

# Wire

*by* J. Bradley

Wire runs past the last row of cubicles and jumps through the plate glass window. He falls thirty stories into a dumpster, the garbage breaking his fall, the smell almost breaking his nose. Through the food and the metal, he hears a door kicked out, four pairs of boots beating the pavement, the switching off of safeties.

"We know you're in there, motherfucker. Step out, slowly, and we might keep you fit for an open casket funeral. You've got the count of five. 1..."

Wire presses a stud on the right side of his mirrorshades. The steel of the dumpster peels back and he sees four figures, arms pointing.

"2..."

Wire takes two slim metal disks, slaps them level to their shins. He presses the stud on the right side of his mirrorshades a few times, the LCD clock inside the right lens ticking up five seconds until a red 1:00 pauses in front of his eye before it ticks down.

"3..."

Wire digs his way out of the dumpster, hands up in the air. The guards walk closer, four barrels staring into him.

"Normally, most guys wait until four or five to come out," the counter turns to the other guards, "This one is smart. Or has a death wish. Get out of there." 0:26 slaps against Wire's right eye.

"I...broke my ankle when I fell guys. I'll need your help to get out of here. It hurts like hell."

The counter holsters his gun, walks closer to Wire. "If he does anything stupid, shoot the fucker." The counter gets in arms reach of Wire when lightning snakes out of the lower half of the dumpster, up the guard's legs. Wire takes the gun out of the guard's holster. Three bangs, three falling bodies echo through the alleys. The counting guard writhes on the pavement, the barrel of his own gun leering at his cheeks.

"No one fucks with me and lives. No one."

The hurried knock on her loft door cuts through Regina Xavien's sighs into her pillow. She stumbles into a red silk bathrobe and toward the door. Through the spyhole, a tall, thin figure with cropped black hair, black goatee, black trenchcoat, and mirrorshades paces, lit cigarette shivering in his mouth.

"Damn it, Frank, it's 3:00 AM. Fuck off."

"Gina, this can't wait. I'm in trouble."

"You're always in trouble. Were you followed."

"No."

Regina sighs as the locks tumble aside. Wire hurries through the door. The locks tumble back into place. He steps close, reaches for the small of her back. Regina slaps his hand away.

"Who the fuck do you think you are? First, you wake me up while I was having an amazing dream and second, I thought you needed a place to hide not to hide your dick in me. Sit on the couch. I'll make us some coffee." The gray leather couch swallows Wire while Regina makes coffee in the kitchen. Ten minutes later, she walks into the

living room with two steaming mugs. "Black, right?" Wire nods, takes the cup, and sips.

"Thanks. Love the new robe. Makes your tits look 14."

"You're lucky I'm too tired to slap you. What did you do this time?"

"Fell thirty stories, four security guards. Normally not loud but it was worth it." Wire takes a manilla folder out of his trenchcoat and hands it to Regina. "Open it and you'll see why."

Regina opens the folder and sees charts, blood levels, photos, various scientific data, names, bodies, bodies, bodies. "Holy shit, this....is this what I think it is?"

"It is. Proof of the UberMarket Corporation's mercenary cloning operation. Proof that I'm...one of the earliest generations of the project. I understand why I can't remember anything more than five years ago, Gina."

"What are you going to do about it? UberMarket owns 40% of the global media. You'd have to get this out of the country to even have a shot of the truth getting out. Rogue bloggers are getting easier to find these days." The loft door flies into the kitchen. A figure in big black armor with mini-guns for arms walks through the opening.

"Get to the kitchen now, Gina!" Regina runs to the kitchen as the barrels warm up and spin. A monsoon of bullets chew the couch, the walls. Wire lures the hail away from the kitchen until he's next to the figure. Wire drives his hand into the figure's throat like a knife, a small spark leaping from his middle finger. The figure collapses. The mini-gun barrels stop spinning.

"I thought you weren't followed, Frank." Regina says, walking into

the smoking scraps of her living room. "You were not only followed, you ruined my fucking living room."

"Gina, I'll take care of it, ok? Besides, if it wasn't for me, you'd be dead."

"If it wasn't for you, this would have never happened. Why do I keep letting you and your problems fuck up my life?"

"Because you love me?"

Regina shakes her head. "No, because you make me a lot of money. You're an o.k. fuck. But I don't love you."

Wire takes the helmet off the figure and hands it to Regina. "And you're an o.k. hacker. Think you can crack the software in this helmet and beam me the mission details?" Regina nods. "Good. I'm going to get out of here. Tomorrow, you'll find 50,000 Euros in your account. That should cover the damage. Get that file out somehow. The truth must be told."

"What are you gonna do?"

"Provide a hell of a distraction."

Wire stands on the rood adjacent to UberMarket's North American headquarters. The packet of information from the figure's helmet scrolls down. "OPERATION SLASH AND BURN - NO WITNESSES". The figure had Wire's cobalt eyes and anemic skin. Wire walks to the other side of the roof. He turns, runs, furiously pumping his arms and legs and jumps through the exit he made earlier, rolling for a moment, and then back on his feet. Wire throws three black balls at the elevator doors, splitting them wide enough for him to leap through. When he lands on top of the elevator car two floors down,

he slaps two sticky black pads on the cables and presses the stud on the right side of his mirrorshades. The cables snap. The elevator falls like a Howitzer shell, bursting through the secret basement level. The building rumbles. Wire presses the stud on the right side of his mirrorshades and sees twenty eight stories below, fifty heavily armed guards, assault rifles and laser sights. Another twenty peek through the broken elevator door, they part ways to allow a man in a three piece charcoal gray Armani suit to peek his head through the shaft. His head is freshly shaved, his mustache handlebar peppered with salt.

“Double backing, I see, Frank. Just like I programmed into you.”

“Dr. Vincenzo, long time, no see. How's the wife?” Dr. Vincenzo glares. “Oh, too soon?”

“Thanks to my technology, she's quite alive and well, but there's holes in her memory...”

“How Notebook 7 of you.”

“You're lucky I need you alive, Frank. You are the only clone that has lasted beyond two years. Something about the way we built you has given you a normal life span. When I cut you up, I'll find out how.”

“Not if I cut you up first.” Wire presses the stud on the right side of his mirrorshades. The guards surround Dr. Vincenzo, pointing their rifles like Voodoo doll needles.

“How did you...”

“Programming, remember. You became so afraid of independent thought, you programmed the later generations of your clones to obey orders fed to them through your nanotechnology. That one man hit squad you sent to my partner's apartment gave me the keyI

needed to figure this out. Wire feels the fingers gripping the elevator cable numbing. His right arm becomes useless. "This last bit, doctor, is all I had left. My cells were breaking down, just like all the others. I didn't know why until I found the file. I finally know who I am now. It's a shame I won't see you die." Wire nods to one of the guards. He walks over and presses the right stud on Wire's mirrorshades six times until "0:30" burns into Wire's right eye. The guard walks back, aiming his rifle at Dr. Vincenzo.

"What are you doing, Frank? I can fix you, if you let me."

"I won't let you fix me. UberMarket's done enough fixing. You've bled this economy dry." Wire lets go of the elevator cable. Fifteen seconds later, the building implodes, blossoming glass, dust, and bodies into the street.

"You dumb bastard. What did you do?" Regina sips her coffee, watching the news report about the US headquarters of UberMarket imploding last night. Planned demolition, the talking head says. Regina picks up her tablet, taps her finger on it. She sees 50,000 Euros in her bank account and a note. "Provided you a distraction. You have a week, Gina, to get those files to someone safe. Do something about it."

Wire's eyes fly open, sucking in air. The handcuffs bite into his arms. A bald man in a three-piece black Yves-Saint Laurent suit stands over him.

"I died. The building fucking exploded. I died. You died."

"Back ups, Wire, backups. I kept back ups of you. Back ups of me. I will find out what you stole and I will make you pay. Oh yes, I will."

