


H I G H L Y C O N F I D E N T I A L

From: STING, Charles
To: Top secret
Subject: TEAM X
Villain profile: the Collector

To *****

Following the arrest of Dr X, we have made several changes at NICE.

- NICE is now the *National Institute for the Conservation of Earth*.
- Dani Day has been appointed to the position of Senior Scientist.
- The mission of NICE is to help protect the planet and the precious things in it.

In order to help NICE in its mission, Dani Day has employed a team of four agents. She assures me that they are highly capable. In order to protect the agents, their real identities must remain a secret. They have been given the name Team X. Their operation status is now **code green**.

Team X have been monitoring a new villain. He calls himself the Collector. The Collector is known to have carried out some serious crimes [see file attached].

I will keep you informed of any further changes.

Regards
Charles I. Sting
**Director of Operations,
NICE**

Important
Agent Information
Read this first

Villain profile: the Collector



Threat category: High

Known crimes:

- Theft of the entire population of cod in the North Atlantic.
- Theft of the White Cliffs of Dover.
- Attempted theft of the Sphinx at Giza. The robbery failed, but he did get away with the Sphinx's nose.

Appearance:
Dark hair. Brown Eyes. 182 centimetres tall. Snappy dresser. Bionic hand. Spectrum retina enhanced implant.

Profile:
The Collector is a billionaire. How he made his fortune is not known. His goal is to own the biggest collection of snow globes in the world. Using advanced micro science he shrinks and steals valuable objects. No target is too big. He does not care about the consequences of his actions.

Other things to note:
He likes to send snow globes to taunt his victims.

X

X

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A ravine cut across the ground from north to south. It was too wide to jump and too long to travel round. Its overgrown banks went down sheer into the darkness.

On its western side, a bare, ridged tree rose out of the ground, growing clear of the black forest beyond. It stood tall and pale in the moonlight, topped by a crown of dead branches.

From high up in the crown, someone whistled.

Cam stepped out of the shadows on the eastern side, with the others close behind her. They all stared up at the dead tree across the ravine, hunting for Zak's silhouette among the branches. He called out to them, and the words drifted down like sounds from another world.

'Once it was like this. Remember?'

No! said a voice in Cam's head. *No, I won't, I won't—*

But it was too late. Zak had spoken the word they never used and her brain filled with forbidden images. She saw herself racing over the grass, with the world turning under her and the sky wide open above her head. Her hands moved powerfully, commanding fire and water. She soared among the clouds.

Be quiet, Zak. Be QUIET!

But he was way up in the branches, too high to reach. He was beyond her orders.

'Remember,' he called down. 'You were up in the air—above the tops of the trees. Remember the dazzle

of the sun and the space and the speed. You were *there*. Remember . . .'

She couldn't stop him. None of them could stop him. He was beyond the gaping ravine, at the top of the tall, dead trunk. Only Zak could climb well enough to reach those high, cupped branches.

'Remember . . .' he said again. The sound was relentless. Unbearable.

Cam put her fingers in her ears, turning away, but she could still hear him. They all heard. *Remember, remember . . .* The word battered at them until the darkness vibrated with anger and pain, and there was no way of stopping it. No way of silencing Zak.

Except the rope.

The rope-ends were on the ground, at Cam's feet. The great twelve-strand rope stretched across the ravine and back again, looping twice round the trunk of Zak's tree. As he called again, Cam stooped blindly, grabbing at one of the ends.

The others stooped too, jostling to find a place. A dozen hands clamped round each length of rope.

'Remember,' Zak shouted—and Cam began to pull, straining at the rope. Putting all her rage and pain into that single action.

Zak's voice grew louder. 'Remember! You were high in the air! Above the tops of the trees, in the full dazzle of the sun! But—all in a flash—you came tumbling down, out of the music and the buzz and the energy,