Duel of Death

A Quake Story

Bang bang, pop pop, boom!
The sound of gunfire filled the hallway as Chase Talent walked toward his apartment. He opened the door to the familiar sight of Chuck, his roommate, pounding away at the latest tactical shooter on a wide screen TV in their living room. Chuck sat on an old sofa, surrounded by speakers, so loud that he didn't hear Chase come in. He was lost in a passionate online battle for some obscure desert town. The only light in the room besides the TV was the afternoon sun coming in through the open windows on one side of their apartment.

     "Still here, huh?" Chase yelled.
     "Woa!" Chuck turned and yelled back. "I didn't hear you come in." Immediately he turned back to his game. "Dude! Since you left I've been promoted three times! I'm almost a Captain!"
     "You know they put that system in there just to keep you playing, right? Your rank doesn't mean anything."
     "Enough hatin'! Hey, why are you so late?" Chuck asked.
     "They closed the subway for a bomb threat again."
     "Again? Isn't that the third time this month? How are people gonna get around if they close the thing every time some retard—Gah!" Chuck ducked his head instinctively to an incoming RPG shot in his game. "You're distracting me from my mission. I got to show these newbs what's up."
     Chase chuckled as his roommate got shot in the back by a thirteen year-old kid.
     "You suck, newb!" a high-pitched voice came through the internet out of the speakers.
     "Camper!" Chuck yelled back into his microphone. He turned back to Chase for a moment. "Hey man, my clan's looking for some more guys. We could really use those Quake skills of yours."
     "You know I'm not into to this kind of game," Chase responded. "Thanks for the offer though." Chase turned and walked over to his room. As he passed his computer he brushed the mouse, flicking the monitor back on. On the screen was an internet chat room for Quake players. No recent traffic. Most of the occupants of the chat room had "retired" from computer games, making room for other responsibilities. Chase was now in the same boat. He didn't have time for games, with work and school. But every once and a while he liked to catch up with old friends he'd made over the years playing Quake, the original 3d action shooter and the first modern internet game.

     Tired from a long day, Chase took off his coat and shoes and laid down on his bed for a moment of rest. "Another day at another dead end job," he said to himself. The sound of gunfire still flooded in from the living room.
     "Yes! I just made Captain!"
     Chase took his pillow and pressed it over his head. In the living room, Chuck was still hard at work at his game. He and a teammate were about to storm a hostile building. "I got one more frag grenade," he shouted through his headset to his partner. "I'm going to toss it, and then we'll bust in. Got it?"
     "Ok man, do it," the response came.
     "Frag out!" he yelled as his virtual character chucked a grenade into the building. Just then Chuck heard a lump next to him in the living room. He turned and saw a small cylindrical object sitting on the floor, apparently having been tossed in through the open window. He looked closer and saw that it was a dark olive green can with block letters spray painted onto it. Chuck didn't believe what he was seeing, but by pure instinct he screamed out, "GRENADE!"
     The grenade exploded, filling the room with a white gas. In the same moment, black shapes crashed through the windows, men in full tactical gear. The door burst open, and a team of men

came flooding in. The first one in leaped onto Chuck, knocking him onto the floor. In an instant, his hands were zipped tied together behind his back. The men worked their way into Chase's room. He had only enough time to stand up before he was thrown up against the wall and restrained.

"Bedroom clear!" one shouted.

"Kitchen clear!"

"Bathroom clear."

"All clear!"

"All clear!" the team echoed. More men came in through the door and started pulling up anything with a cord: computers, cable boxes, mp3 players. Everything was being loaded into black cases. One of the men yanked Chuck's console from the TV.

"You can't do this to me," Chuck yelled. "I'm a Captain!"

Finally a man in a black suit entered the apartment. He held a folder in one hand and looked at Chase.

"Chase Talent?"

Chase looked up at the man, still in shock.

"I knew it was him you were after!" Chuck said. "Chase, I told you not to download torrents! I didn't do anything. I'm innocent! I only watched the movies. I never downloaded them!"

"Bring 'em both," the man in the suit said. The men grabbed the two roommates, threw black masks over their heads, and dragged them out of the building into a van waiting outside.

[chapter 2]

When the mask came off, Chase found himself in a small room in what seemed like an office building. Chuck was no where to be seen, but the man in the black suit and another man were sitting across a table from him. In the room was a projector screen and a few laptops. Chase's hands had also been untied and in front of him was a bottle of water.

Whatever the reason I'm here, he thought, *it can't be because of me alone—I've never done anything this bad*.

"Friends call you Chase?" the man from the apartment said. Chase nodded. "I'm Agent Gates from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Perhaps you've heard of us?" Chase again nodded. "You'll probably never guess why you're here today, so I'll just tell you." He leaned back in his chair. "What do you know about Thomas Jensen?" The name was strangely familiar, but he didn't know how. "Perhaps you know him by another name. Does LyonX ring any bells? *L-Y-O-N-X*?"

This is about LyonX? "Yes, I've heard that name."

"So tell me what you know about him."

"Well, um, he plays Quake on the internet. That's about all I know about him."

"Really? Well according to the website *patternofdeath.com*, you, him, and a few others were in a 'Quake Clan' for almost five years. So surely you must know your 'clan mate' better than that?"

"Are you telling me you dragged me out here because my name is on a website we made years ago as teenagers. I haven't talked to LyonX in almost three years. Whatever this is about, I haven't a clue. I don't even know what the guy looks like."

"You may have never met him in person, but you've known him for what, about ten years now?"

"Yeah, I guess. But can you call meeting online 'knowing' someone? Look man, I have no idea what he did, but it doesn't involve me, OK?"

I wonder what trouble LX is into, Chase thought. *Maybe those pranks of his finally caught up to him*.

"Who was better at Quake, you or him?" Agent Gates asked.

Chase hesitated. *What kind of question is this?*

"Uh, he was better. Dude, what does this have to do with anything?"

"Just answer the questions. How often did you play him in one-on-one deathmatch? I believe you call it duel mode."

"We dueled often. Most all Quakers duel each other. That's pretty much all there is to do in the game: shoot each other. Sometimes with teammates, sometimes one on one."

"So, you're familiar with Thomas Jensen's playing style?"

Chase paused again. *I've never heard of anyone outside of the community knowing about play styles, or even what duel mode is.* "We were clan mates. He taught me everything I know about playing Quake."

Agent Gates leaned over and whispered something to the other guy who had been sitting in the room, then stood up and looked at Chase. "Chase, we need your help. And we're not asking for it. This is a matter of national security. You'll get one phone call to let someone know that you're safe, and that's it. Agent Carter here will fill you in on what you have to do. Oh, and in case you didn't know, tell anyone what happens in here, and you'll go to jail forever."

Gates walked out of the room, and Agent Carter walked over to a laptop and flicked on the projector. Another, younger looking man in a polo and khaki pants walked in and stood against the wall.

"Talent, I'm Agent Carter, and this Matt. He's, uh, kind of like an intern. We'll be working together." Matt nodded to Chase. As the projector fired up, a logo appeared on the screen, and in large letters were the words "TOP SECRET."

What the heck is going on here? Chase thought.

Carter continued. "Here's what we know so far:"

[chapter 3]
Aug 10, 2011
(Five days earlier)

Thomas Jensen sat in front of his computer in his second floor studio in a four story apartment building. On his desk in front of him sat a pile of bills. He had a spread sheet open on his computer. After punching in some numbers, his spread sheet outputted a red number. He sighed and leaned back in his computer chair. He rocked back and forth a bit till his eye caught an old picture hanging on the wall above his desk. It was taken on the Metro subway. The subject of the picture was the red electronic read board that hung from the ceiling of every car. The text on the board read "PD Clan - Your Quaking Needs since 2001!" Jensen smiled at the photo. Just then a beep came from his computer. He was receiving a private message in an internet chat room.

    Rue: lyonx, we've never played together, but you who know who i am right?

Jensen responded.

    LyonX: yeah... aren't you in sweden?

    Rue: not at the moment. i'm in your part of the world now. i've got a business proposition for you. the job requires a man of your skills, and i'm not just referring to quake.

    LyonX: hey, i got out of that gig awhile ago man

    Rue: i can assure you this will be completely harmless. consider it more of a personnel favor that pays well. if you're interested, come to 213.45.34.112 and we'll discuss it over a duel.

Jensen was about to close the window completely when he saw the stack of bills on his desk. He sighed once more, then copied the IP address into his Quakeworld client.

[chapter 4]
Aug 10, 2011
(The same day)

The Metro subway station was as busy as always, business people flooding in and out of the stopped train cars. As soon as one car was gone, a mass of people waiting to board would start to form. When the next car had stopped, the mass would try to force its way onto the packed car, and those trying to get off would struggle to fight the flow of on comers.

In the commotion of the subway station, no one noticed the man sitting quietly with a newspaper on a bench against the wall. The man, mid-thirties, of middle eastern descent, had long curly black hair, a few days old scruff on his chin, and was dressed plainly. Trains came and went, but he just sat and held his newspaper up. He was spreading the newspaper out with both hands, but in his left hand was a small notebook and in his right, a pen. Every once in a while, after a train would leave, he would bring his hands together to turn the page of the newspaper, but he would also jot some things down on the pad of paper, in the Arabic script.

[chapter 5]
Feb 3, 2001
(Ten years earlier)

"*Welcome to Gamespy!*" Chase's computer speakers roared as he fired up the game server browser on his computer. The program was a bit outdated, but it worked fine for older games like Quake, Chase's new interest. He had already become bored with the "new" games his friends were playing. He first saw Quakeworld being played at a LAN cafe. He later found out that Quakeworld was the online multiplayer version of Quake, the first modern 3d shooting game. He was intrigued by the speed and action of the game. Even though the graphics weren't much compared to newer games, Quake still had a following of people that seemingly played nothing else. Chase was eager to find out why this was.

Quakeworld was a deathmatch game. Unlike the trend of new games that only had team play modes, deathmatch could either be a free-for-all battle royal or a team versus team style match. Also, there were smaller maps designed for duels, one versus one. In deathmatch, there sole object was to kill, or frag, your opponent, much less sophisticated than newer games. Also, instead of starting with a fully loaded out character with weapons and armor, in Quakeworld deathmatch a player spawned with 100 health points and a shotgun, which was more like a pea-shooter. Any additional items or weapons had to be picked up in the map by the player. When a player died, he would start over from scratch.

Chase refreshed the Quakeworld server list and arranged them by players per server. He found a server with one player out of two player slots. The map on the server read '*dm4 – The Bad Place*.'

Just playing against one person, this shouldn't be too bad.

He clicked on the link, and the Gamespy program gave an ominous tone as his Quakeworld client opened up. He entered the map to find that it was a small, dark, multi-tiered dungeon with the standard items like weapons and armor scattered around. The map was centered around one medium sized room with a lava pit at the bottom of it. There was a catwalk between two rooms stretching across the lava pit. The other person in the server messaged Chase.

`LyonX: hi`

Chase saw his opponent across the room from him. Chase noticed he had all the weapons in the game already and began firing at the player relentlessly. Nothing happened. Chase, confused, messaged back.

`Snip3rZ47: WHY ARENT YOU DYING`

`LyonX: we're in warmup mode now. the game doesn't begin until you type 'ready' into the console (the chat thingy)`

`Snip3rZ47: OH`

LyonX: new to this, huh?

Snip3rZ47: WHATS THE P-D NEXT TO YOUR NAME

Chase was asking about some letters that appeared next to LyonX's name in the scoreboard.

LyonX: that's my clan's name. 'Pattern of Death'

Chase began exploring the map. Even though the map was small, it had many twists and turns. And since everything was pretty much the same color, the only way to identify where you were was the shape of the room.

These graphics suck, Chase thought, *but the sounds are cool.*

In almost every room was a 'teleporter' doorway which if you walked through would transport you with a 'zing' to another part of the map. There were many teleporters, and it made the map even smaller since you could get from one side to the other quickly. LyonX stayed out of Chase's way as he explored. Chase fell off a ledge and landed in the lava pit. He didn't die but just floated in it.

I see now; I'm invincible till we start the match. The lava wasn't that deep but too deep to jump out of. He tried to get out of the lava, but there was no obvious exit and the catwalk was a bit too high to climb out.

Snip3rZ47: is there a way to get out of this lava?

LyonX: yup. just watch me

LyonX jumped right into the lava and swam up to Chase. When he saw that Chase was watching him, he moved back, then faced down. In one fluid motion he backed up to the surface of the lava and shot a rocket down at the same time. The blast from the rocket hitting the floor boosted him out of the lava just enough to land on the catwalk.

LyonX: see?

Snip3rZ47: woa! you can use the rocket to jump?!

LyonX: i can see that you are very new to this. welcome to quakeworld!

Snip3rZ47: wont you kill yourself?

LyonX: well, you have to be careful to only use the rj when you have enough health and armor

Now it's my turn, Chase thought. He faced down and shot a rocket. It pushed him but not out of the lava. Again he tried, same thing. And again.

Snip3rZ47: WHY ISNT IT WORKING

LyonX: it just takes some practice is all. you probably aren't ready for that kind of move. the only way to get out of there now is to type 'ready'

LyonX: once the game starts you'll spawn somewhere else.

Snip3rZ47: ok. here goes nothing

Snip3rZ47: btw, how long have you been playing this game?

LyonX: since '96

6 years!? Chase thought. *Why is he still playing this game?*

Chase typed 'ready' into the game's console. The game's screen darkened slightly and a countdown appeared. Chase's heart began to beat faster. *10.. 9.. 8..* As the countdown ticked away, Chase knew two things. *7.. 6.. 5..* First, that he was about to get destroyed by his opponent. *4.. 3.. 2.. 1..* Second, that he was hooked on Quake.

[chapter 6]
Aug 10, 2011

Rue, a renown Swedish Quaker, and LyonX had just finished a best of five duel series in Quakeworld. Because of the delay of information passed across the ocean, the lag, or ping, that

results in a cross-Atlantic game of Quakeworld is too great to one or the other player to fairly decide who's skills are the best. Since the two players were now in the same local area, the delay was minimal, allowing for fair competition. The two players sat in the Quakeworld server, resting their mouse hands after the intense combat. In tournament style matches, each player will choose a map from a list of different deathmatch arenas. They alternate choosing until someone gets best 3 of 5 or until they play all five maps. In practice matches, they usually play all five maps regardless of who wins. In their practice match, Rue beat LyonX on three maps, losing to him only on ztndm3q and dm4.

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Rue: ggs, you never know a man till you've dueled him in quake

Rue: i'm glad to see that you've kept your skills up. i haven't lost on
dm4 in quite awhile

LyonX: ggs, it was great to play you

LyonX: i've always wondered how we matched up over here to the swedish
skill

Rue: you do your country proud

LyonX: what are you doing over here in the states anyway?

Rue: working, like everyone else

LyonX: of course

Rue: well, now that i know your game, i'd like to inquire about your other
skills

Rue: i've seen pictures of the hack job you did for the metro, where you
changed the read boards

Rue: what i want to know is can you do that again?

LyonX: well, some things have changed in that system, but i bet i could do
it again. thing is, it's not worth the risk these days

Rue: i've been planning on proposing to my girlfriend, and i want to use
your hack to do it on the read boards of the subway.

Rue: you see? harmless.

LyonX: cute, but i don't know if i get on board with just warm fuzzies.
like i said, risk.

Rue: trust me. i can make it worth the risk.
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[chapter 7]

Rue finished his conversation with LyonX and exited Quakeworld. He leaned back in his chair with a smug on his face. His joy was interrupted by a knock on his door. He opened it, and three middle eastern men walked into his apartment: an older man with a beard, and two younger men, one of whom was the same man who was sitting in the subway station with a notebook.

The older man spoke first: "*Asalamalecum.*"

"*Woalecum,*" Rue replied. "Isn't it risky for all three of you to come here? What will the neighbors think?"

"I don't care what they think," the old man said. "Give me a progress report."

Rue sighed. "Everything's under control. There's no need for you to be here right now, Ahmad."

"Have you done it? Have you broken their code?"

"No, so I had to recruit some help, but—"

"You did what? Who? Who is he?"

"Don't be alarmed. I know what I'm doing. This guy has already broken the first layer

before. That's the hard part. Once I'm passed that, then I can give you everything you want. Controls to the train switches, the locks on the doors, the fire alarm."

"Who is he? What's his name?"

Rue rolled his eyes. "Jensen, Thomas Jensen. You want his address too?" Rue turned his computer screen around and displayed a text page he had dug up with Jensen's information on it. "I told you I got everything under control."

"This is the last time you do anything without consulting me first," Ahmad said.

"There'll be no electronic trail. I've already arranged a place for the hand off. I'm meeting him here," Rue led Ahmad to a map on the wall and was describing how their meeting would go. While he was talking, the man with the notebook pulled it out of his back pocket and jotted down Jensen's name and address.

After Rue finished explaining, he said, "See? Nothing is changed. Everything will be on schedule."

Ahmad stared back at him. "Don't take this so lightly."

The three men left the apartment and started walking downstairs. Ahmad turned to the other two men and said in Arabic, "Waheed, you wrote down the address?" Waheed nodded. "I want you and Jamal to check this guy out. Make sure he's clean, but don't let him on to you."

Waheed replied, "Do we really need these guys, Ahmad?"

"They can help us a lot," he said. Then he leaned in close and whispered. "But as long as we have the bombs, we can't fail."

[chapter 8]
Jan 24, 2003

Chase Talent clung to his mouse and keyboard, his forearms tense. His back was straight in his seat, and his legs were planted firmly on the ground. His eyes were glued to his screen; his ears were covered by large headphones. His in-game Quake character stood on a ledge on that same first map, dm4, overlooking the lava pit's catwalk. His rocket launcher's sight's were fixed on the exit of the dead end room in the lowest part of the map. The only exit to that room was the catwalk above the lava. Chase's character was absolutely still, listening for any sound—a jump, an item pickup noise—coming from that room. Inside that room was LyonX, freshly spawned. Once he appeared in the doorway, a few well placed rockets would be enough to either kill his opponent and gain a point or knock him into the lava pit, where he would burn to death and lose a point. If one of those two were to happen, for the first time in his life, Chase would have the lead over LyonX in a Quakeworld duel.

Stay focused, he thought.

The situation marked a turning point for the Quake player. If he pulled this off, he would be ton the defensive against LyonX. Every one of the other hundreds of duels they had played in the last two years had always been Chase trying to take the lead from LyonX. The weight of the moment began to drag on Chase. His heart began to beat the same way that it had in that first duel long ago.

Suddenly there was a sound of rocket fire. Chase blinked, but there was no rocket headed toward him. That could only mean one thing.

Rocket Jump!

In the split second it took for Chase to realize what LyonX was attempting, his opponent flew out of the room at the speed of Mach Jesus. He had used the same rocket jump technique from the lava, but this time he propelled himself horizontally off the back wall of the room. Chase's rocket shots were too slow, and LyonX, now halfway flown across the catwalk, spun around and returned a rocket straight towards Chase's ledge position. The explosion knocked him off the ledge down to the middle level, leaving the upper level clear for LyonX to use a teleporter to take over

that position.

In the next moments, LyonX aggressively attacked Chase, forcing him out of the control positions, chipping away at his armor till there was none left. Chase, with almost nothing left to hold his ground, had to retreat to the lowest platform, but on the way down a rocket shot from LyonX sent him flying into the lava. He burnt to a crisp before he had time to react.

'*Snip3rZ47 visits the Volcano God,*' appeared at the top of his screen. Chase knew what was coming next. After three seconds, he would be forced to respawn with no armor or weapons. LyonX, fully loaded out at this point, would unleash a fury of rockets, grenades, and lightning bolts that would eliminate any chance of Chase coming back to threaten LyonX's victory. Chase took his hands off his mouse and keyboard and slouched in his computer chair. LyonX noticed that his opponent didn't move after respawning.

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LyonX: come on man. you almost had the lead there
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LyonX: don't give up yet :)
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Chase didn't respond. He threw his head back and sighed.
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LyonX: dude, you've come a long way. in fact
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LyonX ran up to Chase's motionless character and stopped.
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LyonX: your improvement and your discipline have been commendable
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LyonX: you are hereby officially invited to join the Pattern of Death clan
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LyonX: on one condition. you change that silly name
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LyonX: what do you say?
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Chase stared at the text on the screen. He smiled and leaned forward to his keyboard. After he entered text the screen read:
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Snip3rZ47 changes team to P-D
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Snip3rZ47 changes name to VolcanoGod
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[chapter 9]
Aug 11, 2011

The disk burner in Thomas Jensen's computer spun quickly while making a soft churning sound. After a minute, the drive automatically ejected, and Jensen pulled out the formerly blank disk.

"Finished," he said. He carefully placed it on top of the pile of bills on his desk then gave it a metaphorical pat on the head. "The easiest three grand I ever made."

He got up and went to the washing machine in the kitchen closet of his second story apartment. He pulled out a bunch of wet clothes and tossed them into a laundry basket. He nestled the basket with one arm and walked out of his door, letting it close gently behind him. As he walked down the hallway, he met his neighbor, a friendly young Arab woman, approaching from the other way.

"Hey Jamila."

"Hi Tom! Still no clothes dryer?"

"I'm broke, remember? But not for long."

"Glad to hear it."

Jensen continued down the hallway, then out to an outdoor catwalk and up some stairs leading to the clothes line on the roof of another building connected to the side of his apartment building. He began hanging his wet clothes out to dry in the afternoon sun.

Down in the parking lot below, an old car pulled into a parking spot. Inside were the two middle eastern men who visited Rue with Ahmad, Waheed and Jamal.

"This is the place. I'll go check it out," Waheed said, speaking Arabic.

"Don't let him see you. He's apartment 204."

"Yeah, I know. Just call me if you see someone coming. He's probably white, late 20's."

Waheed walked over the to door to the apartment building. He looked behind him briefly, then walked in and up some stairs to the second story. He cautiously made his way down the hallway, then saw '204' written on a door. He pushed softly on the door, and it swung open. He walked in slowly, looking in all directions as he entered. He crept from room to room but didn't touch anything.

"I got sunshi-ine... on a cloudy day..." Up on the roof across from his apartment, Jensen was singing to himself while pinning his laundry to the clothes line. Suddenly he went silent. He noticed someone was in his apartment. He could see them across the parking lot through the windows in his living room. He had never seen that person before, and they seemed to be looking for something. Jensen dropped his laundry and hurried back to the room.

As he hustled down the outdoor stairs and catwalk, Jamal in the parking lot below spotted him. He quickly grabbed his phone. Waheed's phone rang in his back pocket. He pulled it out quickly, and, unknowingly, out with it came his small notebook falling to the floor.

"What?"

"Waheed, get out of there. I think he's coming down from the roof!"

Waheed dashed out of the apartment in a flash. He went down the same stairs to the parking lot. As the building's door shut behind him, Jensen arrived back in his room. He looked around, relieved that nothing seemed to be missing. He ran to the window. He made it just in time to see Waheed get into Jamal's car and drive away. He backed away from the window slowly, wondering what had just happened, when his foot touched a small object on the floor.

[chapter 10]
April 3, 2006

3..2..1..

"Fight!" shouted Chase, as he began another duel with LyonX on dm4.

He spawned in the lower dead end room above the lava pit. He grabbed the mega health and armor and headed straight for the door. Once on the catwalk in the large central room, he rocket jumped up to the second level to grab the thunderbolt, also called the lightning gun, a powerful weapon that shot a medium range beam of lightning. He turned around just as his clan mate, but now his opponent, spawned out of the lower teleporter exit on the catwalk.

LyonX knew that Chase would be on the ledge above and rocket jumped to avoid incoming rockets. Chase was planning for this move. He pulled out his lightning gun and took aim at the air-borne player. His lightning gun's beam, also called the shaft, caught him mid-air and pinned him against the wall of the room. Helpless against the wall, the lightning tore through LyonX's red armor, and soon the console printed at the top of the screen:

`LyonX accepts voLCano's shaft`

"Yes!" Chase yelled.

Maybe this will be the day I finally beat him, he thought.

In their years together as clan mates, LyonX had taught Chase almost everything he knew about Quakeworld deathmatch. Their clan, Pattern of Death, was one of the top clans in North America. Their name was well known in both European and South American Quake communities. Under LyonX's tutelage, Chase's skills had steadily grown. They competed together in online tournaments and practiced often to hone each others' skills. They had just finished four duels on various maps. Each man had won two. Now they were in the final game of the match. But still, in all those years, Chase had never beaten LyonX on his 'home map,' dm4 – The Bad Place.

Four minutes into the duel and the score was 15 – 13, LyonX. Chase had managed to stay on par with LyonX the whole game. A two point difference was nothing on a small map like dm4. Usually one frag led to a few others, since the freshly respawned player had nothing to defend himself with.

LyonX had Chase trapped in the upper armor room. Inside the room, there were two armors, one yellow armor on a ledge and one red armor in a pit. The yellow offered a medium level of protection, but the red armor was the best protection in the game. Behind the red armor in the pit was a teleporter which led to the lava pit catwalk in the central room. The only other way out from that room was via the ledge and the room's one door way, which lead to the large central room. Chase was on the upper ledge shooting through the door way at LyonX in the central room. LyonX had access to plenty of ammo and kept the rockets coming at Chase in the room, hoping to chip away at his armor and health.

It was working. Chase entered the room originally to grab an armor but both armors had not yet respawned. He intended to wait it out inside the room, but LyonX was pushing his attacks closer and closer. Chase was returning fire when he yelled out, "Crap!" He had just fired his last rocket and was now out of ammo.

Outside in the central room, LyonX also stopped firing. In the commotion he wasn't able to hear if Chase had picked up an armor or not. If he had, he could come out of the upper ledge for a frontal assault. LyonX had to be careful. Had he picked up an armor? Or did he stop firing to fool LyonX into rushing into the room?

Inside the armor room, Chase knew he had to act fast. The red armor in the pit was about to appear soon. He could drop down and grab it, but the sound of his feet hitting the ground would be heard by LyonX in the central room. He would then know that Chase was about to come out through the teleporter down by the lava pit, an easy target.

I can do this, Chase thought. He remembered an old trick at he had seen LyonX do in just this situation. He positioned himself in the corner between the upper ledge and the wall. He walked off the ledge and into the corner, holding the forward key the whole time. The corner was just so tight as to catch his player's body with the friction from two walls. He tapped forward into the wall rapidly, and his body eased down the corner to the floor, softening the landing and making no sound. On the floor were two health packs, tempting to grab in his wounded state, but picking them up would make a noise, foiling his plan. Next was a short stair case down to the red armor and the teleporter. He slowed his walking speed and eased down the stairs silently. Now in front of the armor, he grabbed it and ran through the teleporter.

LyonX was still focused on the upper exit and had no time to react once he heard the armor pick up and the teleporter zing. Chase appeared on the lava catwalk and immediately began unloading his lightning gun at LyonX above him. LyonX took some heavy damage and had to retreat into the now empty armor room. Chase then used a teleporter to get to upper ledge in the central room, where he could find health and rocket ammo. Having quickly replenished himself, he rocket jumped towards the armor room upper door. Inside he knew LyonX would be waiting for armor or using the teleporter exit. He caught him waiting at the yellow armor spawn on the ledge. He quickly finished him off with some rockets.

`LyonX rides voLCano's rocket`

Still fully equipped, Chase ran back toward to the central room where LyonX had likely reappeared. He found him again and quickly disposed of him with some rockets and his double barrel shotgun.

`LyonX ate 2 loads of voLCano's buckshot`

Tied up! Chase thought. *I can beat him—I just have to focus.*

[chapter 11]
April 3, 2006

Five minutes later, the two players were again tied up with less than a minute to go. 29 – 29. They had been going back and forth with their aggression, and the pace of the game had steadily increased. Despite his best efforts, Chase's heart was racing.

Focus, focus, focus, he told himself.

And he was focused. Out in the central room, Chase, having just restocked on ammo and health, paused for a moment. LyonX was down in the dead end room to grab the mega health, a bonus one hundred health pickup. Chase heard the sound of the mega pickup and jumped in place twice. LyonX, hearing the jumping sounds, thought the central room would be clear and rocket jumped off the wall for a high speed exit across the catwalk. Chase was ready for him this time. He shot a rocket toward the middle of the catwalk before he even saw LyonX. An instant later his target and the rocket nearly impacted on the catwalk, the blast sending LyonX into the lava. He used his lava trick and rocket jumped out, but by now the mega health bonus and his armor were gone. He had just enough time for one well placed rocket shot at Chase before he was cut down by Chase's lightning.

`LyonX accepts voLCano's shaft`

`[30] seconds remaining`

Almost there, Chase thought.

LyonX had respawned in the armor room and came flying out looking for Chase. A rocket battle ensued in the central room. LyonX trapped Chase in a corner and was able to take him out, but not without taking heavy damage himself.

`voLCano is gibbed by LyonX's rocket`

Chase knew what he had to do. LyonX was weak and looking for health. In the final seconds all he had to do was grab a weapon and find his clan mate one last time. He respawned and made his way to the central room again. He grabbed the lightning gun and saw LyonX retreat into a side room to grab health. He followed him into the room, attacking with the shaft. LyonX grabbed the health but was still too weak to make a stand and ran through a nearby teleporter. The teleporter exit was at the narrow entrance to the upper armor room ledge. Down in the armor room were the two health packs which he desperately needed. He dropped off the ledge when Chase, having followed LyonX through the teleporter, arrived behind him and cut him down mid air as he went for the health.

`LyonX accepts voLCano's shaft`

Yes! I've done it! Chase rejoiced in his head.

There were only seconds left, and Chase would have finally defeated LyonX on dm4. Still full on health and armor, Chase made his way back to the central room through the armor room door when the impossible happened—

Chase was dead.

His lightning gun and ammo now belonged to LyonX.

LyonX gained an additional point, tying up the game.

Chase's heart froze as he realized what had happened.

LyonX had used a technique that required a combination of skill and luck. Quake was the first true 3d shooting game. Since it was a pioneer of 3d, some problems existed that had never existed before in 2d. Since Quake took place in a 3d environment, objects were also three dimensional. Two objects could not occupy the same three dimensional space, so a method had to be chosen to keep this from happening and crashing the game engine. When a player dies in Quake, he randomly respawns at a predefined respawn point. If one player is standing on a respawn point, and another player is randomly chosen to respawn in that exact spot, the respawning player *telefrags* the other player. Their equipment load out along with an extra point is bequeathed to the respawned player.

All players learn the spawn locations on any given map quickly. But advanced players learn to be aware of when their opponent makes the mistake of passing over spawn points after someone has just died. A dead player can still see out of his dead body's head's final resting place until he clicks to respawn. It is possible to time an opponent's movements with respawning for the chance of

telefragging them.

```
voLCano was telefragged by LyonX
```

It was written on the screen plainly for Chase to read, but he still couldn't believe it. Although the score was still tied up, in a few seconds he would respawn to a fully loaded opponent. He did respawn and a few rockets were all it took to take him down again.

```
voLCano is gibbed by LyonX
```

The final seconds ticked away. The game was over: $32 - 31$, LyonX. Both players sat speechless in the server. Chase's character respawned in warmup mode by the red armor. He leaned back in his chair and watched the armor and rocket launcher bob in circles. He sat there, exhausted, just staring at the floating items. LyonX broke the silence.

```
LyonX: gg man
LyonX: that was probably the last time i will be able to beat you on this
map
voLCano: you say that every time
LyonX: and i believe it every time
LyonX: because of you i've gotten a lot better here
LyonX: you know i'm starting work at this company in a few weeks
LyonX: probably won't have much time for quake anymore
LyonX: you're starting college soon, right?
voLCano: yea..
LyonX: who knows, this could have been our last game for a while
voLCano: kind of depressing when you say it like that
LyonX: yea? haha. well the real world catches up to us all in the end
voLCano: yea
LyonX: i got to get up early in the morning
LyonX: thanks for all the good games man
LyonX: see ya in the chat room
LyonX dropped from the server
```

Chase was about to respond, but LyonX was already gone. He felt like he should have thanked him for something, but he was still angry at himself for losing.

That was the last game he and LyonX ever played. They kept in contact over chat rooms for awhile, but that too faded with time. Real life had caught up to them.

[chapter 12]
Aug 11, 2011

Thomas Jensen sat in his living room as the sun went down outside his apartment building. He was puzzled. Who were the men he saw earlier? Why was the one man in his apartment? And what was this notebook about?

In his hand he held the notebook he had found on the floor of his apartment. He flipped through the notebook but couldn't make any sense of it. It was mostly written in Arabic expect for a few things in English, including his name and address and a hand full of email addresses. Suddenly he rose and walked across the hall to knock on his neighbor's door.

"Jamila, it's Tom. Got a minute?"

Jamila opened her door. "Sure Tom. What's up?"

"I was just curious if you can read as well as speak Arabic?"

"Well, I'm not great, but I can read a little."

"I was wondering if you could take a look at this and tell me what it means." He handed her

the small notebook. She flipped through it and saw the Arabic writing.

"I'll give it a try. Come on in." She pushed open the door, and they both walked into her living room. She sat down at a desk, and he sat down on her sofa. "I'm just gonna write down anything I understand."

"Ok, that's fine. Thanks."

Jamila went to work, starting from the first page of the notebook. As she turned the pages, she made notes on another piece of paper in English. After a few minutes, she turned to Jensen and said, "Ok, I think I did this right." Jensen leaned forward. "There's really nothing too complicated here. It's mostly numbers. It's actually about trains."

"Trains?"

"Subway trains, I'm guessing. It has lists of trains, their times, and numbers of passengers at those times."

"Passengers?"

"Well, here's the thing. Instead of the word for people, it uses the word *kafer*, which is sometimes translated 'infidel.' It also has the phrase *Allah allakbar* written all over it, which means 'God is great.' Whoever wrote this was either being funny or is seriously religious. There is one part I don't understand though." Jensen got up and walked over to Jamila. "It has your name and address here, but above that it says, and I think I got this right, 'computer security problem.' Any idea what that could mean?"

Jensen turned and pondered for a moment, then he looked back and said, "Haven't a clue."

"Well, here is your notebook and the translation. Let me know if there is anything else I can help you with."

"Hey thanks a lot, Jamila."

"Anytime," she smiled.

Jensen walked back into his apartment living room. He plopped down on his sofa and turned on the television. Still thinking about the notebook and the men from earlier, he mindlessly flipped through television channels. A local news broadcast caught his attention.

"Authorities have shut down all subway operations this evening after another bomb threat was reported earlier today," a female news anchor announced. "This makes the second time this month that the transit system has been interrupted, leaving thousands of commuters stranded to find another way to get home." Jensen listened carefully. "There was nothing suspicious found last time, and if these threats continue, it may require a policy change that will allow the subway to run until the presence of something dangerous can be confirmed."

"Something dangerous..." he repeated to himself. "Computer security problem..."

Suddenly his eyes widened. He stood up and ran to his computer. He looked for Rue's name in an online chat room. He saw the name and opened a private message box. He began entering a message, but then stopped. He paused for a moment, then got the notebook back out and looked at the email addresses. He didn't recognize any of them. He looked at the one closest to his name again:

ru2345x@ssy.se

He looked the email address listed under Rue's name in the chat room:

rue13@yahoo.com

He copied the Yahoo address and the Swedish address into a search engine and hit the button. A forum about computer programming came up. The post the search engine had found was years old. The poster's name was *Swen13*. His email address was *rue13@yahoo.com*. In his post was a message in response to another programmer:

i guess yahoo mail is right down right now. just send it to me at this address: ru2345x@ssy.se

"Rue is *ru2345x*!" Jensen exclaimed. "Those guys know Rue!" In the notebook there was something in Arabic written next to Rue's email. He picked up the paper Jamila gave him. He

looked for the corresponding translation. He found it. She had written, '30,000.' Rue's words came back to his head:

Rue: trust me. i can make it worth the risk

"He was gonna give me 10% of what they gave him. But why?"

Just then on the local news channel an interview came on between a field reporter and the Chief of Security for the Metro.

"Sir, what is your confidence level in the policies and control measures for the subway system?"

"I am extremely confident in our staff, our equipment, and our procedures," the Chief of Security said. "We have a computer security system that will provide instructions to passengers and also keep the trains running safely in case of some type of emergency."

"Computer security problem..." Jensen repeated.

He turned back around from the television to his desk. He looked at the translation paper once more. The last thing on it was a date: August 16th, 2011. He turned to his computer again and searched for the local city police report hotline. Once he found the number he dialed it in his cell phone. As it rang, he stood up and started pacing around the room.

"Hello? Yes, I want to report something. Thomas, Thomas Jensen. I think something bad is going to happen. There was this strange guy in my apartment..."

"What is your address?" the operator said.

"345 Macon Street, Building 3 Apartment 204. So when I came back I found this notebook with Arabic writing in it—writing about the subway, and infidels. There is this guy who was going to pay for a hack job. I thought it was just a prank. He said it was for his girlfriend."

"Calm down," the operator said. "You're saying there is a threat to the subway?"

"Yes, that's what I'm saying."

"What kind of threat?"

"How am I supposed to know? It could be a bomb or something. I'm telling you something's wrong here."

"Another bomb threat for the subway, huh?" the operator said. "You have proof of your claims? Or a name?"

"Proof?" Jensen paced quickly back and forth in his living room. "I told you I have their notebook, what else could you—" he paused. Out of the corner of his eye through the window he saw the same car from earlier creeping up to the parking lot. "Just wait, I'll get you proof. Stay on the line," he said and sprinted out of his apartment and down the hallway, clutching his cell phone in his hand. As he ran by Jamila's room, she poked her head out to see what the commotion was about.

"Tom, is everything ok?"

Jensen was already down the stairs and passing through the door to the building. Out in the parking lot, Waheed and Jamal were talking.

"We don't know if that guy earlier lived in that room for sure," Waheed said. "I'll just go back up there and see if the room is still unlocked. Who knows, that guy could not have come back yet. Just wait here so we can see if anyone is in that apartment first."

"It was stupid to come back here," Jamal said. "If that guy sees us again, then we're—" At that moment he spotted Jensen running out of the door around the back of their car to see their license plate. Jamal instantly hit the gas, and the car peeled out of the parking lot. Jensen continued the chase.

"4 3 2 - J ..."

He needed two more letters. He sprinted to catch up to the car before it turned onto the main street, when suddenly everything lit up around him. A delivery truck came around the other side of the building and struck Jensen head on. His body smashed into the pavement. His back hit first, then his head. His cell phone flew from his hand and skidded across the blacktop. Blood started to seep

from his shoulder and head. Jamal and Waheed pulled onto the main road and sped away.

"Tom!" Jamila cried as she ran up to him. She had followed him out of the building. "Call 911!" she yelled to the truck driver, who had gotten out of his truck. She saw his phone on the ground and picked it up. She heard a voice from the phone.

"Hello? Mr. Jensen, did something happen?"

"Hello?" Jamila said out of instinct.

"Hello, this is the Police Department. What's going on?"

"This is the police? Tom was chasing somebody and was hit by a car! Please send help! We're at 345 Macon Street."

"We're sending an ambulance and a squad car."

Tom's body laid lifeless on the street. In his back pocket was the notebook.

[chapter 13]
August 14, 2011
(Present Day)

Agent Carter had just begun his brief to Chase in the FBI building. Matt, the younger looking man, was leaning against the wall.

"Thomas Jensen, who you know as LyonX, called a local police threat line 72 hours ago. He was involved in a terror plot against the subway."

"You got the wrong guy," Chase said. "He'd never try to hurt—"

"As far as we know," Carter interrupted, "as soon as he found out what he was involved with, he tried to report it. During the phone call, he chased suspects from his apartment and was hit by a truck."

"Is he ok?" Chase asked. "Where is he?"

"He is in a coma now, in a hospital. Because of that you're here now, but I'll get to that later. When the police arrived on the scene, in his back pocket was a suspicious notebook. When his neighbor was interviewed by the local police, this whole investigation started. After they saw the notebook, they called us. We knew this was something real. The notebook plus other reporting we've received told us that there was an attack being planned on the subway system. But we needed more information. When? Where? And of course, who? We went to his apartment and investigated his computer. We found the hack he'd written, as well as chat logs with 'Rue,' the person who hired him."

Chase sat in his seat at the table, still trying to understand what was going on. "Rue... the Swedish Quaker?"

"We believe he might have other aliases in the hacking community. Someone local has been providing hack jobs to various organizations recently. He might be involved."

This just keeps getting weirder, Chase thought.

Carter continued. "We couldn't find any details about the deal in the chat logs. Thankfully, we had Matt on the team. Matt, explain what you did."

Matt took the floor. "I was on the team investigating Jensen's, or as you know him, LyonX's computer. I noticed the only game he had on his computer was Quake, and he had many links and files also related to Quake. I explained to the guys that he was a Quaker. I knew this because I grew up watching my brother play Quakeworld. Maybe you knew him, 'adamllis?'"

"Yeah I knew him. He left as I was getting into it."

"Because of my brother, I knew about dueling, the community, and most importantly, demo files." Chase listened closely. "I guessed from the chat logs that they had more communication than just the internet chat rooms. Then I realized that they discussed the deal during warmup in the Quakeworld server, where no one could record the conversation. Thankfully, LyonX recorded all his game demos. It took awhile for me to explain to the head shed here that demos were recorded game

play footage for later review by the players. And that only after warmup mode ends is anything recorded. Not surprisingly, they didn't chat much during their games, but we did get a few hints after watching all their games together." Matt walked over to the laptop and hit a key for the next slide.

"In their last duel, which took place four days ago, they spoke briefly in the last few seconds of the game. Here it is:" Matt pointed to the screen, which displayed a screen shot of the in-game chat console.

```
Rue: gtg now
Rue: same time same server thurs
LyonX: ok, should be done by then
Rue: sweet, i'll get you the details on the meet then
LyonX: ok
Rue: ggs, see u
Rue dropped from the server
```

"I figured out what Rue was doing," Matt continued. "He was using Quakeworld duels as a means of identifying LyonX. There just aren't many people left on the planet still playing Quakeworld. And those that still do usually having been playing for ten plus years. As you know, you can't fake those skills. Rue knows LyonX's game when he sees it. He'll know if the person that meets him in the Quakeworld server is an experienced Quaker or not."

Carter joined back in. "We think Rue has some other part in this attack, or at least knows who's doing it. We need to find out who he is. And in order to do that, we need LyonX to duel Rue as planned in sixteen hours."

"But LyonX is in the hospital..." Chase said.

"We found the 'Clan History' on your and LyonX's old Quake clan web page," Matt said.

"You and LyonX had played in many team tournaments together and had known each other a long time," Carter said. "Also, you were local and easy to find."

And I was just about to delete my Facebook page, Chase thought.

"We need you to show up to LyonX's Quakeworld duel with Rue—as LyonX," Carter said. "All you have to do is play him until he names a time and a place for their meet. We'll handle the rest."

"You've explained everything to him?" Agent Gates walked through the door and stood in the middle of the room. Carter nodded to his boss. "Well Chase, there you have it. With our other sources, we know this attack is getting ready to happen. Our analysis tells us they don't need this hack your friend made to do damage; it's more like a bonus for them. But, what we do know is that this Rue guy knows what's going on, and we got to get to him to get the attackers." He looked Chase right in the eyes. "Chase, it's like I said, we need your help."

Chase looked away for a moment. He took a long, deep breath and turned back to Gates.

"Show me the demos."

[chapter 14]

Chase sat at a desk in front of a computer. His hands rested on the same mouse and keyboard he had used all those years in Quakeworld. The same over-the-ear headphones hung around his neck. His back was straight in the chair, his feet placed flat on the floor. On the monitor was his open Quakeworld client's console screen. Matt sat in another chair behind him. Agents Gates and Carter leaned against the back wall of the room in the FBI building.

"It's time," Gates said, looking at Chase.

Chase held his arms out to his side and stretched his shoulder muscles. He shook out his wrists and rotated his head around a few times. He took one more deep breath and then typed into

the console.

```
connect 213.45.34.112
```

He pulled his headphones over his ears, then struck the enter key. His Quakeworld client reached through the internet to find the server address. The connection was made quickly, and the computer loaded the deathmatch map *Aerowalk*. Now Chase's character stood in the arena and the console printed:

```
LyonX joined the server
```

Chase checked the scoreboard. No one else was on the server. He began his warmup routine, rocket jumping around, shooting various objects as he came around corners, getting a feel for the connection.

Just like LyonX taught me to do before a match, he thought.

A few minutes went by. Chase was still alone on the server. Gates began pacing back and forth behind him in the room. After a few more minutes, Carter walked over to him.

"Do you think something went wrong? Did Rue find out?"

"All we can do is wait," Gates replied.

"Got him," Matt said. Everyone looked at the monitor.

```
Rue joined the server
```

"Ok Chase, you know what you need to do," Gates said.

Chase stopped running around. He typed the name of the map into the console that LyonX and Rue had played first in their last match.

```
LyonX would rather play on dm6
```

```
Rue agrees with LyonX on dm6
```

```
Server changes map to dm6
```

The server loaded the new map, and the two players faced each other in the arena, another classic duel map.

```
LyonX: rdy?
```

```
Rue: yes
```

Both players typed ready and the countdown began. Chase was focused. Since LyonX had only beaten Rue on maps ztndm3q and dm4, in three of the five games all he had to do was lose. He just had to keep enough pressure on his opponent to not be suspicious.

Just one map at a time, he thought to himself. He was most afraid of dm4. If LyonX had beaten Rue on dm4, then Chase would have to beat him too.

Chase knew all the duel maps well, each one having been taught to him by LyonX. In dm6, the goal was to control the red armor, which was on one side of the figure-8 style arena. Chase had reviewed the demos from the last game between Rue and LyonX. He knew that on this map, LyonX used stealth tactics, sneaking around quietly to steal the red armor from his opponent, then attack.

Their first game began. Rue took the lead at first, but Chase was able to employ the same stealth techniques as LyonX. He stole a few red armors which allowed him to frag Rue a few times to keep the game competitive. After 10 minutes the game ended. 12 – 5, Rue.

"What was their scores the last time Jensen played him on this map?" Gates asked Matt.

"Last time Rue won 10 – 6."

"Good. Keep it up, Chase."

It's been awhile since I played at this skill level, Chase thought. He took another deep breath and typed in the next map, dm2. The server loaded the new map, and the game began.

[chapter 15]

Dm2 was also a classic deathmatch arena. In North America it was played mostly as a team deathmatch map, due to it's larger size, but it still remained a popular duel map in Europe for its

slow, but chess-like battles of control. An American losing to a Swede dueler on dm2 was somewhat expected.

The problem wasn't just losing. In dm2, there were many shortcuts that could only be achieved with precise rocket jumps. The ability to make these jumps gave a player a huge advantage over one who couldn't. The problem Chase faced was that both Rue and LyonX could make the jumps easily. Even when Chase was at his Quakeworld prime, he still struggled with those jumps on dm2. He knew that he needed to make at least one of the rocket jumps during the game or Rue would start to get suspicious. But at the same time, if he repeatedly failed at the shortcuts, it would also look suspicious.

Here we go again, Chase thought as he spawned.

There was no lightning gun on dm2, and there were many armors and two mega healths. The goal of the map was stock up on armor and health then trap your opponent in a hallway or corner with rockets and finish them off.

Five minutes into the game, Chase was behind $7 - 0$.

I need to use a shortcut trick and somehow get at least a few frags to match LyonX.

Chase had just respawned on the weak side of the map, the side with the least armor and health. He suited up with the red armor and mega health and grabbed a rocket launcher on his way to the central room.

The central room was a large open box with a high ceiling. At the very top of the ceiling was a small room which resembled a birdhouse. The birdhouse was only accessible by a floating platform that went back and forth to another small room on the other side of the ceiling. That room had an entrance leading from a teleporter exit.

Inside the birdhouse was a mega health, the critical item of the map. If a player could get a red armor and both mega healths on the map, he would almost certainly win the next rocket battle. The long way up to the mega was using the teleporter and the floating platform. The fast way was to use a rocket jump shortcut from a small stair case on the floor of the large box room up to the floating platform. Since the stairs were under an overhang, extreme precision had to be used when rocket jumping off the stairway. Chase was on the floor of the box room under the ceiling mega room.

If I can get that mega before he does, I'll have a good chance in the next fight.

He had practiced the jump that day after watching LyonX's demos. He had only made it a few times out of many attempts.

Here goes nothing.

With that he ran up to the stairs, looked down at his feet, held the back key, jumped, then shot a rocket. The boost sent him into the overhang, then back down to the floor. Without hesitation he tried again. This time his rocket aim was off, and he ran off the stairs before he shot the rocket. He tried again, getting off the ground and clearing the overhang. His hopes shot high as he tried to fly toward the platform, but he missed it and fell back to the floor.

As he landed, Rue came flying around the corner, attracted by all the noise. Chase was now weak, having damaged himself from so many rocket jump attempts. Two rockets were all it took from Rue to finish Chase off. His body exploded in a mist of red pixels.

```
LyonX is gibbed by Rue's rocket
```

Three minutes later and the score was now $12 - 0$. Chase needed at least a few frags, or he would look suspicious. Every time he secured health and armor, his opponent would track him down and trap him somewhere. Rue knew the map's duel tactics inside and out, and it was slowly becoming obvious to him that his opponent did not. Gates and Carter glanced at each other as Chase went down two more times.

"What was the score on this map last time?" Gates asked.

"12 - 5 Rue," Matt said.

Focus, focus, focus, Chase thought to himself, realizing that the situation was getting worse

with every second that went by. Suddenly the two players found each other near a lava pit by the teleporter to the upper mega. Chase saw Rue first and was able to get a good shot in, but Rue answered back from an inferior position. Two of Rue's rockets hit Chase dead on, knocking off most of his health and forcing him back. Rue tried to take up his lost ground when a rocket from Chase knocked him into the lava pit.

Yes! Chase thought.

Rue would soon burn to death, forcing him to start over from scratch and lose a point. Chase went off to look for health when he heard jumping sounds behind him.

Rue's not dead?

He had rocket jumped out of the lava before burning. He was weak, but catching Chase off guard, he nailed him in the back with a rocket.

`LyonX rides Rue's rocket`

"Darn it!" Chase screamed. *That was my chance.*

15 – 0, one minute left.

He spawned on the weak side again. He grabbed the rocket launcher but skipped the red armor and mega health.

"What is he doing?" Gates said. "No armor? That's suicide."

"I don't know," Matt said.

This is it, Chase thought. *It's now or never!*

He hopped down the hallway to the box room as fast as he could. Rue was on the other side of the map. Chase, without hesitation and no armor, ran straight for the stairway under the bird house mega room. He looked down and shot a rocket. He moved so fast Gates, Carter, and Matt didn't know what had happened.

Chase was now sitting on the floating platform, aimed right at the teleporter exit inside the room across from the birdhouse. He had executed a perfect rocket jump shortcut, flying from the lower staircase and landing on the floating platform. He shot a rocket at what seemed like nothing, and a split second later Rue emerged from a white pixel cloud to catch Chase's rocket head on.

`Rue rides LyonX's rocket`

Still weak from their last battle, Rue had used the teleporter to go for the upper mega health. He knew the only way that his opponent could have gotten to that position so quickly was to use the staircase rocket jump shortcut.

`Rue: that's more like it`

Sighs of relief came from everyone in the room, including Chase. Chase grabbed the mega and some armor and rocket jumped down the long hallway to the weak side. He found his opponent again and was able to get two spawn kills as the game ended. Final score, 15 – 3, Rue.

"Nice job, Chase," Gates said.

"Three more games. You can do it," Carter said.

Chase let out a deep breath. He took a moment to shake his hands and arms. He rolled his shoulders a few times, then typed the next map into the console.

`LyonX would rather play on aerowalk`

[chapter 16]

The next map was Aerowalk, a popular custom duel map. Aerowalk was a fast-paced, multi-tiered arena that rewarded aggressiveness. Due to its action packed game play, Aerowalk was popular worldwide, and Chase was quite familiar with dueling on it.

The players readied up and the game began. It was almost a nonstop blood bath. The map's open architecture made it difficult for any one player to dominate for long. Control of the armors went back and forth between the two players continuously. Their frag counts were neck and neck the whole time. If Rue attacked with rockets, Chase would escape then come right back with his

shaft.

I'm starting to get a feel for him, Chase thought as he caught Rue in the red armor room.

The red armor spawned on a small, exposed platform high above a narrow stairwell. Besides spawning there, the only way up to the platform was a rocket jump. Rue had rocket jumped up to the platform too early and was defenseless as he waited for the red armor to appear. Chase came the corner at the top of the stairway with his thunderbolt ready.

`Rue accepts LyonX's shaft`

Chase rocketed himself to the platform as the red armor spawned. He then rocket jumped horizontally off the back of the platform and screamed through the upper floor finding Rue again right off the spawn.

"He's doing well. What was Rue and Jensen's score on this map?" Gates asked.

"Last time was 21 – 17 Rue," Matt said.

"We chose the right guy," Carter said as a rocket from Chase caught Rue in the air.

`Rue rides LyonX's rocket`

The score was now 18 – 15 Rue, with one minute to go. All Chase had to do was keep the same pace to match LyonX's performance.

Rue spawned in the lowest tier of the map. He picked up the yellow armor and the mega health. He grabbed a rocket launcher as Chase was about to come down on him again, then slipped through a teleporter to an upper ledge. Chase followed his opponent through the teleporter to find Rue waiting on the other side.

Chase was trapped in a volley of rocket fire and had no choice but to jump off the ledge. Rue predicted his movements and shot a well aimed rocket toward the floor. The rocket caught up to Chase before he hit the ground, blowing him apart mid-air.

`LyonX rides Rue's rocket`

`[30] seconds remaining`

Rue sped around the map. He caught Chase as he spawned twice.

Got to get at least on more frag.

Chase respawned on top of the red armor platform. It wasn't up yet, and staying on the platform, he slid into the corner against the wall.

Now what?

He was trapped there waiting for it to respawn. If he jumped down, he would be defenseless. Just then Rue came from underneath the ledge. He didn't see his opponent through the two holes in the bottom of the platform because Chase had slid over to the corner, out of direct view.

With his point of view toward the top of the stairwell where his enemy had appeared last time, Rue rocket jumped up towards the red armor. At that moment Chase heard the armor respawn, and he slid out of the corner slightly to pick it up. Rue had just about landed on the platform when he saw Chase. Chase moved forward into Rue's character, shooting his shotgun as fast as he could. Rue fired his rocket instinctively, but by that time, Chase was right on top of him, and they both took massive damage from the blast.

Chase kept right against him, firing his shotgun quickly. Rue saw his health was in the red and panicked. He shot another rocket and blew himself up against the side of Chase's body. Chase survived the second blast with 33 health points. It was an intimate battle fought within a tiny space.

`Rue becomes bored with life`

Chase picked up Rue's rocket launcher and charged on, grabbing health and a thunderbolt on the way to the other side of the map.

`[10] seconds`

Rue had found a thunderbolt leftover from a previous battle and a green armor. Chase found Rue and a shaft battle ensued. Chase's positioning and aim soon gave him the upper hand.

Lightning gun was always my best weapon, thought Chase.

Rue tried to escape, but Chase shafted him into the wall. Rue entered a comment as he died.

```
Rue accepts LyonX's shaft
```

```
Rue: i wonder if your lg can still beat mine on lan
```

The game ended. 20 – 16 Rue.

"Nice job again, Chase" Carter said.

"Well played," Matt said.

"Two more maps. You can do this, Chase," Gates said.

Chase stood to stretch out. He shook his arms and wrists then sat back down. He was tired, but his spirits were high.

LX, I'm doing this for you, buddy, he thought. *Focus, focus, focus.* He typed in the next map, *ztndm3q*. He was confident he could beat Rue on that map. It wasn't as well played in Europe as in America. He had always done well on that map, even beating LyonX on many occasions. But still ahead of him loomed dm4. Chase had never beaten LyonX on that map, and he knew that Rue, an old school Quaker, would be deadly there. It could even be his best map. He began warming up, then suddenly stopped.

"Guys, uh, come look at this," Chase said.

The rest of the team gathered around the screen. Rue had just typed a message in the Quakeworld server. Everyone read the message, but no one could say anything at first.

"Huh? What does he mean?" Matt said.

"Not sure..." Gates said.

```
Rue: i'm done
```

[chapter 17]

The team was still in confusion about what Rue meant. He continued typing.

```
Rue: i've seen enough
```

```
Rue: i've got to be somewhere soon
```

```
Rue: is it done?
```

"I guess he doesn't want to play the rest of the games," Carter said.

"You've definitely convinced him you're Jensen," Gates said. "Tell him you finished it yesterday." Chase typed the message.

```
LyonX: yea, finished it yesterday
```

```
Rue: alright
```

```
Rue: if you want to get paid, you bring it to me in person
```

```
LyonX: name the place
```

```
Rue: there is a lan cafe in midtown called 'generation net,' know it?
```

"I know the place," Matt said. "It's on Madison and Park."

```
LyonX: madison and park right?
```

```
Rue: yes
```

```
Rue: tomorrow 9pm, bring the package to the cafe
```

"Ask him how we'll know him," Gates said.

```
LyonX: how will i know you?
```

```
Rue: let me finish
```

```
Rue: when you walk in, on the counter
```

```
Rue: will be a tag for a computer at the cafe
```

```
Rue: take the tag and sit at the computer
```

```
Rue: you'll see what to do when you get there
```

"Try to get his phone number," Gates said. Chase typed the message.

```
LyonX: you wanna just give me your phone number to make it easier?

Rue: no. follow the instructions and you'll get paid

Rue: cash, 3k
```

"Ask him what it's for," Gates said.

```
LyonX: what will you do with it once you get it?

Rue: don't worry about it

Rue: just do as i say and you'll get paid

Rue: no more no less
```

"Tell him you'll be there," Gates said.

```
LyonX: i'll be there at 9

Rue: alright. that's all for now

Rue dropped from the server
```

Chase took his hands off the keyboard and turned around.

"Ok team, we got a lot of work to do," Gates said. "Chase, excellent job tonight. We couldn't have done it without you."

"So you guys are going to grab the guy tomorrow?"

"Yes, Agent Carter will go to the cafe as Jensen to make the hand off. As soon as we get confirmation on Rue, we'll go in and grab him and hopefully figure out who has been paying him and how and when they intend to attack the subway."

"Carter will be LyonX, huh?" Chase looked at Carter. "You look too tan to be a hacker," Chase said. The pressure of the games was beginning to lift. He was exhausted after the three games, but he had expected a lot more. His biggest relief was not having to play dm4.

"Chase, thank you," Carter said. "We'll be able to get this guy because of you. This could be the critical move to stop an terrorist attack."

"You did well, man," Matt said. "That was some nice Quake."

Chase was ready to go home, but there was one more thing he had to do. He looked back to Gates.

"Don't forget, you told me you'd tell me where LyonX is."

"And now that we know we can trust you, I'll gladly tell you." Gates scribbled a hospital name and room number down on a piece of paper and handed it to Chase. "I'll get someone to drive you home."

"Hey, whatever happened to Chuck?" Chase asked.

"Oh, your roommate?" Gates said.

Carter, Gates, and Matt all looked at each other.

"He still thinks he was brought in for downloading torrents," Gates said.

The whole room burst into laughter.

"We interrogated him a little bit then threw him in a back room," Carter said. "He'll probably stay off the internet for a good while."

"It'll probably be good for him," Chase said.

He nodded once more to everyone, then walked out the room.

[chapter 18]

Ahmad grabbed Waheed by the throat and threw him to the floor.

"You imbecile! And when we're so close to success!"

"I'm sorry. I didn't mean for this to happen," Waheed said from the floor. "The notebook, it —"

"Stupid... idiotic... disgraceful..." with every word Ahmad kicked Waheed in his ribs. "You

may have ruined everything!" He turned to Jamal who was also in the room in Ahmad's apartment. "Bring the car, we're going to see the Swede."

The three men loaded in the car and drove a short drive to Rue's apartment. Jamal pulled into a parking garage and parked. Ahmad and Waheed got out and walked up to Rue's apartment.

Rue answered the knock at the door.

"Again you come here without telling me," he said as Ahmad barged in.

"That man you recruited, who is?"

"I told you not to worry about him."

"Who is he?" Ahmad closed the distance between them.

"Why are you so interested?" Rue glanced at Waheed. "Did your men do something stupid again?" Waheed looked away.

After a moment Rue said, "He's just some guy from the internet. Trust me, he's clean. He has no idea what this is about. He's bringing me the code in person tomorrow, just in time for your plans." Ahmad backed off a bit. "Like I said, there'll be no electronic trail. Even if they were watching me, they have nothing. No proof."

"What does he look like?"

"I've never seen or met him."

Ahmad grabbed Rue's shirt and pulled him close.

"Then tell me how you will know it is him!"

"We are Quakers."

"What?"

"We have both been playing the same computer game for years. I can recognize his skills from a mile away. Faces can be altered, pictures manufactured. But raw skill..."

"You're betting all this on some damn computer game?" Ahmad screamed.

"I've been playing this game for twelve years!" Rue yelled back. "And I'm telling you not ten people in the world can beat me in that game. Not ten!" Ahmad released his grip some. "And tomorrow one of those ten people I will play at the LAN cafe."

Rue stepped in closer to Ahmad. "I'll tell you what. Tomorrow I will play the man before we meet. He was the first one in two years to beat me on one specific map. He has beaten me there both times we played, and tomorrow," Rue leaned in close, "if he doesn't beat me, then you can kill him."

[chapter 19]
(The following day)

A light mist was coming down as a low layer of clouds rolled in, blocking what was left of the evening sun light. The streets and sidewalks of Midtown glistened with the light from traffic signals and buildings. The sidewalk in front of *Generation Net* reflected the purple and green lights from the cafe's neon sign. The cafe was on the ground floor in a several story office building. The street side of the building was all one large window with a door in the center. Inside were several rows of tables with several computers per table. About half the seats were filled with people surfing the internet or playing computer games with each other. Across the street, in the second story of another office building, a slit in the blinds on the window widened.

"See anything interesting?" Gates said.

Matt had been assigned to surveillance duty. "Nope, still nothing."

"We got a few hours yet. Just try to keep track of who's going in or out of the building," Gates said. He picked up a hand held radio. "2 – 1, how's it looking over there?"

"1 – 2, Nothing out of the ordinary," the voice said. Another team was watching the other side of the building.

"3 – 1, come in," Gates said.

"Go for 3." Carter's voice came through the radio.

"You ready?"

"Yeah, the van's going to drop me off near the subway station. I'll walk in from there."

"Sounds good," Gates said. "We're bringing these guys down tonight."

[chapter 20]

Should have looked at the weather report, thought Chase as he walked into the hospital lobby. His jacket was damp from the mist still coming down. He found the elevator and hit the button for the fifth floor. When he walked out he was greeted by a nurse behind a counter.

"Can I help you?"

"Yes please, I'm a friend of Ly—Thomas Jensen," he said.

"Mr. Jensen is in the second room on the left down this hallway," the nurse replied.

He thanked her and made his way down the hallway.

I'd never thought I'd meet him in real life, let alone in a hospital.

He found the room and walked in. There were two patients in the room; both appeared to be unconscious. One was being visited by a young, middle eastern woman.

LyonX never mentioned any women in his life.

He walked over to the other patient, who looked middle aged. *James Nixon?* Chase read the name plate.

Well a lot can happen in three years.

He turned around to the other patient and the woman. He came closer and for the first time in his life saw Thomas Jensen, lying unconscious in the hospital bed.

I guess he shaved his beard he was so proud of.

"Do you know Tom?" the young woman asked.

"Yes and no, I guess," he said. She gave him a puzzled look. "I've known him for years, but mostly in a... long distance relationship I guess." He paused and looked at the woman. "And you are his...?"

"Neighbor. No, friend," she said. She smiled and held out her hand. "I'm Jamila."

"I see," he replied. He shook her hand. "I'm Chase."

He looked again to LyonX, his mentor.

He looks younger than I expected.

But there was one thing he had imagined correctly. He had a face that looked like it rarely frowned. Even lying in that hospital bed, with those pajamas and a few wires coming out of his chest, he didn't appear to be in discomfort, or even discontent. Chase figured it was because of that same attitude that this woman was here by his side.

"Do you know him well?" she asked. Chase looked up at her, then back at his friend.

"Very," he replied. "He taught me a lot." He sat down on the other side of the bed from Jamila. Memories of their games and conversations began to surface in his mind.

```
Snip3rZ47: i quit. i suck at this.

LyonX: haha, don't say that. you've only been playing for what, like 4
months?

Snip3rZ47: 6 months, and i've gotten no where

Snip3rZ47: this is a waste of time.

LyonX: so you quit at everything that gets hard?

Snip3rZ47: huh?

LyonX: whats different about this from anything else in life?

Snip3rZ47: this is a stupid game

LyonX: yeah, but we live stupid lives too. most things in life are stupid.
```

```
LyonX: quake may be hard, but at least it's fun!
Snip3rZ47: fun if you win maybe
LyonX: ha, the fun is in the challenge, not the victory
LyonX: if you apply that to life, it'll make things a lot easier
LyonX: fine, quit quake. and then quit school, work, marriage, etc
LyonX: there are plenty more challenges ahead of you
LyonX: and in life you don't get to respawn
Snip3rZ47: you're so full of it
```

But he was right, Chase thought.

He hated to admit it, but there had been times when LyonX's words wandered into his mind even when he was far from Quake. Chase scanned Thomas' chart. There was a photocopied picture of his driver's license on it. Chase chuckled to himself.

"What is it? What's funny?" Jamila asked.

"Ah, it's nothing. I just thought of something he told me once," Chase said.

```
voLCano: i'll never beat you on this map!!!
voLCano: so frustrating........
LyonX: haha, well, like i said, they replaced my name on my driver's
license with 'dm4 master'
LyonX: cause no one can beat me here. at least on this continent.
```

"Ok folks, just letting you know visiting hours are over in fifteen minutes." A nurse, an older woman, rolled in a cart of various items like towels and bed pans.

"Hey thanks for taking care of this guy. He's my friend," Chase said.

"Well, it's our pleasure here at Midtown Med," she replied. "You two both look like smart young people. I was wondering if I could ask a quick computer question."

"Sure, maybe we can help," Jamila said.

"My grandson just asked me if my laptop has an L-A-N, and I just don't know what that means," the nurse said. "Would you mind grabbing that for me dear?" The nurse asked Chase to pick up a clean bed pan on the top of the cart that was blocking her from grabbing something underneath.

"LAN means *local area network*," Jamila said. "It's when you want to connect your computer to a network nearby, but you use a cable instead of a wireless connection."

"I don't think there's any PC that doesn't have a LAN connection. It's the fastest way to connect two computers—" Chase froze. A line from his match with Rue flashed in his head.

```
Rue accepts LyonX's shaft
Rue: i wonder if your lg can still beat mine on lan
```

"On LAN..." Chase repeated to himself. He turned and walked toward the window of the hospital room. Suddenly he released the bed pan. It fell to the floor with a loud crash.

Chase turned back and yelled, "What time is it?!"

"It's 8:45," the nurse said, startled.

With that Chase burst out of the room, ducking and diving past people and carts down the hallway. Jamila and the nurse looked at each other, wondering what had just happened.

Chase was soon out of the hospital door, running down the side of the street through the mist. He met an intersection, only briefly looking to his left and right as he sprinted across the street. A car slammed on its brakes to avoid hitting him.

"Watch out crazy!" the driver yelled, but Chase was already gone, racing away into the thick of the night.

[chapter 21]

A voice came over the radio.

"1 – 3, 1 – 3"

"Go ahead 3," Gates responded from the building across from Generation Net.

"I'm going in," Carter's voice continued.

"Roger. All stations, all stations, we're going hot," Gates said. He turned to Matt. "You should see him in a few minutes. Any thing suspicious going on down there?"

Matt was looking down at the cafe through its large street facing windows.

"Nothing interesting so far. The place is about half full. Most everyone looks like the regulars in a place like that. Some nerds, some kids, and some foreigners who have no other place to use the internet." He was looking at a young man with dark hair and a beard sitting toward the window of the cafe. "I think that one guy's middle-eastern, and there's some Asians in the corner playing Starcraft I'm guessing. Can't tell if anyone out there is Swedish."

"Ok," Gates replied. He was sitting at a table with various communications equipment.

Two blocks away a black van pulled up to the sidewalk. The door slid open and out stepped Carter, dressed in jeans and a t-shirt. In his pocket was a burned CD.

"Final voice check," he spoke to no one.

"3 – 1, we hear him," Gate's voice came over the van's radio.

"They hear you," a man in the van said. "Good luck."

"Thanks," he replied. "Pushing," Carter said into his hidden microphone on his shirt. He walked down the sidewalk as the van drove away.

"See anything?" Gates asked again to Matt.

"Still noth—wait," Matt said. Gates turned to look at Matt. "Ok, yes. That wasn't there a minute ago."

"What is it?"

"A tag, for the computer. It was just placed on the front counter."

"Did you see who put it there?"

"I didn't, but I did see the guy at the front desk get a phone call not more than a minute ago."

"So if the guy at the front desk isn't him, the phone call must have been Rue."

"So, we still have no idea where Rue is," Matt said.

"Yes, but he needs that code. He has to be here to get it."

"Here comes Carter," Matt said.

Gates stood up and moved to the window. "All stations, friendly on site," he said into the radio. He looked out through the blinds to catch a glimpse of his team mate.

Carter came walking down the street. He looked relaxed as he causally approached the entrance to Generation Net. In a back room in the cafe, through a camera system, someone else was watching Carter's approach. Next to that person in the back room was a computer. On the computer was an open Quakeworld client. The game was connected to a server, and the player's name was Rue. Behind him, through the door to the room came a middle-aged middle-eastern man.

"You're too predictable, Ahmad," Rue said from a seat in front of the security cameras. "You'd make a terrible Quaker."

"I don't play games, and I wish you wouldn't either," Ahmad said. "Your friend owns this place?"

"Yes, but I'm sure you didn't come here to use the internet." Rue spun around in the chair. "But hear this, you better not mess this up for me. I've waited a long time for this."

"I don't take chances, and I came here to make sure that there aren't any. I hope you were serious with what you said before, because I assure you, I am serious." He pulled back his coat to

reveal a pistol tucked into his pants.

Rue looked at the weapon then straight into Ahmad's eyes. "Dead serious," he said, then turned back around to the monitors as Carter walked in the door.

[chapter 23]

"You may have to use that gun after all," Rue said, "because that guy does not look like a hacker."

Rue watched carefully as Carter walked up and saw the tag laying out on the counter top. He calmly glanced around then picked it up. He saw it was for station number sixteen and looked up to see that there was no one seated there.

Across the street, Matt was watching through the blinds. "He's picked it up. Ok, now he's moving toward an empty seat against the wall."

Gates was seated at the radio equipment. "Everything's going smoothly."

In the back room, Ahmad and Rue watched the monitors closely. "I don't like the way this guy looks," Rue said.

"I'm going out there," Ahmad said.

"Wait, we don't know yet. If it's them, he's probably not alone."

"I didn't come alone either."

Carter walked down the row toward station sixteen. Directly in front of him as he walked down the isle was a door to the back room. He arrived at the computer and pulled the chair out. As he sat down he entered the code from the tag to access the computer. What came up on the screen puzzled him. There were only two icons on the desktop, both right in the middle of the screen. One was a text file entitled 'just business.' The other icon was the Quake logo with a shortcut symbol at the bottom.

"What have we got here," Carter said to himself; his words echoed in Gates' radio.

"He's sitting at the computer now, just looking at the screen," Matt said.

"Just business..." Carter read the title of the icon aloud as he clicked it open. What he saw surprised him. Four 2 and 3 digit numbers separated by dots.

"Business?" Gates repeated. "That must be the instructions. What's he doing now?"

"Well, he's just staring at the screen. Now he's looking around. He seems a bit nervous."

"Nervous?"

"Oh great, my favorite game." Carter's voice again came over the transmitter. "I'm quaking with joy."

"Quaking?" Gates stood up. "No. It can't be..."

"1 – 3, 1 – 3," Gates' hand held radio sounded.

"What is it?" Gates said.

"We're in the van about a block down the street. We just saw some guy sprint by us toward the target site. Not sure what it's about."

"What is he doing?" Ahmad asked.

"He's still just sitting there," Rue said. "Something's not right. He would have been in the server by now."

"If he's not the guy then flick the lights once, and I'll deal with it," Ahmad said as he walked out the back door.

Rue looked back and forth from the monitor and the server.

"I'll give you thirty seconds," he said and rolled his chair over to the light switch.

"It's over if he wants us to play another round of Quake," Gates said. He kicked the wall next to him. "I can't believe we didn't see this coming. We got to get him out of there. All stations, stand by for extract plan—"

"Wait!" Matt said.

"What?"

"Hold on. I think... is that...?" Matt strained into the darkness from behind the blinds. "Yes! It's Chase!"

[chapter 24]

Carter started up the Quakeworld client, but it just sat there, staring him in the face. He didn't know what to do.

"Never saw this coming," he said.

"Fifteen seconds," Rue said from the back room. His hand hovered over the light switch for the cafe. Through the cameras he saw Ahmad come through the back hallway door and walk out into the cafe floor. Ahmad began walking toward Carter seated in front of the computer, staring at the open Quakeworld client.

"A middle eastern guy just came out of the back. He's headed for Carter," Matt said. Gates ran to the window.

"Ten seconds," Rue said. Ahmad had almost reached Carter. He slowly moved his hand around his waist when he heard the words:

"Hey cheapskate!"

Ahmad looked up and saw a young, soaked, out of breath man standing in front of station sixteen.

"Yeah I'm talking to you buddy. I guess we can just pick up anything we find and that makes it ours." Ahmad stopped in his tracks and looked off in a different direction. Rue watched closely on the monitors.

"You know how I know you took my tag," Chase said to Carter, breathing heavily, "because you have no idea what that is, do you?" he said pointing to the Quake logo on the screen. Chase's voice echoed through Carter's wire tap and into Gates' radio across the street. Carter shook his head and stood up. As he stood, he pulled the CD out of his pocket and slid it under the keyboard.

"Get lost, punk," Chase said. Carter turned and walked off.

In the back room, Rue's hand fell from the light switch. "He might not be a hacker, but he's definitely a Quaker."

[chapter 25]

Chase removed his rain soaked jacket and draped it over the chair. He shook the rain out of his hair and wiped his wet hands on his t-shirt. He saw the CD under the keyboard and quickly stuffed it in the inside pocket of his jacket as he sat down.

"Where did Chase come from? And what is he doing here?" Gates asked.

"Maybe he figured out what Rue was going to do," Matt said. "One final duel to confirm LyonX's identity."

"We didn't plan for this. This could be too dangerous."

"Well, it's because of him we've come this far. And we still don't know where Rue is."

"But if something happens to him..."

"Don't forget, he came here on his own. Carter's still down there too."

Carter had gone back to the counter and purchased a new tag. He sat down at another computer in the next isle behind Chase. From his seated position, he could see Chase's screen between two monitors in the row in front of him. He opened up a chat program on the computer.

Gates' cell phone beeped a few times.

"What's this?" he said as he opened it and read an incoming message. "It's from Carter!"

"He says 'what's going on? where did he come from?'" Gates read aloud as he responded. "'Don't know. What was on the computer?'"

"'all that was there was a server address. R wants another round. C looks like he came to play. i can see the screen from where i am.'"

"'Good. If something happens, get him out of there.'"

"'rgr'"

Ahmad had rejoined Rue in the back room. "Someone else just replaced that other guy," he said.

"I saw," Rue said. "He looks like he knows what he's doing." Rue watched Chase through the monitors.

"It still might be someone else."

"True, and we'll find out in a minute."

Chase pulled his computer chair closer to the table. He straightened his back and spread his feet out flat on the floor.

I hope this was a good idea. He minimized the Quakeworld client and looked at the desktop. He opened the text file and saw the server address.

Just as I thought. I'm learning this guy's style.

He copied and pasted it into the Quake console.

`connect 243.12.67.114`

Here goes nothing, he thought and hit enter.

The connection was made, and the map was loaded, dm6. As soon as it loaded, Chase checked the scoreboard; the only other player in the server was Rue. He looked at Rue's ping, a number related to latency that is displayed next to a player's name on the scoreboard. Both he and Rue had 13 ping.

He's definitely local.

In Quakeworld, the lowest number for ping has always been 12. 13 ping is essentially 0 latency.

```
player changes name to LyonX

LyonX: i got what you want. you got my money?

Rue: of course i do.

LyonX: well then where are we meeting?

Rue: before that, we have one more game to play.

Rue: you have no problem with that, right?
```

Chase paused. *Looks like there's no other way.*

```
LyonX: bring it on

Rue: haha, that's the attitude i was hoping for

LyonX is ready
```

Please ready up here, please, he thought. *If we play on dm6, I can just lose like before.*

```
Rue: you should know by now how much i like a challenge. i'll pick the map
```

```
this time, and i'm sure you won't have any problems with it
```
```
Rue would rather play on dm4
```
Chase stared at the text on the screen. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath.

It's all been leading up to this. This is the final duel.

He opened his eyes again and exhaled slowly.
```
LyonX: like i said
```
```
LyonX: bring it on
```
```
LyonX agrees on dm4
```

<center>[chapter 26]</center>

The server loaded the deathmatch arena dm4, and the two players spawned in warmup mode.
```
LyonX: give me a sec to get my config right
```
```
Rue: take your time
```
Chase opened the console and began adjusting the game control settings to his liking. After making some adjustments, he ran around the server, getting the feel for the adjustments and the server's speed.

It's been a long time since I played on LAN.

Compared to even high speed internet, a LAN connection feels unburdened and much smoother to a Quake player.
```
Rue: i've been looking forward to this game
```
```
Rue: i warn you, don't disappoint me
```
Chase ignored the chat messages as he focused on getting his settings right. He flew around the map, rocket jumping and speed running. He needed to warm up his hands which were still numb from the cold. Even cold hands could hurt his game, and he was going to need everything he had to win on dm4. Rue began his warmup routine as well, running around and rocket jumping in a similar fashion.

Chase jumped into the lava pit, then he rocketed himself out. He repeated the process several times, then ran to the mega health dead end room. He practiced rocket jumping off the back wall and speeding across the lava pit catwalk. Next he ran a loop through the central room jumping from ledge to ledge, getting into the rhythm of the map.

Chase's heart had been racing from his foot race to the cafe, but now he couldn't tell if it was still from the running or if it was from the challenge at hand.

Either way, there's no time to be nervous. No room for error.

He focused on his warmup. He shot a grenade down to the catwalk then dropped down from a ledge. The grenade landed on the catwalk and waited for its three second fuse to blow. Chase ran up to it and jumped, catching the grenade's blast and then doubling it with a rocket jump of his own. The two explosions shot him up two floors to the upper door to the armor room. An impressive trick. Chase was ready.
```
Rue: rdy?
```
```
LyonX: and waiting
```
Both players typed 'ready' into their consoles. The server ended warmup mode and launched the game countdown.

10..9..8..

Chase slipped on the headphones that came with the computer.

7..6..5..

Slowly the other people in the cafe, the rainy night outside, Gates and the FBI team, the threat of danger, everything else began to fade away from Chase's mind.

4..3..2..

The only thing that mattered now was the Quake map, his opponent, and himself.

1.. Fight!

The duel had begun.

[chapter 27]

The game began, and the two players spawned in the deathmatch arena. The action began immediately on the tight map. The two players danced around the map amid fireball blossoms. The bright explosions lit up the otherwise dark dungeon. There was no time to think, plan, or strategize. At the two players' skill level, dm4 had to be played on almost pure instinct. If a passerby were to glance at Chase's screen, he would be bedazzled by the collage of teleporters, rocket jumps, and shaft battles which, to the untrained eye, would be a chaotic blur of color. But to Chase and his opponent, it was a game of chess at light speed. Every rocket hit was followed by a change in position of the two players—one would fall back, the other advance—who were constantly battling over control of the life sustaining armors. Every inch of the 3d space of the arena was utilized. Every other rocket shot would send a player into the air, sometimes hitting the ceiling, to be pummeled again by a stream of lightning or another rocket.

Carter, seated in the row behind Chase, could see his screen but couldn't tell what was going on. He messaged Gates across the street.

"'they've started. i can't tell who's winning. too fast.'" Gates read.

"I got an idea," Matt read . "Come watch for a bit." Gates walked over to the window as Matt pulled out a laptop. "Even though they're on a LAN, the server they're playing on could be visible from the internet." Matt opened a program used for finding game servers. He programed it for Quakeworld and sorted the results by ping time. "Got them. We can't get into the game because it's a private server, but we can see the scores."

"How's he doing?"

"Two and a half minutes in and the score is 12 – 4 Rue."

"Come on, Chase," Gates said. "You've got to win this one."

Three minutes down in a ten minute match. The score was already 14 – 4 for Rue. 10 points behind with seven minutes to go on dm4 was far from over, but Chase needed to act fast to keep that from growing. He only had the lightning gun and a little armor as his opponent burst out of the entrance to the armor room fully loaded. Rue shot a rocket through Chase's shaft beam, knocking him down into the lava pit below. Chase knew where he was headed but kept his eye on his target. As soon as he hit the lava, he fired his lightning gun as Rue turned to run out of the room. Suddenly both players were vaporized.

In Quakeworld, if a player fires his lightning gun in a liquid he dies instantly. And if another player, even on dry land, is within the reach of his lightning gun, he dies as well. The discharging player loses one point for suicide but gains a point for everyone else that dies.

```
LyonX discharges into the lava

Rue accepts LyonX's discharge
```

Got to close the gap.

With both players starting over on equal footing, this was the chance Chase needed to get back in the game. His instincts did the work. He got to Rue's last location and grabbed the rocket that was left behind. He found Rue without armor in a back hallway. After he fragged him, Chase rocket jumped to an upper ledge where he could see a few different spawn points. He began unloading rockets in the different directions. One rocket caught Rue right as he spawned. Chase then paused and listened for the next spawn.

Got you!

He heard the chyme of the spawn behind him; Chase flicked his mouse around and took him out again.

```
Rue is gibbed by LyonX's rocket

Rue rides LyonX's rocket

Rue rides LyonX's rocket
```

In the back room, Rue pounded his mouse on the table. "Can't let him catch up." His lead was slowly being eaten away.

Ahmad stood behind him, watching, waiting.

[chapter 28]

Gates stood by the window overlooking the cafe. "How's he doing?"

"22 – 17, Rue with four minutes left," Matt said.

"5 points down..."

Carter rose from his seat and took a quick walk around the cafe. 'no one else in the cafe is playing,' he messaged Gates.

'Matt says that R is local. be on the lookout,' Gates responded.

Chase dove into the red armor pit in the armor room as a rocket flew by his head. As he ran down the stairs, grenades bounced all around him in the tight space. He grabbed the rocket launcher, but there was no red armor yet. He dodged grenades as long as he could, but he had to run through the teleporter or lose half his health to grenades. Right as he backed into the teleporter, the red armor spawned in front of him.

Dang it! I needed that.

He'd have to find another way to get armor. He found a green armor but that did almost nothing against a rocket or grenade attack.

He was in a hallway trying to figure out what to do when the next attack from Rue came. Chase dodged a rocket then moved in with his lightning gun. He kept the shaft locked on his target as a rocket exploded next to his feet. Rue backed into a corner, and Chase closed in. Rue tried to switch to his shotgun to keep from blowing himself up with a close range rocket shot, but he was too late.

```
Rue accepts LyonX's shaft
```

Yes! Next.

His lightning gun aim was on target and getting better. As he rounded up health and armor, Rue spawned in the dead end mega health room.

"Stupid LG!" Rue yelled. "No American can beat me on dm4..." He rocket jumped out of the mega room and teleported to the upper level as Chase emerged from the upper armor room. Using expert rocketing technique he halved Chase's health and took over the armor room. Chase had to back down to the pit again. He tired to catch Rue with his lightning gun as he entered the armor room but wasn't fast enough to avoid a barrage of rockets from Rue.

```
LyonX is gibbed by Rue's rocket
```

Chase clicked to respawn, and he appeared in nearly the same spot at the red armor pit respawn point. His same lightning gun was laying on the floor in front of him. He picked it up as Rue jumped into the pit. He again got up close with his shaft, and Rue had no choice but to fire a close range rocket, blowing himself to bits. Chase survived with 15 health points.

```
Rue discovers blast radius
```

"Again!?" Rue screamed.

"Yes! Rue just lost a point. That means he killed himself," Matt said.

"Good, what's the score now?" Gates asked.

"22 – 18."

"Keep it up, Chase. Keep it up."

[chapter 29]

One minute remained. Rue led the game 26 – 24. Chase was starting to get tired. It had been a long time since he had played a duel at that skill level. His heart was still racing. His palms were sweaty. Once a minute he had to take his hands off the mouse and keyboard and wipe the sweat off on his sleeves. The exhaustion, the sounds of the street, the other people in the cafe, the possible danger— they began to drift back into his mind. He realized what was happening as a grenade bounced around the corner.

```
LyonX eats Rue's pineapple
```

A memory surfaced in Chase's head. He was playing LyonX, years ago, on that same map, dm4. As usual, he was being destroyed by his mentor and friend. Suddenly the sound of sirens blared through the walls. Outside of his house in the street was a traffic accident. The noise was so loud it went through his headphones and blended with the Quake sounds. His character stopped moving.

```
LyonX: what's wrong?

Snip3rX47: there's something going on outside, sirens, i can't concentrate

LyonX: and?

Snip3rX47: and so i stopped. what's the point if i can't fight properly

LyonX: dude, come on. you got to push through it

Snip3rX47: i can barely play the game as it is

LyonX: i live by a train, hospital, and a fire station

LyonX: my next door neighbor is a drummer in a garage band

LyonX: if you join a clan, you can't just call timeout in a team
deathmatch

LyonX: you got to find a way to block it all out

LyonX: you have to learn how to play without sound sometimes

LyonX: you have to learn to sense your opponent

LyonX: do what i do. when i start to lose concentration,

LyonX: i just repeat focus, focus, focus to myself

LyonX: once i realize that my mind is not in the game, i say the first
'focus'

LyonX: then, by the second 'focus' i am actively focusing on the game

LyonX: and by the third, i am, hopefully, focused on the match

LyonX: i had to do this to win the east coast duel tournament against lic

LyonX: in our final match, a fire broke out in my building

LyonX: but i stuck to the game. i wasn't about to quit after coming that
far
```

The memory came and went in a flash, and Chase was back in the cybercafe in the most important duel of his life.

I've got to finish this. I've got to win this!

Tired, sweaty Chase straightened his back up. He blinked his eyes as if to reset himself. He

looked at the game clock. 53 seconds left. He looked at the score. Down three frags.

"Focus," he said.

The sounds of the street began to soften. The light in the cybercafe began to dim around him.

"Focus."

His hands and fingers began to merge with the mouse and keyboard.

FOCUS!

His character respawned and dashed off to grab a weapon. He picked up the lightning gun and paused for a brief second. He could hear his opponent fall from the ledge into the red armor pit through the wall behind him. He was back in the game.

[chapter 30]

Chase grabbed the grenade launcher as he heard Rue pick up the red armor. He lobbed a grenade toward the armor room teleporter exit down on the lava pit catwalk. The grenade met Rue right as he appeared below. Chase had already switched to his lightning gun and kept his shaft pinned on Rue while dodging his return fire.

`Rue accepts LyonX's shaft`

With no time for celebration Chase hoped across a ledge to teleport to the armor room door. Rue respawned in a back hallway. Chase back-tracked from the armor room to catch Rue with nothing. He cornered him with grenades and then finished him off with the lightning gun again.

`Rue accepts LyonX's shaft`

"He just got two more frags!" Matt said.

"Yes! How much time left?" Gates asked.

"40 seconds."

Chase grabbed the yellow armor and then dropped into the armor pit to pick up the rocket launcher and teleport to the lava pit catwalk. He already knew where Rue was. Rue had respawned in the dead end room and picked up mega. It was a common strategy in close games to force the other player to come down to the dead end room while the leading player holds up and waits for the clock to run out.

With only a one frag lead, Rue had to hold his opponent back as long as possible to keep the victory. He knew Chase was on his way down and began firing off rockets into the narrow entrance. Chase had no time to waste. He shot off some grenades into the room, bouncing them around the corner off the walls. They barely landed inside the room, far from Rue camping out at the end of long chamber.

Rue stopped firing to judge his opponent's location from the angle of the grenades. But to his surprise, Chase hopped out from around the corner and landed on his own grenade. He then rocket jumped off the wall just as the grenade exploded underneath him. He barreled down the long room straight into Rue.

Rue had no time to react and missed his first rocket shot. As soon as he could, Chase switched to his lightning gun and unleashed a pure stream of electricity directly into Rue's torso. Rue couldn't defend himself with his rockets for fear of blowing himself up again.

`Rue accepts LyonX's shaft`

"He's got another! It's tied!" Matt screamed.

"Yes! Come on Chase!" Gates said.

Chase survived the fight with only 3 health points. He rushed out to the catwalk to find

health packs and catch his opponent for one more frag to tie up the game. He found some health and green armor as he teleported back to the upper level. His opponent was waiting for him, and Chase met Rue's shaft as he appeared. He instinctively shot off a grenade and went back into the teleporter. The grenade hit Rue straight in the chest; Chase came back out of the teleporter with his lightning gun spraying. His precise lightning aim again cut Rue down.

```
Rue accepts LyonX's shaft
```

"NO! I can't lose again!" Rue yelled in the back room.

"Chase's up one frag!" Matt said across the street. "15 seconds left."
"Yes! Finish it, Chase," Gates said.

Chase wanted to scream, but it wasn't over yet.
Focus, focus, focus!
The red armor was now up in the pit of the armor room. If he had that then he might be able to kill Rue one more time and end the game for good to avoid a chance of overtime. He ran toward the armor room door. As he entered the room, he looked at the time left and was listening for his opponent to respond.
13 seconds, I can do this. He should be respawning about... now!
Chase froze.
He was dead.

[chapter 31]

Chase was dead. His weapons and armor now belonged to Rue, and Rue had an additional point. 12 seconds left, and the score was now tied.

```
LyonX was telefragged by Rue
```

"Ha ha ha ha!" Rue shouted. "The oldest trick in the book. What a mistake at a time like this."
Ahmad stood behind Rue. "So you've won? That's all I needed to hear."
"I just need to kill him one more time." Rue had a huge grin on his face.

"What? How?" Matt said. "He's lost the lead."
"We got to get him out of there if he loses," Gates said. "All teams, stand by for extract."

Carter knew something was bad. A death like that with so little time left. He looked to see if Chase reacted. Chase sat perfectly still, almost frozen, still staring at the screen. He seemed to be waiting for the game to end. With the red armor floating down in the pit, Rue would just have to jump down, grab the armor and the rocket launcher, then go through the teleporter to find his opponent freshly spawned and defenseless. Ten seconds was plenty of time.
Chase's Quakeworld character's head laid sideways on the ground, having fallen from where he had died. He could see his opponent walking further into the armor room to grab the armor. He could almost hear him laughing. Chase laid perfectly still, watching, listening. He watched Rue until he dropped off the ledge in the armor room. He heard him hit the floor. He heard a thud as Rue dropped to the stairs, then another thud, and finally a thump at the last stair step. In a split second he would be at the rocket launcher and red armor, everything he needed to secure victory. It was at that exact moment, when Rue was inches from the armor, that Chase clicked to respawn.

```
Rue was telefragged by LyonX
```

"Yes! He did it! He killed Rue somehow," Matt said.

"How much time left?" Gates said.

"9.. 8.. 7.. seconds left."

Gates sat down and let out a sigh.

Rue was stunned. He instinctively hit the respawn button but was at a loss for what to do. Chase was now fully loaded and in the lead for the second time in the game. Rue knew there was no chance of killing him now. The final seconds ticked away. The duel ended. The scoreboard printed the final score:

```
LyonX 29
Rue   28
LyonX: gg
```

No response.

Carter wasn't sure what was going on. He couldn't tell what had happened in the final moments of the game. Chase still sat motionless in his chair. A message came to him: 'He did it.' Carter held back a smile when he read the words.

"Game over," Matt said, "LyonX is the winner. Looks like Rue can't doubt his opponent's identity anymore."

"Let's hope," Gates said. "All teams, stand down," he said into his radio. He turned back to Matt. "We're still winging it from this point. Chase could still be in a lot of danger. We have to watch closely."

Chase sat in his chair, still in shock from the mental overload of the ten minute game.

I never imagined what I'd do if I got this far.

He typed a message to Rue in the Quakeworld server.

```
LyonX: so now that you know i am who i say i am..
LyonX: come out here so we can make the exchange
```

I need to get him to come out here, where it's safe.

```
Rue: i do believe you are who you say you are
Rue: but i'm not one for crowds so come to the back room here in the lan
cafe
Rue: i got your money right here
```

Chase leaned back in his chair and tilted his head. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a camera hanging from the roof.

He's here. I've got to let the guys know. I know they're watching.

He turned around in his chair and saw Carter seated in the next row. He saw Carter look back at him, then turned toward the door in the back of the cafe. Carter caught on immediately. He looked up and saw the cameras as well.

"'he's facing the back room of the cafe, R must be here,'" he messaged Gates.

"'rgr, moving in,'" Gates returned. "All teams, get ready to move in," he said into his radio. "I'm heading down there," Gates said to Matt. "Keep watching and monitor the comms."

Gates grabbed his pistol and a radio and ran out the door of the second story room across the street from the cybercafe. "Hold on Chase, we're coming."

[chapter 32]

The longer I stay here the more suspicious I'll look. Chase stood up slowly, still facing the back

door. He stretched out his back, then twisted and reached for his coat. He slowly put it on. The CD that Carter left on the table was in his coat pocket.

Just get in, get out. They got my back.

He began walking toward the door.

As he stood up, a middle eastern man who had been using a computer toward the front of the cafe also stood. It was Waheed. He moved toward the back of the cafe.

"All stations," Matt said over the radio. "A middle eastern man is following a friendly toward the rear of the building."

"Roger, we see him," a man said over the van's radio system. The van had just pulled into a parking spot in front of the building.

"We got the rear exits covered if anyone tries to come through the back," a member of the team on the other side of the building said.

Chase had arrived at the door to the back hallway.

This is it.

He pushed it open. It was dark, save for a weak light coming from the right end of the hallway. He crept down the hallway toward the light. The light was spilling from a cracked door to a small room at the end of the hallway. He slowly reached up to the door when suddenly it was pulled open from the inside. Chase stood face to face with a young, blonde haired white man.

"So this is the great American hero?" Rue said. "Enter." He beckoned Chase into the security room.

"Sup," Chase said. "You're.. Rue?"

"You are correct."

Chase looked around the room briefly. Rue was alone. He saw the camera screens on the wall and Rue's computer on a desk.

"Not many people can beat me on dm4," Rue said. "I congratulate you on your impressive skills. All the more important when Quakers such as you and I are becoming fewer all the time."

"Yes, not many players left anymore."

"I just want to know...," Rue said, "next time you'll need more than luck to beat me."

Chase paused. "Next time?"

"Yes, next time. This isn't over between you and me." Rue looked at Chase right in the eyes. "But, I'm sure you're ready to talk business. You're money is right here in this bag." Rue tapped a small black leather bag on the floor behind him with the back of his foot. "And now... for your part?" Rue stared directly into Chase's eyes.

"Sure." He slid his hand into his coat pocket and pulled out the CD. "I'm sure your girlfriend will love it."

Rue paused for a moment. "Yes."

Chase held out the CD in front of him and handed it to Rue.

"Well, I don't mean to be rude, but..." Chase turned and began inching back toward the door.

"Don't tell me you're leaving without your money? Or are you a true Quaker? You came here for the challenge as did I, no?"

Chase laughed awkwardly. "Sure." He took a step forward and reached for the bag. He picked it up and backed toward the door.

"You're not going to count it?"

"No, I trust you. Would I have come all the way here if I didn't?"

"I guess not."

"I actually got to split, so nice meeting you. Good luck with your... plans. Pleasure doing business with you." Chase took another step back and felt his back press up against a thick chest. He turned around to see a large middle eastern man standing in the doorway.

"So this is our friend?" the man said.

"Allow me to introduce Ahmad, my not so humble associate," Rue said.

"Thank you for helping us. But you can't just leave without letting us thank you properly," Ahmad said.

"I didn't know I was helping you with anything, but I'm glad if I did. But don't worry this is plenty thanks enough," Chase said, lifting the bag.

"Nonsense," Ahmad said, "why don't you sit down while I get you something to drink." Ahmad pressed down on Chase's shoulder until he was seated in a nearby chair. "And while I'm gone, you," he said looking at Rue, "can make sure that you know how to use what our friend has brought."

Rue rolled his eyes as Ahmad stepped out of the room. "As if I don't know what I'm doing," he said as he reached for the disk. He inserted it into the computer's disk drive and waited for the content to load.

This is bad, thought Chase. *I have no idea what's on that disk. Did Carter bring a bad disk or the real program?*

"I attempted the same thing myself, but I couldn't get past the outer layer of security. I'm curious how you did it."

"Yeah, it was pretty tricky. Kind of hard to explain."

Chase glanced at the door. No sight of Ahmad.

"Hey, I'm going leave this here for a moment and find the bathroom." He set the bag down on the chair. Rue turned around, but Chase was already out the door.

Chase walked out into the hallway; it wasn't long but it was dark.

The door... where was it?

He started feeling along the walls looking for the door he had used earlier.

Where is it?

He could hear someone coming from the office. He pressed further down the dark hallway, now frantically patting the walls for the door. He came to the end of the hallway. He couldn't see anything; he was just feeling everything. He rubbed his hands along the wall.

What's this?

His hand found a round metal protrusion in the wall.

The door knob!

He twisted it, but it felt locked. He pulled and pulled at it; it wouldn't budge. Suddenly he stopped.

What's that sound?

He had heard a faint noise while tugging at the knob.

Is that... breathing?

[chapter 33]

"Going somewhere?" out of the darkness came a voice, terrifyingly close. A hand grabbed Chase's hand on the door knob. Chase struggled to get free until he felt a small, cold, unmistakeable metal object pressed against his side.

Suddenly the lights came on in the hallway. Chase jumped back, but Ahmad's hand gripped his own firmly. Ahmad had been standing by the door in the darkness. He held his pistol against Chase's ribs and glared into his eyes. Chase froze. He'd never had a gun pointed at him before.

From the other end of the hallway came Waheed. "This isn't the guy we saw before," he said.

Chase looked around. They were in a long narrow hallway that ran between the cybercafe and a separate office. On one end of the hallway was the security room; the other end was a door to the side street.

Rue walked up as well. "There is a program on the disk, but it's not what I need."

Ahmad spoke to Rue, "You said you knew him. Is this the right guy or not?"

"I've never seen his face, but I've definitely played him in Quake before." Rue paused. "I can't explain it."

"Who are you working for?" Ahmad asked Chase.

"I'm working for him," he answered, pointing at Rue.

"Then why doesn't the program work?"

"Maybe I made some mistakes, alright? Like I said it was compl—"

"Silence!" Ahmad took the gun and struck Chase across the back of the head. Chase let go of the door knob and crouched down, reaching for his head.

"Where are they? Are they outside?" Ahmad unbolted the door to the cafe and peered through. "I'm sure they're watching us. Get up." Chase remained crouched down. "I said get up, infidel!" He grabbed Chase by the arm and stuck the gun up into his chin. Chase rose immediately. "We're leaving."

Waheed took his phone out and called Jawad. "Bring the car around the side."

"Grab the money and whatever else you brou—"

BAM. Suddenly the door to the hallway was kicked partially open, knocking over Ahmad and Chase.

"Freeze! FBI!" It was Gates, who stood on the outside of the doorway, using it as cover. He had his pistol at the ready, aimed at Waheed through the partially open door. Waheed froze. "Hands up! On your knees!"

"Everybody out! Let's go!" Carter was in the cafe rounding up all the customers.

Chase, coming out of shock from being knocked down, yelled, "Gun! He's got a gun!"

Ahmad came to at the same time and began firing at Gates through the door. His first three missed, but the fourth struck him in the leg, dropping him to the floor. Gates couldn't return fire because he knew that Chase was behind the door too. Rue had dropped to the floor with his hands on his head. Carter ducked behind a desk when he heard the gun fire. The customers still in the cafe all hit the deck.

After shooting four rounds, Ahmad slammed the door to the cafe shut and trained the gun back on Chase.

"Get up!"

Chase knew Ahmad was serious. The gun was in his chest with the safety off. He obeyed and got up. Ahmad pushed him toward the far end of the hallway just as the second FBI team was coming through the back of the building by the office area. Waheed heard the noise and reached behind his back and pulled out a pistol. He opened the door to the office area and started shooting toward the second team when they appeared. They returned fire and Waheed took a shot to the gut, dropping him to the floor, still shooting. Ahmad used the distraction to move himself and Chase out of the hallway through the side street door.

Still in the cafe, Gates realized what had happened. He grabbed his radio.

"There's a side door. They went out the side of the building."

Immediately Jawad pulled up in a car to the side of the building. He opened the door from the inside and, under the threat of a loaded weapon, Ahmad pushed Chase and himself into the front passenger seat.

"Where's Waheed?" Jawad asked in Arabic.

"We will meet him in the afterlife. Go!"

"Wait!" Rue came running out of the side door. "You can't take him. I must know who he is!"

"Take him with us?" Jawad asked.

"No, go go!" Ahmad yelled.

"No! Wait! Who is he? I will not be humiliated!" Rue screamed.

As Ahmad shut the car door, the FBI van pulled around the corner of the building. Jawad hit the accelerator and rocketed down the sidewalk. The van followed in chase. The two vehicles pulled around a corner and down the main street, tires screeching. Inside the car, Ahmad moved his free arm around Chase's neck and began shooting at the van through the rear windshield. The van slowed down to avoid taking fire. The two vehicles flew down the street turning a quiet night into a rally car race.

Back in Generation Next, the two agents and the second team had the situation under control. Waheed was in custody, and the other customers had been rounded up. Matt ran through the front door to find Gates and Carter.

"Are you ok?" Matt asked.

"I'll make it," Gates replied as he tied off a bandage around his wounded leg. Carter came out from the back room. "Where's Rue?" Gates asked.

"Me and the other team searched the whole building. Didn't see anyone back there. He must have slipped out the side during the gun fight."

"Did you call in for backup?" Gates asked Matt.

"Yeah, the police know the situation. They're going to block off the roads."

"Good, bring the car around. We're going after them too."

[chapter 34]

On the street the high speed chase continued. The police had contacted the FBI van about the road block. A mile down the street there were two squad cars blocking the street and more were on their way. The van was hot on their trail. Inside the car, Ahmad reloaded his pistol with his free hand, the other arm still around Chase's neck. He shot a few more rounds through the now destroyed back window.

"Hey!" Jawad shouted. "Don't forget what's in the trunk!"

"Shut up and drive. Turn here!"

Jawad obeyed and veered across the street. They passed into incoming traffic and a car served to avoid a head on collision. The van followed, but as they crossed over the center line the swerving car slammed into the van, flipping it on its side. Sparks flew everywhere as it slid down the payment, eventually skidding to a halt.

"Allah Allakbar!" Ahmad said as they sped off.

A moment went by and the FBI members climbed out of the van with minor injuries. The driver picked up the radio set and radioed to the police: "This is the FBI van. We flipped over, but we're ok. They should be at your position soon."

"Roger. We haven't seen them come this way yet. We have this street and all the surrounding ones blocked off now. We'll get them when they come this way."

Gates, Carter, and Matt where on the same street that the van had crashed on, headed that way. Carter drove.

"You sure you're ok?" Matt said.

"Yeah, you're still bleeding pretty bad," Carter said.

"Just go. I'll be fine. Give me the radio." Matt handed him a hand held. "This is 1-Alpha with the FBI. Anyone see them yet?"

The local police responded. "No, nothing down here yet. Are we sure they were headed this way?" Just then Carter approached the over turned van. "Yeah, they came this way alright."

Carter pulled up to the van, and the three of them got out. "You guys ok?" Carter asked.

"We're fine here. Still no sign of them? They should have been there by now. The road block is less than a mile from here."

Gates got on the radio again. "Still nothing?"

"Nothing here."

"They must have changed directions," Carter said.

"We would have seen them on our way here," Gates said. "What else is in this area?"

"Well, there's some fast food places a little further down. An office park and an apartment complex down these side streets," Matt said.

"Anything else?" Gates said.

"Nothing comes to mind... Wait," said Matt. "Isn't there a Metro station near the apartments?"

"That's it," Gates said. "All units, we think they're at the train station."

[chapter 35]

Outside the Midtown subway station was a large parking lot. It was late and not many people were around. The parking lot was dimly lit and more or less empty. Jawad skidded the car into a parking space in the rear area of the lot.

"Why are we here? We need to get out of here!" he said.

"I'm going to finish this," Ahmad said. "No more delays. No more plans!" He opened the door and got out. He jabbed the pistol into Chase's chest and pulled him out of the car.

Jawad got out of the car, too. "Ahmad, think about this. It's not worth it now." Ahmad and Chase moved to the back of the car. He pushed Chase up against the car then stepped back a few feet, pointing the gun at him.

"Open the trunk." Chase did nothing. He glanced quickly around the parking lot. There was no one to help him.

"I said open it!" Ahmad pointed the gun at Chase's head.

Jawad stepped back from the car. Chase opened the trunk. There was some blankets covering up something else.

"Uncover it."

Chase flipped the blankets back to reveal what looked like a homemade explosive device in a small cardboard box. Ahmad took a few more steps back. Chase took a closer look inside the box. There were three two-liter plastic bottles. Inside each bottle were some white powder and some wires and a nine volt battery.

"Pick up the box."

"Ahmad," Jawad said. "This isn't going to work. What can you get with this now?"

"Coward!" Ahmad pointed his gun at Jawad. "This ends tonight!"

"Fine." Jawad began walking away.

Ahmad pointed the gun back at Chase.

At the front of the parking lot, two empty school buses pulled up to the exit to the subway. Shouting and laughing, middle school kids began pouring out of the subway exit and were boarding the buses. Ahmad lowered his gun and moved toward Chase.

"Walk." Chase looked back at Ahmad. He walked over to Chase and stuck the gun into his side again. "Walk!" Chase began moving backwards with the cardboard box in his hands. Ahmad followed a few steps behind him with the gun pointed at him. "Towards the buses!"

Chase turned and looked at the kids getting on the buses. *They must have just gotten back from a field trip,* he thought. He turned around and saw the barrel of a gun aimed right at him. He turned back and took a few steps toward the buses.

"Go!" Chase took a few more steps then stopped again.

"I said go!" Ahmad screamed. Chase could barely hear him over the giggles and shouts. He kept walking, closer and closer to the school buses, now full with children.

"Keep going!" Ahmad had stopped following. When Chase was ten meters from the buses, Ahmad reached in his pocket and pulled out a small gray device with an antenna.

Chase kept walking. Now ten feet away. He turned around to see that Ahmad had backed up almost to the car. Chase, looking at Ahmad, kept moving toward the middle of the buses. Ahmad, watching Chase, crept further back toward the car. Now five feet away, Chase took the final steps to reach the buses. Ahmad, with a grin on his face, turned around and ran the last few feet to the car. He ran around to the other side of it and crouched down. Taking one last look at Chase, standing between the school buses, he screamed, "*Allah Allakbar!*"

Chase looked back at him and said, "Good game."

Ahmad pressed a button on his remote:

BOOOOOOOM!!!

The light from a huge fireball lit up the night sky. The screams of children followed the boom of the blast, as the students were covered in shattered glass from the buses' windows. Flaming pieces of Ahmad's obliterated car rained down from the sky. Chase lay on the ground, having been knocked off his feet by the blast. Blood seeped out onto the pavement from the back of his head. The empty cardboard box had been blown out of his hands.

[chapter 36]

Thomas Jensen slowly opened his eyes. *Where am I?* Through blurred vision he saw he was laying in a bed in a small room. Next to the bed were IVs and a heart rate monitor. Attached to his chest were various wires. *A hospital room?* He tried to think of the last thing he could remember. *Something about a notebook, and a strange man. I was running down the street when..* He remembered the truck that had put him in that hospital bed.

He ripped the wires off his chest and tried to stand up. *Wow, how long have I been here? My legs are so stiff.* With a little trouble his feet managed to reach the floor. He stood up and stretched out his muscles. *Gosh, I feel like a 2x4 has been rammed down my back. What hospital is this exactly?*

He looked around to investigate. There was a curtain dividing the room in half. He weakly made his way over to the curtain and pulled it aside. *Who is this guy?* Behind the curtain was another bed; in it was a young man with bandages around the back of his head. *He looks like he's in a coma. I guess I've been in a coma for a while too.*

A young female nurse rushed in. "Mr. Jensen! You're awake! How do you feel? Are you in pain? Do you know who you are?"

"I think I'm fine, thank you. And yes I know who I am; this ain't no Korean drama this time."

"Please sit back down. I'll call the doctor right away; there are some tests we have to get started on."

"Tests? That won't be necessary. I told you: I feel fine; I know who I am. I know where I am, sort of. I'm ready to go home."

Before the nurse could issue a rebuttal a third voice joined the conversation.

"Glad to hear that." In walked a man in a black suit with a folder in his hand and a slight limp in his left leg. "Please sit down." Thomas had no reason to object. The two men sat across from each other in two chairs that were in the room. "Thomas Jensen?"

"That's me."

"My name is Agent Gates. I work for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Perhaps you've heard of us?" Thomas nodded. "You'll probably never guess why you're here today, so I'll just tell you." He leaned back in his chair. "What do you know about Chase Talent?" The name seemed strangely familiar to Thomas, but he didn't know how. "Perhaps you know him by another name. Does 'voLCano' ring any bells? V-*o-L-C-a-n-o*?"

This is about voLCano? "Yes, I've heard that name."

Gates leaned forward in his chair. "I'm just gonna skip straight to the point. Thomas, we

need your help. We know you're familiar with Rue, a Swedish Quaker and hacker with dangerous connections. When you were out, we recruited your old clan mate voLCano to play as you so that we could stop a terrorist attack on the Metro system that you reported. Thanks to your report and voLCano's help, the attack was prevented, but we failed to catch Rue. VoLCano played Rue on LAN and defeated him on dm4. Rue somehow has gone mental over it and sent us this:"

Thomas was trying to figure what all this was about when Gates threw a printed image down on the table between them. The image was a collage of local schools and had a message printed over it: "*American FBI, Bring me my challenger or else I will show you a quake of my own. You won't humiliate me again. -Rue*"

Gates continued. "We also know he's still working with a man who goes by the name 'Jawad' who was also involved in the last plot." Gates threw another picture down on the table, a snapshot of Jawad from the subway station parking lot security cameras.

That guy drove the car that I chased from my apartment, Thomas thought.

"You said voLCano beat Rue on dm4?" Thomas asked. "Where is he now?"

"He risked his life to stop the last attack, and he's here with us now." Gates pointed to the other bed in the room.

No! Thomas got up and ran to Chase's bedside. *Are you ok, buddy?*

"He's in a coma now. Doctors say he's stable."

Thomas clung to Chase's bed side, looking at his old friend for the first time.

"Rue gave us a deadline of five days, but that was three days ago. We know he has contacts with bomb makers. We're running out of time."

Thomas paused for a moment. He took a long, deep breath and turned back to Gates.

"Show me the demos."

Play more Quake.
THE END