football quarterback, and his huge arms still attested to his time spent on the field. His manner though, was more Tony Stark than Captain America. The man knew the guard and had spent some time with him. Normally, he found the exuberance of the guard to be refreshing, but now it was all he could do not to shush him. The man resisted searching for the security cameras, as he knew there were several. He only hoped the code he had written worked.

"Morning Harold." He was amazed at how calm he sounded. He forced a grin on his face. "Has the morning shipment left yet?"

"Not yet. You're just in time actually. He's almost finished loading." The guard peered at the box. The man sweated and prayed he wouldn't open it. He had to act fast, or lose it all. "More stuff for home base?" The guard asked him quizzically. He checked his clipboard, no doubt searching for the shipping special the man thought. It was time to gamble.

"No, actually." He lowered his voice conspiratorially. "I have a friend over at MoreLabs," he deliberately dropped the name of one of the competitors as a cover to make the guard understand why he wanted to be circumspect. It was a risk, the man knew, but he felt it would be worth it. "He is willing to line me up for Superbowl tickets for next week's game in town. He's offering me four tickets in exchange for some bootleg moonshine, and some parts for his distillery. Two of the tickets are yours if you keep this low for me. I don't want the bosses finding out about the still."

The guard's face lit up like a kid at Christmas. "'Tiger' Thomas is playing this match against the Vikings. I wasn't able to get tickets! You say this guy's willing to trade *four*?" The man nodded. "All right!" the guard pumped his fist. He quickly opened the gate. "There you go!"

"Thanks." The man said sincerely. Pushing the crate down to the loading bay, he saw the FedEx driver loading the last crate onto the truck. Other than the man, the driver, and Harold, the bay was empty. Now was his chance! Quickly rolling the crate down to the truck, he tossed

the driver a fifty and rolled the crate aboard. The driver started to protest until he saw the denomination. Pocketing the cash, he nodded to the man and stepped out the loading bay door. A few minutes later, and the man heard the motor start up and the truck pull away into the early morning gloom. Finally, phase one was complete.

The man hurried back up the ramp and down the brightly lit corridor. Now, he had to muddy the waters as best he could to give them a fighting chance. As he planned, the probability of his own mortality never entered his mind. He had made his choice when he found out what the company was doing. *Ryan, I hope you can handle this.*