WRATH & ENVY COUNTER-STRATEGY

Somerset and Mills (two detectives) formulated a plan of attack to uncover Doe's operation and identity, by utilizing an illegal underground library-tracking system unknown to the public. Through this, Somerset paid an individual to go through all the files and pick out suspects who checked out books related to academic subjects seen in Doe's initial murders. This system is, once again, highly illegal and completely unknown to the public - basically an undetectable trap to translocate Doe. The only weakness to it is that since it's illegal, Somerset and Mills need an alibi if they want to actively break into the apartment - which Mills formulated, covering all bases. The suspect list is also pretty long, but that doesn't impact the two's advancements much.

Anyhow, upon the trap being sprung on Doe, Doe intimates his counteraction by opening fire on the two detectives (with a firearm he obtained beforehand, showcasing some rough anticipation over the events). Notably, Doe had the option to either kill Mills or spare him upon gaining the upper-hand. It's worth noting that due to Somerset's presence, Doe was placed in an unavoidable situation where serious damage to his plan was inevitable —>

1. Doe's base of operations is uncovered, where he houses almost everything linked to his plan - including thousands of in-depth writings.

2. Outside of this base, Doe has no resources due to his extremely long-term and intricate anonymity.

3. Doe still has multiple murders still left in the plan to be committed, with this discovery basically removing any hope of the plan operating smoothly or at all.

4. With the discovery of the apartment, law enforcement now has the means to unlocking knowledge on Doe (via the notebooks), which would only take one or two months to fully sort through (as stated by Somerset), so Doe is now on a very strict timeframe.

With all these disadvantages at play, Doe is now lacking a base, doesn't have pure anonymity, lacks any resources, and is placed under near-impossible time constraints. Normally, this would shatter such a methodical plan - especially since his plan isn't even halfway done by this point.

However, Doe contemplates for a few seconds - he chooses to spare Mills (oddly, considering killing him may be beneficial - as he is the one to later create the alibi Somerset needs). This choice is the cornerstone to a complex strategy Doe has just created that completely neutralizes all advantages/advancements produced by the trap placed upon him, which is pretty impressive.

To formally begin his strategy (after sparing Mills - he also quickly enacts the next two murders in a hasty fashion, boosting the murder count to five - he now needs two more), Doe arrives at Mills's house and meets with his wife (Tracy). Doe had obtained the information of Tracy earlier in the film via his press disguise granting him the ability to purchase information from the precinct, now finding a use for it. He disguises as one of the men from the precinct and Tracy lets him into the house (Doe predicted Tracy wouldn't refuse due to her lack of social connection, which Doe observed and learnt of by gathering information based around Somerset being Tracy's only friend - with Somerset compromised by the information load at his apartment, it gives Doe the perfect opportunity to strike - turning law enforcement's deep dive into his notebooks into a disadvantage, as it isolates Somerset from Tracy - the perfect condition for Doe). Even if she refused, note that Doe still has his firearm as a contingency to brute-force his way in. Doe, after a moment, kills Tracy brutally and removes her head. He allows the blood to stain his clothes, before packaging Tracy's head in a box and ordering it to be shipped at exactly seven o'clock p.m. to a specific location - At the same time, Doe hires a lawyer in advance. To summarize, here are the steps of preparation Doe took before enacting his strategy —>

1. Utilize the information he acquired through his disguise to locate Tracy (Mills's wife). Pose as a man of the precinct to gain access inside of her home (which he predicted would work given Tracy's psychological profile, which he had built via

observing her connection to Somerset - he ensured Tracy would accept the offer by reversing the apartment discovery into a downside for law enforcement - with his firearm being a contingency), and then kill her - Allow her blood to stain his clothes, and take & package her head into a box. Then order the box to be delivered to a specific location at exactly 7 o'clock, paying the driver $500.

2. Hire a lawyer in preparation, at around the same time. This will act as a future shield during the actual execution/mid-game of his strategy.

Now that the preparation process has been detailed, Doe executes the main action of his strategy - He walks into the precinct wearing the bloodied clothing and turns himself in. He immediately requests to see his lawyer, and after discussing matters with Doe personally - The lawyer gives the precinct an ultimatum (and a statement from Doe that says he admires them, which will tie into the strategy itself towards the end). Doe will grant the precinct information on where the final two bodies are, but he requests to personally show them via car accompanied strictly by Mills and Somerset (has to be at around six o'clock - Doe predicted it would take them around an hour to drive to the location). If his demands are not met, the bodies will never be uncovered and Doe will plead insanity. Doe's strategy here was incredibly well-shielded from all angles —>

1. Doe knew that the presence of blood on his clothing that notably isn't his would lead the investigators to conclude that at least one other victim was present. This would give credit to Doe's bluff, and ignoring it would be highly risky and incredibly dangerous for the precinct.

2. Doe also knew that the blood couldn't be formally tested in time before Doe's offer had expired, meaning they had no way to decipher and see through his bluff in the first place.

3. By specifically setting the events up to occur at six o'clock, it ensured Mills isn't able to go home at the end of his shift and obviously see Tracy's body or notice her missing.

4. By including Somerset and Mills into his conditions, it restricts the two from making any actions outside of the case. They'd be under constant pressure and communication by either Doe's lawyer or the precinct itself - Giving Mills no window to even call Tracy.

5. Doe knew that Somerset was Tracy's only friend and that Tracy had been suffering from a depressive state ever since she moved to the city (A fact she only shared with Somerset - Again, Doe knew this information via his disguise as a member of the press). If Mills did try to call Tracy, Doe predicted that Somerset would rightfully intervene to save Tracy from any stress given her mental state (fundamentally setting Somerset up as an innate contingency to ensure no contact is held between Mills and Tracy).

6. Doe ensured that the precinct would know he's the killer right away, via the absence of fingerprints, dental records, employment history, etc - All factors that are incorporated into the killer's profile.

7. In conclusion, by setting the deadline as seven o'clock it ensures several outcomes - 1) The blood on Doe's clothing is unable to be tested in time, and given the amount of proof Doe has given the precinct within the strategy itself to believe his bluff (the blood not being his), it fortifies his strategy from being seen through — 2) Doe and Somerset, naturally being core components in the conditions, will be kept on constant activity through either communication with the precinct or Doe's lawyer - This ensures Mills doesn't have the window to call Tracy (safeguarded by the Somerset contingency) — 3) It ensures Mills isn't able to return home at any point to find Tracy's body or uncover the fact she's missing, and 4) It pressures the precinct into making a decision quickly and efficiently.

Doe's strategy, naturally due to the incredible amount of shielding present, is completely effective. The precinct agrees to Doe's terms, showcasing just how invincible it was in both theory and execution. Overall, Doe's strategy was immaculate due to the improvisation required, lack of resources consumed (only

relying off prior knowledge and outlying resources), precise yet quick preparation process, multitude of shieldings (roughly six to seven notable shieldings), and was perfectly concealed from the precinct and main cast as well.

Mills, Somerset, and Doe travel in a car together with Doe in the backseat, separated from Mills and Somerset (who is in the driver's seat) via mesh. The detectives attempt to question Doe, yet no usable information is brought to their attention. Doe says how excited he is for them to see what he has prepared - Before talking about how his murders were justified. Mills attempts to degrade Doe by stating they could've caught him at any time. Doe refutes these by taunting Mills with the fact he could've killed him in the alleyway (where Doe was initially compromised), which results in Mills losing control and yelling at Doe (which proves to Doe himself that his aim is going to be completely effective). A helicopter follows the car from above, keeping a key eye on the travel and listening in through Somerset's wire.

Once the trio arrives at the location, Doe asks what time it is. Somerset tells him it's around seven o'clock, and Doe knows it's almost time for his strategy to take full form. Moments later, a van begins to pull up on the road. Somerset first hypothesizes there's a bomb in the box, which is logical - But after making sure that isn't the case, he opens the box and is greeted with Tracy's head.

At this exact moment, Doe takes advantage of his isolated time with Mills - Stating he is envious of Mills. Envious of his normal life and his pretty wife - Mills halts for a moment and asks how he knows about his wife. Doe states it's rather easy to purchase information from the precinct as a member of the press, and then describes the events that occurred earlier that evening. Mills raises his gun towards Doe and waits for Somerset. When Somerset returns, he pleads to know that Doe's words are untrue - However, Somerset cannot contest this (a trap Doe had anticipated to make the situation more dire for Mills).

As a final nail in the coffin, Doe states Tracy begged for the life of the unborn child inside her - Just then Somerset slaps him, but it's too late. Mills, who didn't know Tracy was pregnant, is horrified. His eyes fill with tears, and he raises his gun once

again. Doe asks Mills to become Wrath for him, and to that Mills sends a bullet directly into his head - Before shooting his lifeless body over and over again. Doe died as Envy, admiring the life of detective Mills - Mills symbolically died that day, representing Wrath. Doe had completed his goal of all seven “murders”, and had cemented his plan in history.

Now, to note what made this situation so leveraging for Doe —>

1. If Mills was the one to investigate the box instead of Somerset, he’d be left alone to make the discovery while Somerset stays with Doe (they cannot leave him alone, naturally). This achieved the same effect, if not arguably cleaner - Mills is isolated from the other two and is forced to get a front-row seat to his wife’s severed head, facilitating his grief and anger even more so.

2. In an alternate ending, Somerset shoots Doe instead of Mills. Notably, Somerset states in the film he had never fired his gun in his entire career - Doe forces Somerset to abandon his moral code in this alternate conclusion. This extends to the possibility of Somerset being forced to shoot Mills to preclude Doe’s death, which would achieve the same effect. In the comic run, Doe left a note for Somerset taunting him and stating that he hopes Somerset enjoyed their time together, as if Doe actively acknowledged this specific outcome as likely and a possibility.

3. In another alternate ending briefly mentioned by Kevin Spacey, Mills turns the gun on himself. In this ending, Doe’s murder spree is arguably even cleaner - a common critique of the film is that no death is linked to wrath (outside of perhaps Mills “dying” symbolically), however this possible ending fixes that.

Fundamentally, the only way for Doe to be counteracted at this stage is for no harm to be done to him. Which is, naturally, a complete win for Doe as well. He successfully reversed all advantages law enforcement gained (which were plentiful and major) and formulated a strategy so potent to where law enforcement is forced

to let him live and survive, if they don’t - they failed to halt his plan in its entirety, which was the entire purpose of the trap in the first place.