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Chapter Twenty: Midnight (pps176-189)

The gang enter the Kremlin

AZ: Put more of this in Kit's voice, as if he were talking to himself.

KF: At some point one of the gang mentions, in the hearing of Steve, the need to make the rendezvous by noon on Boxing Day.

KF: Kit's fantasy about what he will do if everything goes wrong. He will leave the country and start a new life somewhere else, preferably somewhere he has already been... Italy, his mother's country, where he speaks the language? Some quiet village he has been to for a holiday?

Midnight

The Fort looked like something from a fairy tale now, with snow falling thickly around its floodlit roofs and towers. As the van with “Hibernian Telecom” on its side approached the main gate, Kit had a momentary fancy that he was the Black Knight riding up to besiege the place.

He was relieved to get here. The snowstorm was turning into a full-scale blizzard, despite the weather forecast, and the journey from the airfield had taken longer than expected. The delay made him fearful. Every minute that passed made it more likely that snags would occur to threaten his elaborate plan.

He was worried about the phone call from Toni Gallo. He had put her through to Steve Tremlett, fearing that if he played her a fault message she would feel obliged to drive to the Fort to find out what was going on. But, having listened in to her conversation with Steve, Kit felt she might do that anyway. It was a damn nuisance that she was in Harbourmouth, instead of at a spa fifty miles away.

The first of the two barriers lifted, and Elton drove in. Kit saw that there were two guards in the gatehouse. That was new: normally there was only one.

Elton wound down his window. A guard leaned out of the booth and said: “We’re glad to see you laddies.”

Kit surreptitiously studied the guard's face. It was unfamiliar. The man must have joined since Kit left. Kit looked past him at the second guard, and recognised Robert McKinnon, who had been here in Kit's time. Robert did not look at Kit. "It's good of you to come out at Christmas," the first guard said.

"All part of the job," Elton said.

"Three of you, yeah?"

"Plus Goldilocks in the back."

A low snarl came from behind. "Watch your mouth, you shit-faced coon."

Nigel murmured: "Take it easy."

The guard did not hear the exchange. He said: "Let me see identification for each of you, please."

They all took out the cards Kit had given them. He had faked them based on his recollection of what the phone company pass looked like. The phone system rarely broke down, so Kit figured the guard had probably never seen a genuine pass and, if he had, he was not likely to remember it exactly. Now he held his breath as he waited to find out whether his prognosis was right.

The guard looked briefly at each card and handed them back without comment.

"Drive to the main entrance." Kit looked ahead. The road was invisible, buried under snow. "You'll be all right if you stay between the lampposts," the guard said. "At reception you'll find a Mr Tremlett who can tell you where you need to go."

The barrier in front of the van lifted, and Elton pulled forward.

They were inside.

Kit felt sick. He had never done anything remotely like this. He had broken the law

in what way?

before, with the scam that had got him fired—but that had not felt like crime, it was more like cheating at cards, something he had done since he was eleven years old. This was different: it was a straightforward burglary, and he could be caught at any instant. He swallowed hard and tried to concentrate. He thought of the enormous sum of money he owed Harry Mac. He remembered the blind terror he had felt this morning, when Daisy held his head under water and he thought he was dying. He had to go through with this.

Nigel said quietly to Elton: “Try not to aggravate her.” He was referring to the “Goldilocks” jibe.

“It was just a joke,” Elton replied.

“She’s got no sense of humour.”

“I’ll remember that.”

If Daisy heard the exchange, she did not respond.

Elton parked at the main entrance, and the four of them took toolboxes out of the back. They passed between the carved stone lions of the porch and entered the grand hall, where the oval modern reception desk was planted incongruously beneath an open hammer-beam roof in medieval style. The main lights were off, to save power, and the place was dimly lit by low security lights, which intensified the church-like look of the Victorian architecture: the mullioned windows, the pointed arches, and the varnished timbers of the roof. The dimness made no difference to the security cameras, which—Kit knew—worked by infra-red light.

There were two people at the desk, instead of the usual one, and Kit guessed that Toni must have doubled the guards. That gave him another frisson of anxiety. He reminded himself that he had known she would step up her security, after the threat from Animals Are

Free. Doubling the guards was an obvious move. It made no difference to Kit's plan

One of the guards behind the desk was an attractive young woman Kit did not recognise, and the other was Steve Tremlett. Kit hung back, not wanting Steve to see him too closely. Steve knew Kit from the old days, and Kit was worried he might see through the disguise. "You'll want to look at the central processing unit," Steve said.

"That's the place to begin," said Nigel.

Steve raised his eyebrows at the London accent, but made no comment. "Susan will show you the way—I need to stay by the phone."

Susan had curly dark hair and a rounded figure that was squeezed uncomfortably into a police-style uniform. She led them out of the grand hall into a corridor panelled in dark wood.

Kit began to feel strangely calm. He was inside, being escorted by a security guard, in disguise, about to rob the place. He felt fatalistic: the cards had been dealt, he had placed his bet, there was nothing to do now but play out his hand, win or lose.

They entered the control room.

The place was cleaner and tidier than Kit remembered, with all cables neatly stowed, and log books in a row on a shelf. He presumed that was Toni's influence. Here also there were two guards instead of one. They sat at the long desk, watching the monitors. Susan introduced them as Don and Stu. Kit did not recognise either one. An extra guard was no big deal, Kit told himself; just another pair of eyes to shield things from, another brain to be distracted, another person to be lulled into apathy.

Susan opened the door to the equipment room. "The CPU is in here," she said.

They all trooped into the little room. Kit felt a moment of elation. This was the inner

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Kit plays yesterday's footage to the monitors, but he does not stop the system recording the current feed from the cameras. He figures: we are all disguised, the footage will do no one any good.

sanctum. Here were the computers and associated machines that ran not just the phone system but also the lighting, the security cameras and the alarms. Even to get this far was a triumph.

Nigel looked around at the stacks of featureless black boxes. He had no idea what any of them did. Kit hoped Susan would not notice the bewildered expression on Nigel's face. He wanted to say: "Try to look knowledgeable, Nige, for god's sake, you're supposed to be an engineer!"

To distract attention from Nigel's evident ignorance, Kit said quickly: "This one's the phone system." He pointed to the correct computer.

"Of course," Nigel said. He turned to Susan. "Thanks very much," he said dismissively. "We'll take it from here."

"If there's anything you need, come to Reception," she said, and she left.

Kit pointed at Daisy. "You, wait in the control room. If the phone in there rings, pick it up." He indicated Nigel and Elton. "You two, stay in here with me, for now, please." He was deliberately avoiding using their names.

He put his laptop on a shelf and connected it to the telephone system computer. He pulled over a chair, turned his laptop so the screen could not be seen by someone standing in the doorway, and started to work.

First he accessed the program that controlled the video feed from thirty closed-circuit television cameras. He looked at the entrance to BSL4, which appeared normal. He checked the reception desk. Steve was there but Susan was not. Scanning through the input from various other cameras, Kit saw that she was patrolling the inside of the building. He noted the time.

Next he shut down the program that recorded camera footage. Whatever happened from now on would not be saved in the computer's memory. He also erased all camera images from the last hour. He did not want the police to have pictures of the Hibernian Telecom team arriving. There were computer programs that could see through disguises.

Before he could go any farther, his mobile phone rang, and a message popped up on the screen of his laptop: "Fort calling Toni." He guessed that Steve Tremlett wanted to let Toni know that the telephone repair team had arrived. He decided to put the call through: it might reassure Toni and discourage her from coming here. He pressed a key, then listened in on his mobile.

"This is Toni Gallo."

"Steve here, at the Fort."

"Hi, Steve, what's going on?"

"Good news. The repair crew from Hibernian Telecom have arrived."

"Have they fixed the phones?"

"They've just started work."

"Great."

"I hope I didn't wake you."

"No, I'm not in bed, in fact I'm on my way to the Fort. I thought I'd drop by."

Kit cursed. It was what he had been afraid of.

"There's really no need," Steve told Toni.

That's right! thought Kit.

"Probably not, but I'll feel more comfortable."

Kit thought: *When will you get here?*

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EF: Toni might recognise him by voice, smell, mannerisms, jewellery.

Steve had the same thought. "Where are you now?"

"I'm only a few miles away, but the roads are terrible, and I'm driving at twenty miles an hour."

"Are you in the Porsche?"

"Yes."

"It may take you a while to get here."

"At least another half hour, more likely an hour."

"This is Scotland, you should have bought a Land Rover."

"I should have bought a bloody tank."

Steve laughed. "I'll call you if anything develops."

"Thanks."

They hung up.

Kit cursed under his breath. Why couldn't she stay at home in bed?

A visit would not be fatal, however. The main danger was that she might see through Kit's disguise. If he could keep out of her way, or at least make sure she didn't stare straight at him for any length of time, she would not become suspicious. There would be nothing to tell her that a robbery was going on, even if she arrived in the middle of it. Nothing should seem wrong until after Kit and the others had left the building—days after. It would appear only that there had been a problem with the phone system, and a repair team had come and fixed it then gone away again. Not until the scientists came back to work would anyone realise that BSL4 had been burgled.

But Toni was clever and more observant than her security guards. She was just dangerous, and Kit would be more comfortable if she stayed away.

When you go back through this
 suggest you put more of it in
 Kit's voice, as if he's talking
 to himself.

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IT 1.13 'Kit studied the bank of screens' better?

There was nothing he could do about it, except hurry up. He returned his attention to the security television system.

The computer's massive memory stored the images for four weeks before overwriting them. Kit knew his way around the program, for he had installed it. He located the video from the cameras in BSL4 for this time last night. He checked the feed, random-sampling footage, to make sure no crazy scientist had been working in the lab in the middle of the night. All the images showed empty rooms.

He then fed last night's images into the monitors the guards were watching. Now they had no way of telling what was really going on in BSL4. Unknown to them, they were looking at old footage. And, since BSL4 was closed to the guards, someone could walk around in there doing anything he liked without their knowing.

He returned to the main control room. Daisy was slumped in a chair, wearing her leather jacket over the Hibernian Telecom overalls. Kit studied ~~at~~ the bank of screens. All appeared normal. The guard called Don looked inquiringly at him. As a cover, Kit said: "Are any of the phones in here working?"

"None," said Don.

Along the bottom edge of each screen was a line of text giving the time and date. The time was the same on the screens showing yesterday's footage—Kit had made sure of that. But yesterday's footage showed yesterday's date.

Kit was betting that no one ever looked at the date. He figured that the guards scanned the screens for activity, they did not read text which told them what they already knew.

He hoped he was right.

If Toni Gallo showed up, she might notice the discrepancy.

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- Kit mentions that the guards patrol once an hour and calculates they have 30 mins because Susan passed 15 minutes ago - I think earlier in the book Kit heard Toni on the phone to the guard reminding him patrols were to be done every hour - so he would have known he had only 15 mins till her next patrol (unless he wasn't listening when Toni reminded the guard about the half hourly patrols)

His best tactic was to work as fast as possible. Now that he had effectively blinded the security cameras in BSL4, his next task was to get Nigel into the lab without any of the guards seeing.

The main problem here was the guard patrols. Once an hour, a guard from reception made a circuit inside the main building. The patrol followed a prescribed route, and took twenty minutes. Having passed the entrance to BSL4, the guard would not come back for a full hour.

Kit had seen Susan patrolling when he had sat down at the computer and now, as he surveyed the screens in the control room, he saw her sitting with Steve at the reception desk, her circuit done. Kit checked his watch. It was fifteen minutes since he had first noticed her. He was not sure how long she had been back, but he must have at least thirty minutes to get Nigel into BSL4.

Don was wondering why the telephone repairman was so interested in the television monitors. "Something we can do for you?" he said in a challenging tone.

Daisy grunted and stirred in her chair, like a dog sensing tension among the humans.

"Um, no, thanks," Kit replied. He turned to Nigel, standing in the doorway of the equipment room. "Go down to reception. Pick up the phone if it rings."

Nigel left.

Kit returned to the equipment room. He called up the feed from the reception camera and watched it on his laptop. Elton looked over his shoulder. After a couple of minutes they saw Nigel arrive and say a word to Steve Tremlett.

Next, Kit called up yesterday's feed from the camera outside the entrance to BSL4. He ran the footage at double-fast-forward. He needed a clear half hour, with no one passing

How could he? What about Steve? He'll have to explain why, no?

across the screen. He stopped at the point where the patrolling guard appeared. Beginning when the guard left the picture, he fed yesterday's images into the monitor in the next room. There should be about forty minutes of nothing. The screen would now show the wrong time as well as the wrong date, but he could not help that. It would *not* show Kit and Nigel entering BSL4.

He switched back to reception. Nigel was still there. Kit used his mobile to call the Fort's number. He heard it ring out, and saw Nigel pick up the phone from the desk in reception.

"Go," said Kit.

Nigel hung up and left the Great Hall, heading for BSL4. He had in his pocket a plan of the building drawn for him by Kit, but he appeared to have memorised it. Daisy and Elton had copies of the same plan.

Kit detached his mobile phone from his laptop. Calls to the Fort would still ring his phone, but without the computer he would not be able to divert them or listen in.

He said to Elton: "Stay here. Don't let anyone access the computer."

"Okay."

He stepped into the control room. Daisy was still in her chair, vacantly watching the monitors. "I need something from the van," he said, for the benefit of Don and Stu. "You stay here."

She glanced up at him then looked away without answering.

She was not much good at acting the part, Kit thought. He hoped the security guards would simply assume she was taciturn out of bad temper.

Kit left the control room and headed for BSL4. In the half-lit corridor he met Nigel.

Why did he send N to reception?

They did not speak.

At the end of the corridor was an airlock with curved doors. They stood in front of it. A television camera pointed straight at them, its winking light indicating that it was transmitting their image; but Kit had made sure its footage was not being displayed on any monitor or recorded in memory.

On the wall beside the airlock was a small screen—a fingerprint scanner—with an integral card reader. Kit swiped his father's pass through the card reader, and pressed the forefinger of his left hand to the screen. He and Nigel waited while the central computer compared the information from the screen with that on the chip inside the smart card.

It seemed to take a long time. Nigel looked at Kit anxiously. The light over the door remained stubbornly red. Kit told himself that this had to work. The chip contained the encoded details of his own fingerprint—he had checked. What could go wrong?

Then a woman's voice behind them said: "I'm afraid you can't go in there."

Kit and Nigel turned. Susan was standing behind them. She appeared friendly but anxious. She should have been at reception, Kit thought in a panic. She was not due to patrol for another thirty minutes....

Unless Toni Gallo had doubled the patrols as well as doubling the guard.

There was a chime like a doorbell. All three of them looked at the airlock. The red light turned green, and the curved glass door slid open.

Susan said: "How did you open the door?" Her voice betrayed fear now.

Kit involuntarily looked down at the stolen card in his hand.

Susan followed his gaze. "You're not supposed to have a pass!" she said incredulously.

Nigel moved towards her.

She turned on her heel and ran.

Nigel went after her, but she was half his age, and it was clear to Kit that he would not catch her before she reached reception. He let out a shout of rage: how could everything go so wrong, so quickly?

Then Daisy came through the door at the far end of the corridor.

Kit would not have thought he would ever be glad to see her ugly face.

She seemed unsurprised at the scene that confronted her: the guard running towards her, Nigel following, Kit frozen to the spot.

Susan hesitated, then ran on, apparently determined to push past Daisy.

The hint of a smile touched Daisy's lips. She drew back her arm and smashed her gloved fist into Susan's face. The blow made a sickening sound, like a melon dropped on a tiled floor. Susan collapsed as if she had run into a wall. Daisy rubbed her knuckles, looking pleased.

Susan got to her knees. Sobs bubbled through the blood pouring down her face. Daisy took from the pocket of her leather jacket a flexible cosh about nine inches long and made, Kit guessed, of steel ballbearings in a leather case. She raised her arm.

"No!" Kit shouted.

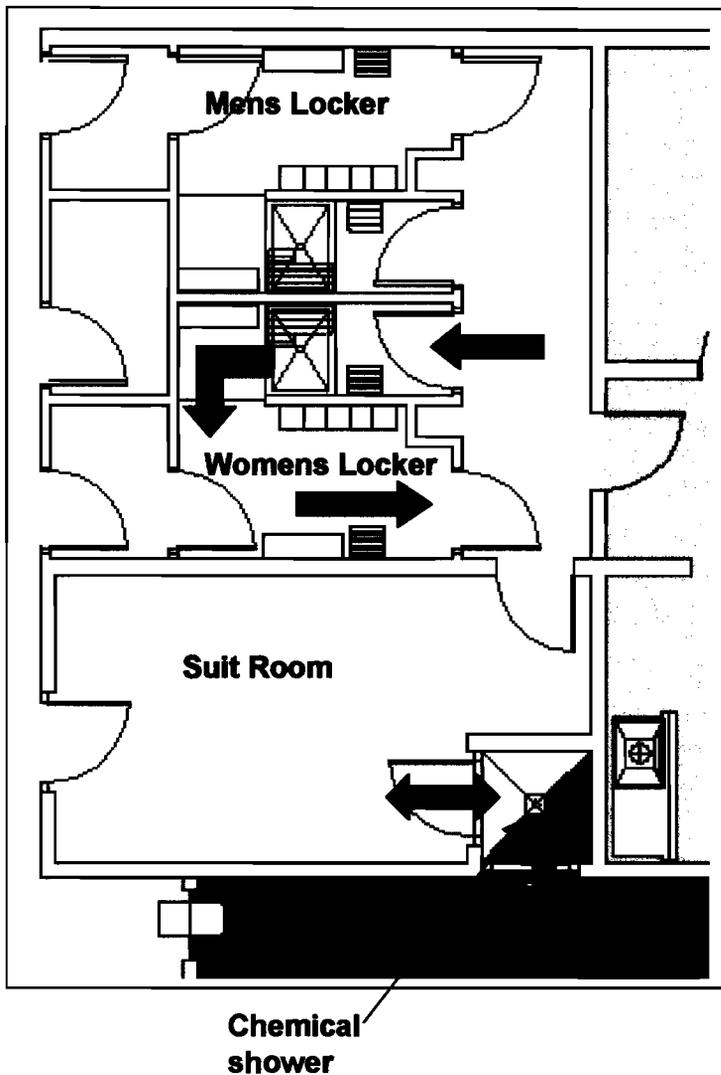
Daisy hit Susan over the head with the cosh. The guard collapsed soundlessly.

Kit yelled: "Leave her! I said no violence!"

Daisy raised her arm to hit Susan again, but Nigel stepped forward and held her wrist.

"No need to kill her," he said.

Daisy stepped back reluctantly.



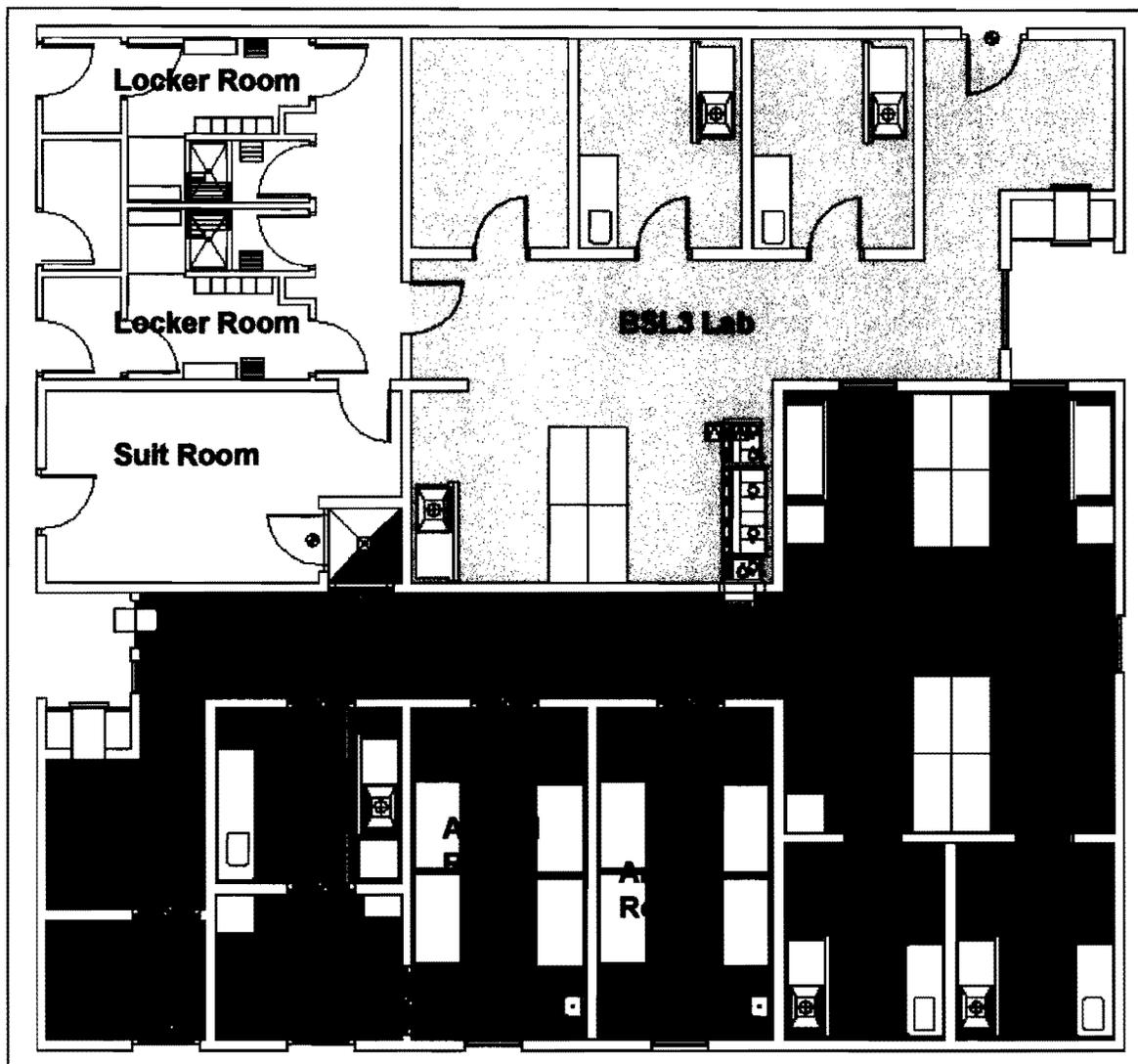
Going into the BSL4 is basically how you described, but the lockers and shower aren't really part of "air-tight" containment. The shower is more because you sweat like a pig in the suit working with something that can kill you if you breathe it.

The Chemical Shower is really the line of containment for people flow. It is "airtight" with gasketed doors that are interlocked.

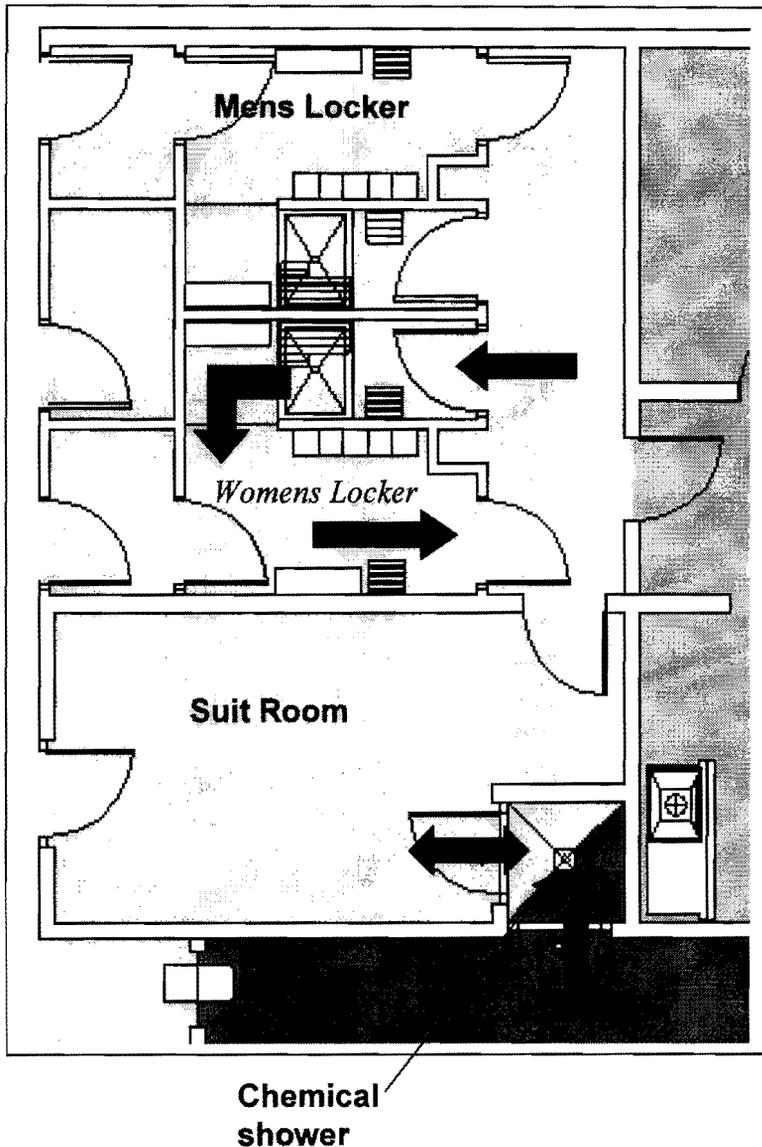
The suit room is where the positive pressure suits are stowed as well as tested for leaks, proper operation etc. prior to donning them.

The ante-rooms I indicated prior to entering the lockers are more for privacy/ humbleness – since you may be standing in your birthday suit when someone opens the outer door.

The dual color for the chemical shower is because once the BSL4 door is opened the shower is considered "hot". The door on the Suit Room side cannot be opened until the (even empty) Chemical shower has gone through a decon cycle and fogged out the shower.



This is a schematic plan of a BSL3 and BSL4 lab



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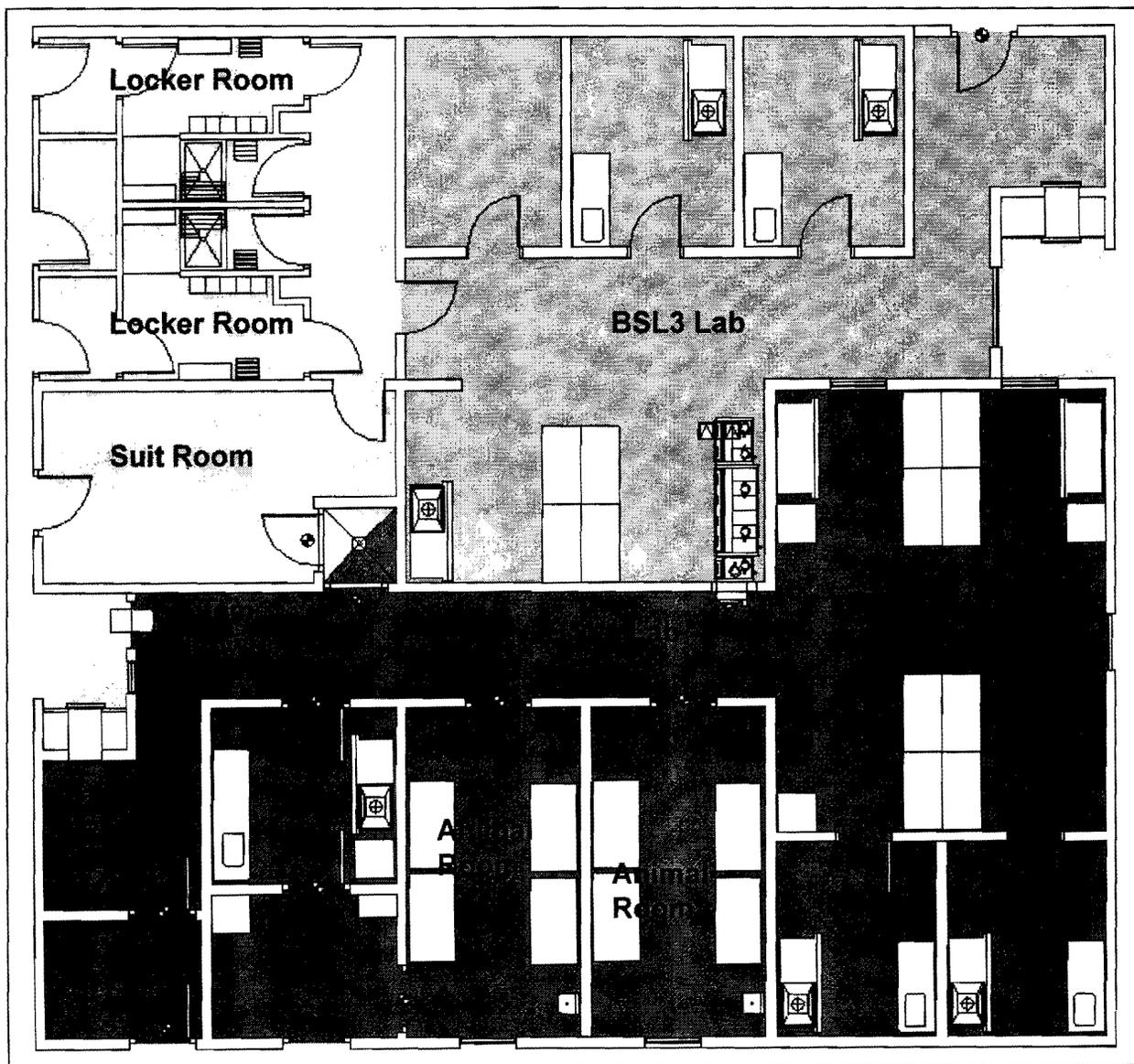
Your text is pretty good. Hopefully this sketch can give you a visual imagine that you can put into literature (not just words) much better than I can.

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IT 1.10 Should Kit say something like ‘The guards can’t go in there, and I’ve doctored the monitors’ Just to make it clear that while the guards can’t see what’s going on in BSL4, the gang CAN still see reception and the corridors – hence Daisy watching Susan.

GK: Technically the antechamber before the actual suite is not BSL-4, but this is a very minor point. You could just say ""as he entered the antechamber to the BSL-4 laboratory.

SE: Okay now I get to draw a picture! The following is a diagram of a BSL4 entry. Typically you could enter into the locker rooms directly from a corridor. Security into the locker rooms would be very tight, just as you described (card and biometric reader) although you wouldn’t need to go through an airlock that would pop your ears – this would be a conventional door with a crack at the bottom. A common ante-room (not airlock) before the locker rooms would be a good idea though – a single secure point, single log-in, etc.thanks for the idea. The ear-popping pressure drop wouldn’t occur until the chemical shower.



This is a schematic plan of a BSL3 and BSL4 lab

"You mad cow!" Kit said. "We'll all be guilty of murder!"

Daisy looked at the light-brown glove on her right hand. There was blood on the fingers. She licked it off thoughtfully.

Nigel said to Daisy: "How did you know she was coming?"

Daisy straightened her blonde wig. "I was watching the monitors," she replied. "I saw the bitch leave the reception desk, heading this way."

"This wasn't supposed to happen," Kit said. "Now what are we going to do with her?"

Nigel said: "Tie her up and put her some place where she won't be found."

Kit's brain was coming back on line. "In BSL4," he said. "The guards can't go in there." He was still by the door. "Bring her here," he said to Daisy. "Nigel, find something to tie her up with." *Does the door to BSL4 remain open all this time?*

Daisy got her arms around the unconscious Susan's chest and dragged her along the carpet to the airlock. Nigel stepped into a side office and came out with a long power lead. He bent down and tied the guard's hands and feet. He pulled the knots tight and checked them.

Kit swiped his father's pass through the card reader again, and pressed his finger to the screen. The curved door opened.

His mobile phone rang. He ignored it.

He took Susan in his arms, as if dancing with her. Her mass of curly hair brushed his face, and he smelled a flowery shampoo. He backed into the air lock. It was designed to take one person only, but he was able to squeeze in with Susan crushed to his chest.

The door closed and another, opposite, opened. He pulled the limp body through. His ears registered a drop in air pressure as he entered BSL4.

He was in a small lobby leading to the separate men's and women's changing rooms.

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IT 1.2 I think it's been made clear enough, though, that Kit has moved the recording screens to show the previous night's footage?

GK: Good - you accurately portrayed the exit process, it is generally a release button.

He propped Susan up against the wall. She was directly in the view of a security camera, but it did not matter, because the monitors were showing last night's footage.

He reached into his pocket for his phone, but it stopped ringing.

He went out through the airlock. The procedure was the same, except that no pass was required to go out: the system was activated by pressing a button.

Kit was thinking ahead. "She'll be missed quite soon," he said to Nigel and Daisy. "Don and Stuart will notice that she's disappeared off the monitors. And even if they don't, Steve will be alerted when she fails to return from her patrol. Either way, we don't have time to get into BSL4 and out again before they raise the alarm. Shit, it's all going wrong!"

"We can handle this," Nigel said. "We'll just have to round up the other guards before I go in."

Kit's phone rang again. He looked at the screen. There was no caller identification. It was probably a call to the Fort, but without his computer he could not be sure. "That's probably Toni Gallo," he said to Nigel. "What do we do if she comes here? We can't pretend nothing's wrong if all the guards are tied up!"

"We'll stay calm and deal with her," said Nigel.

Kit's phone kept ringing.

Kit, I would think, needs to be beside himself.
And how does he propose to get Nigel into BSL4?