

THE LOOKING GLASS CASE FILE

A Negative Space companion

TRANSFER OF RECORD

ELI BRANDT

DESTINATION: MODESTO

RECEIVING FACILITY NOT FOUND

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A transfer of record

On a Tuesday evening, at six-forty, a resident of a residential-care home outside Sacramento went out on a transfer order to a continuing-care facility in Modesto. The order was signed and filed, and it was already entered in the system before he was out the door.

The resident was Eli Brandt, thirty-three, no family of record.

Nine days later Rodriguez asked the home's front desk to walk her through its last ninety days of transfers. One transfer did not check, so she called the Modesto facility to confirm intake.

"There is no Modesto facility. The address is a parcel lot."

The paper said he was somewhere safe, and no one in his life was placed to go and see.

Transfer chain, reconstructed summary

Step	What the record shows	Status
Origin	Residential-care home outside Sacramento	Confirmed by the desk
Order	Continuing-care transfer, signed and filed	Entered before departure
Vehicle	Non-emergency transport van	Reported by Rodriguez
Destination	Continuing-care facility, Modesto	Address resolves to a parcel lot
Intake	Confirmation call	No receiving facility found

The order is administratively regular, and that is the whole of what "clean" means here. It records a destination. It does not record an arrival. It says nothing about who authorized the move, whether Brandt consented, or where the van stopped. His medical and intake records were requested at this stage and had not arrived; privacy law was holding them.

The fifth account

Twelve bidder accounts. Cho had opened five. The first four read alike, buyers shopping for a laboratory. The fifth cracked at four in the morning and did not.

Expenditure comparison, reconstructed summary

Four earlier accounts	Fifth account
Rare-earth metals by the kilogram, through paper importers	Fourteen-month staffing contract with a residential-care operator: twenty-two homes, four states
Three-phase electrical service at premises zoned for nothing that needs it	Forty-percent stake in a non-emergency medical transport company
Precision optics	Six-bedroom residential lease held through a trust registered in Wilmington
Climate-controlled floor space, leased by the year	Standing payments to an agency placing nursing aides and orderlies on short contracts

Chen's reading of the fifth account is operational, and it is inference. Hold the staffing contract and you know who is inside every one of those buildings, who visits, and who never does. Hold vans and a house nobody can trace, and a move can be filed as a transfer rather than a disappearance.

"This one's shopping for access."

The packet is built around that assessment, and the assessment has edges. A staffing contract is a footprint of twenty-two buildings, not twenty-two scenes. A forty-percent stake is equity; who dispatches those vans is not established. Wilmington is where the trust is registered. Where the house stands is not in this packet.

One wire out

Cho found it on the second pass, an hour later: a single wire, eleven months old, smaller than the staffing money, routed through an intermediary in Cyprus to a fabrication concern with a Bratislava registration. A composites shop that does aerospace work and bills it as proprietary.

One payment. No staffing, no transport, no beds around it. The only line on the account that resembled the other four.

"I can't make them be the same thing from here."

"They touch in exactly one transaction, and then they never touch again."

Both are Cho's, at that stage of the ledger. Stone weighed the two threads, the long domestic one and the single short one abroad. Two ends of something, he offered, and then the caution: "Or two things we want to be one because one is easier to chase." The domestic end was slow; the fabricator was one address and one payment in a country that would cooperate if asked properly.

A name on the shop's invoice gave the Slovak service a face it would share, one that kept a standing reservation in the bar of a Bratislava hotel on the first Tuesday of the month.

What the wire bought is not in this packet. Neither is an amount, a bank, or a beneficial owner. It is the one point at which an account paying for beds and drivers also paid a shop abroad. Whether that makes one operation or two is not settled here.

The lobby

Placement: thermal from a rented fourth-floor room, its sash open over the atrium, with a sightline down into the lobby. Floor: Stone. Elevators: Chen.

At 6:31 the courier came down for his drink. At 6:33 his head made two passes of the room in the mirror behind the bar, and his hand set the drink down and did not go back to it. At 6:34 the evening stopped resembling the plan.

Cho, on the net:

"He's lighting up. He's venting heat like a machine working too hard, and the lobby is losing him. Sarah, watch the lobby."

The compiled account describes a lobby losing track of a man crossing toward the elevators. A bellhop steered a cart around him without appearing to register him. Stone reported his own eyes sliding to a column.

Chen: "Use the floor. Fourth tile from the planter seam. Count, don't look."

Stone: "Got him by the tiles. Can't hold him by anything else."

Chen held him from the elevators. He did not run. He left as the bellhop's cart, the swing of the revolving door and a tour group folding in off the street moved between him and the observers, and he went out through the service corridor. The observer at the elevators did not reach the corridor. The courier paused in the service doorway before leaving.

Cab rank, then nothing. The plate came back stolen.

What the thermal kept

"He killed the field and walked out clean." That is Cho's operational assessment.

"I kept the thermal for the whole ninety seconds he was lit. Look at the vent pattern."

Channels, compiled summary

Channel	Placement	Result
Thermal	Fourth-floor room over the atrium	Subject held for about ninety seconds
Sustained attention	Lobby floor, Stone	Lost; eyes drawn to a column
Tile count	Lobby floor, positional reference	Position held briefly, nothing else
Sustained attention	Elevators, Chen	Tracked him across the lobby; intercept failed

What she traced was a ragged sawtooth. "It spikes, drops, spikes again. Park's generation managed heat continuously. Smooth." Her judgment followed: "That's not a finished machine. That's somebody building a finished machine from memory, with half the pages gone."

This packet includes Cho's description of the thermal pattern. It reproduces no calibrated temperatures, burst timings, or inventory of what the courier carried. Four floors up is a camera position, not a measured boundary. The judgment that the device is unfinished is Cho's, and it rests on comparison with a machine that ran smooth.

The rows of the table are different kinds of evidence. The thermal is a sensor record, kept, and it can be replayed. The failure on the floor is the agents' description of their own attention, given on the net as it happened. One can be checked against itself. The other is testimony.

Other vans, other doors

Back from Bratislava, Rodriguez kept calling desks.

"The same vans logged transfers I can't account for at three other facilities, going back almost a year."

"I can't name them yet. Records requests are in on every one of them, and the privacy holds will take days to break."

Three facilities, records under hold, names unknown.

A note on clocks. Almost a year of transfers, eleven months on the wire, fourteen months on the staffing contract, nine days on Brandt. Separate intervals, separate records; not one timeline.

A transfer point outside Bakersfield sat on a route two of the vans shared. In March a night clerk there queried one of the manifests, asked his supervisor about it, and drafted an email he never sent. Twelve days later he drove into a culvert at two in the morning. One car, dry road, no alcohol, closed at the county minimum. His sister called the facility twice about his last paycheck, and nobody called her back.

"It reads as an accident. It would read as an accident to me, if he had queried any other manifest in the state."

Rodriguez's doubt is about sequence: a query on one particular manifest, and a death twelve days later. Nothing in the packet connects the two beyond that order of events, and the email's contents are unknown. The item is listed because Rodriguez judged it the one manifest that mattered.

Supplement: the Brandt file

Later, Brandt's records broke loose. This packet takes two things from Rodriguez's report of them.

The first is her description of the departure. "Out the service door at six-forty beside a man in a maintenance polo, paper already clean in the system, nine days of silence because Eli had no one who came." He has no name in this file.

The second is the medical entry.

"Impaired depth perception. Onset in childhood. Cause of record, a viral encephalitis at age eight."

"Except the encephalitis isn't in any hospital record I can find. It's recited."

"Every file he has repeats it in the same words, the way paper repeats a thing somebody upstream wrote once and everybody after copied along."

In her phrasing, "his trail starts clean at nine with a story already smooth from handling."

What this supports is a question about where the sentence came from. Rodriguez searched and did not find a hospital record. The packet does not know how wide her search ran, and a record she did not find is not shown to be absent; her search does not rule out the illness. The deficit and its stated cause are separate claims, and the question here is the provenance of the cause, not the existence of the deficit. What happened to a boy at eight is not in the file. The same sentence about it is.

Open items

Checks that would close the file on Eli Brandt, or open it properly.

1. The order. Who authorized the Modesto transfer, who keyed it, and from which terminal. An entry that precedes a departure has an author.
2. The van. A vehicle log, a fuel receipt, a gate camera, anything that establishes where it went after it left the service door.
3. The man in the polo. The description is Rodriguez's. Who gave it to her, and when, is not recorded here.
4. The destination. Who first wrote a Modesto facility into a transfer order, and when.
5. The first chart. The earliest clinical document that says "encephalitis" in its own words rather than copied ones, if one exists.
6. The other three facilities, once the holds break, laid beside Brandt's transfer for authorization path and timing, without assuming every move was criminal.
7. The wire. A shipping record, a customs entry, an invoice with a description that is not the word "proprietary."
8. The invoice name. So far it is a lead. Whether a man is attached to it is longer work.

Eli Brandt is thirty-three. A transfer order names his destination. The address it names is a parcel lot, and no receiving facility was found there. Nothing in this file places him anywhere after the service door.

About this companion

This is a fictional companion to *Negative Space*, Perception Wars Book Two, by Wesley K. Alexander. Its pages are arranged and adapted from early-case material in the novel; they are not reproductions of documents that appear verbatim in the book, and the summaries and tables are reconstructions, not signed records. The order reflects selected working extracts and one later, limited supplement rather than a complete chronological file, and it stops well short of where the case goes. The agency and case setting are fictionalized. Nothing here is medical, legal, or operational guidance.