The Protagonist Document



“We live in a twilight world”

“And there are no friends at dusk”

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(!!IMPORTANT NOTE!!): This document is made under the assumption that you have watched Tenet and are already familiar with its concepts of Time Inversion. This document will make no attempts at explaining these concepts so I can recommend watching these four videos by Welby Coffeespill in order to be all caught up:

https://youtu.be/uAg2cvR9OwE?si=AWVSl8aPynM7P2mD

https://youtu.be/laR0urVrikM?si=03Zw3rnshoUOlP02

https://youtu.be/Qv-bJIcZebc?si=yUZrxXembLPDz-vh

https://youtu.be/FVdBLjNR5TU?si=AoMPND0MzSW3lTHR

After rewatching Tenet for a third time and binging a bunch of analysis videos, I've come to the conclusion that my man The Protagonist (No, he's not known by any other name) is SEVERELY underrated in SCD. Tenet is a very complicated movie that doesn't show everything on screen, but all the events and feats of the characters are all still logical and well explained. This is to say that there is no one correct interpretation to explain all the unshown events that happen, only different levels of complexity.

For this document, I’m going to trend towards the more complicated side of things. This is because I believe that nothing in movies is an accident, the famous “Sometimes the curtains really are just blue for no reason” doesn’t apply when it comes to movies due to how ungodly expensive they are to make. Every background detail, every line even if it didn’t make it into the final movie will be analyzed and studied all in order to draw the most accurate portrayal of events as I can.

I’m nowhere near smart enough to have analyzed this movie all on my own. I borrow liberally from Welby CoffeeSpill, a 3D animator who has made a series of videos showcasing what every scene looked like from a birds eye view in order to understand the movie better. I could not have made this document without him so PLEASE give his videos a watch as they clear up so many mysteries for me.

Key Characters:

- **The Protagonist:** The Protagonist is the main character of the movie. As I said in the introduction, he’s unfortunately not known by any other name. I’ll be abbreviating his name as TP for the rest of this doc.



- **Neil:** Neil is The Protagonist’s companion that joins him early into the movie, he’s played by Robert Patterson. Initially brought in as a helping hand to get to Priya, he reveals that he knows more than he lets on throughout the course of the film.



- **Andrei Sator:** A Russian arms dealer and The main antagonist of the film, he acts as a “broker” for the future into the present. His goal is to assemble The Algorithm and seal it underground, “triggering and avoiding” armageddon for the future which will have the consequence of destroying the present



- **Priya:** An arms dealer and a high ranking member of Tenet. She initially acts as TP’s boss, giving him orders and telling him where to go as well as explaining what The Algorithm is



- **Tenet:** A “beyond secret” organization that uses ignorance as its ammunition. Not a single member of it knows anything about the organisation's nature nor anything significant about any of its members. Tenet was founded in order to combat Posterity, a future group of scientists that wish to reverse the flow of time using The Algorithm.



- **Posterity**: They’re never given a name within the film, nor are they even seen on screen, but I will be referring to them as “Posterity” for convenience's sake. Posterity is a group of scientists “generations from now” that are responsible for the creation of The Algorithm and act as the overarching villain of the film. They’re the ones that contacted Sator from the future in order to get him to manipulate events in the films present.

With that out of the way, we can begin.

Categories I’m using for this doc:

Full-Scale IQ:

- Working Memory Index (WMI)
- Processing Speed Index (PSI)
- Verbal Comprehension Index (VCI)
- Fluid Reasoning Index (FRI)
- Visual Spatial Index (VSI)
- Cognitive Proficiency Index (CPI)

General Intelligence:

- Fluid Intelligence
- Crystallized Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (Intrapersonal):

- Emotional Management
- Emotional Engagement
- Emotional Realization

Emotional Intelligence (Interpersonal):

- Emotional Understanding
- Emotional Perception
- Emotional Facilitation
- Empathy

Social Intelligence:

- Social Skills
- Social Awareness
- Social Intuition
- Social Regulation
- Leadership
- Charisma

Adversity Capacity

- Mental Fortitude
- Stress Tolerance
- Pain Tolerance
- Impulse Management
- Perseverance
- Composure

Thinking

- Critical
- Creative
- Abstract
- Systemic
- Linear
- Lateral
- Associative
- Holistic

- Convergent
- Divergent

Reasoning

- Logical
- Deductive
- Abductive
- Inductive

Analysis/Insight

- Psychological Profiling
- Social
- Behavioral
- Strategic
- Cultural
- Systemic
- Contextual

Sensory

- Observation
- Perception

Foresight

- Prediction
- Anticipation
- Guesswork

- Preclusion

Strategy

- Efficiency
- Complexity
- Logistics
- Building
- Fortitude
- Flexibility
- Forecasting

Planning

- Process
- Preparation
- Intricacies
- Coverage
- Formulation Speed
- Invincibility
- Versatility

Manipulation

- Direct
- Indirect
- Logical
- Emotional

- Individual
- Mass
- Methods

Deception

- Misdirection
- Bluffing
- Fabrication
- Sophistry
- Acting Skills
- Concealment
- Disguise
- Information Control

Psychology

- Psychoanalysis
- Psychological Warfare
- Cold Reading
- Hot Reading
- Seeing Through People

Field Skills

- Information Gathering
- Tactics
- Setting Traps

- Contingencies
- Prioritisation
- Multitasking

Counteraction

- Trap Evasion
- Improvising
- Castling
- Responsiveness
- Navigation

Adaptability

- Cognitive
- Environmental

Judgement

- Decision Making
- Situational Awareness
- Intuition
- Methodical Approach

Mentality

- Ruthlessness
- Tenacity
- Cunning
- Maturity

Resistances

- Manipulation Resistance
- Perception Resistance
- Dissonance Resistance

In true Tenet fashion, I'm going to rip the bandaid right off and start from the ending just to keep this document short.

The Protagonist was in control from the very beginning and all the events of the film transpired under his plan. [General Intelligence: Fluid, Crystalized][FSEI: EM, EU, EF][FSSI: Everything][Thinking: Critical, Creative, Abstract, Systemic, Lateral, Holistic][Reasoning: Deductive, Inductive][Analysis/Insight: Everything][Strategy: Everything][Planning: Everything][Manipulation: Logical, Indirect, Mass, Individual, Emotional][Deception: Everything][Field Skills/Countering: Everything]

I know that sounds cheap, but I feel like it's important to get that out of the way now lest I try and explain the movie two times in a row from the point of view of the past Protagonist and the Future Protagonist.

To elaborate further. Anyone who's seen the movie knows that we only see events through the eyes of The Protagonist during May-June of 2019. But as we know from the end of the movie, it was The Protagonist in the future that founded Tenet and set up the events in the past in order for everyone to be where they

needed to be. From this, we get two different viewpoints of the film, the viewpoint of what we see directly on screen, and the viewpoint of what the future Protagonist would have done in order for the events of the film to play out the way they did.

To make the distinction between present Protagonist and future Protagonist, I'll be calling them The Protagonist (TP) and Future Protagonist (FP) respectively. As well as using Red and Blue to denote when I'm talking about Present Events (events from TPs perspective) vs Future Events (AKA events from the perspective of FP)

As it all happens off screen, we can never know for certain what FP actually did. Which is why I prefaced at the beginning that there's no one clear-cut explanation for the events of the film, only layers of complexity. This document is merely an interpretation of the actions and thought process of Future Protagonist based on all available evidence and implications given to us in the film.

Even though this document is treating them as two separate characters (which has the effect of making TP basically featless next to FP), they are still very much the same person and will

be scaled as such. I’ll get into any complications this may have in the “Debunk” section at the bottom of this doc.

Part 0: The Situation



The contextual adversity of The Protagonist's situation is at the core of what makes him scale so high in my books. It's important to fully understand the situation he found himself in and the opponents he had to overcome in order to fully comprehend the scale of his plans.

Posterity:

As previously stated, Posterity are the future group of scientists that are essentially trying to destroy the past in order to save themselves. One of the scientists that was a part

of Posterity rebelled, sending all 9 pieces of The Algorithm back into the past, trying to hide it forever. The Algorithm is a literal algorithm rendered into physical form so it could not be copied or replicated. Posterity is now trying to send it back to the future so they can use it to invert the entire world. They're doing this because we in the past are the direct cause of climate change, which has impacted them so much that "they had no choice but to turn back". In order to better understand how destroying the past could possibly benefit them, check out this video by Welby CoffeeSpill (the GOAT):https://youtu.be/Ff-1mSjHaPE?si=bK0l6ziO_4wvHi1e

Given the fact that "their oceans rose and their rivers ran dry" meaning the effects of climate change got so bad that they're close to extinction, as well as the fact that they have/had the capability to invent Inversion technology, I estimate their timeframe to be **at least 150 years ahead of the present in Tenet** (which is set in May-June 2019). They could easily be 300 or 1000 years into the future, but it's unknowable to how far along they are since nobody in the present can verify. This is all just to say that at bare minimum, Posterity has at LEAST a century and a half head start on everyone in Tenet.

It should be noted that Posterity is implied to be in desperate times from their point of view. I also estimate that they're mere decades away from the complete end of the world and have run out of options. The fact that they're even trying to destroy their own past, violating the Grandfather Paradox yet thinking they can get away with it just goes to show how dire things have become for them. This is to say, for the sake of fairness, that their position may not have been the most advantageous, they had struggles and adversity of their own. But don't let that distract you from how ungodly powerful of a position they were really in.

Everything and everyone in Tenet, every event and everything that has not yet come to pass for the present, is all ancient history from the viewpoint of Posterity. Having access to inversion technology, old internet logs, newspapers as well as the hindsight that comes from simply being in the future, they are more than prepared to succeed in their goal of retrieving The Algorithm.

They're already aware of where each section of The Algorithm is, all they need is someone in the past to go fetch it for them and bury it in a capsule so they can dig it up in the future, easy as that.

So they pick their best candidate:

Andrei Sator:



Andrei Sator was born into the Soviet Union and was a teenager by the time it collapsed. He was born in Stalsk-12, a secret city that was never put on any maps and was unknown to the world. One day an underground nuclear warhead exploded and scattered its pieces across the city, they needed people to dig up the plutonium and that’s where Sator came in. He dug up a capsule sent by Posterity that contained dozens of gold bars and a contract for an LLC with his name already written on it. He then spent the rest of his life (teenager to middle aged)

hunting down and securing all pieces of the algorithm, financed and guided by Posterity. By the time the movie starts, Sator has all but one piece of The Algorithm already in his hands, all he needs is the Plutonium-241, the last piece.

“No Friends At Dusk”:



As previously stated, the person who was really pulling the strings was The Protagonist from the future, orchestrating events in the past all in order to combat Posterity. The events of the film as shown to the audience are all from the perspective of The Protagonist of the past, going through the situation for the first time.

After being through it all himself (but crucially, not knowing all of the details), The Protagonist realizes the true gravity of the situation he's in and the challenges he has to overcome.

Place yourself in The Protagonist's shoes for a second, you are against:

- A group of scientists that are centuries ahead of you, they invented the very technologies that you yourself previously used against them. Meaning that they are far more experienced and knowledgeable about Inversion and Time Travel than you could ever be.
- They have virtually all available information about the past in their hands. Internet history, phone records, newspapers, anything at all that happened in the past is information they can easily access, acquire and use against you.
- They're already well aware of the potential consequences of trying to change the past, but are willing to risk it all anyways. Just because things worked out in the end for yourself in the past, doesn't mean that they always will forever.

In summary, if you slip up once, it’s all over. Leave any trace behind, and I mean ANYTHING that could ever possibly tip off the future to your existence and the existence of your goals and plans to stop them, it’s all over. Make a phone call, send an email, anything. It’s all ancient history from their point of view, anything you could ever do has already been done for them. All they would need to do is find where your plan began and simply stop it from happening via any method possible.

So what do you do? What *can* you even begin to do without it all crumbling away right in front of you?

Here’s what The Protagonist did.



He founded an organization in secret, built upon layers and layers of secrecy. Not a single member knows who the other members are, everyone is only given as much information as they need to have and NOTHING more. No learning names, background details, no small talk, nothing. The only common knowledge every member of the organization had was a gesture of interlocking fingers and a word: “Tenet”. Tenet was an organization that had

it’s own private army, contacts with intelligence services and had access to their own Turnstile (or even several turnstiles).

He did this:

- Alone. Every single Tenet member that The Protagonist came into contact with in his past is either dead or gone. He cannot possibly contact them again as after the Stalsk-12 Operation, Tenet was essentially disbanded. It was The Protagonist by himself that founded Tenet in the future and then inverted back into the past in order to recruit its members.
- With no prior instructions. The only thing he learnt about what he must do now came from Neil’s final speech at the end of the film, he didn’t know anything else beyond that + what he saw over the events of the film.
- From the dark. The only members of Tenet I can say *for sure* knew The Protagonist’s face were Neil and MAYBE Ives. Neil is obvious because he and TP were friends “for years” before the events of the film and Neil is the member that knows the most about Tenet. Ives *might’ve* known that The Protagonist was just the past version of his boss but I can’t say for certain as I haven’t found any concrete evidence. Point being, every single other member of Tenet

such as Priya, Faye, Crosby etc had no clue that they were talking to their own boss the whole time.

[Inter EI: EU][Social Intelligence: Leadership, Social Skills, Social Awareness, Social Regulation][Thinking: Critical, Creative, Abstract, Linear, Lateral, Systemic][Reasoning: Abductive, Inductive] [Analysis/Insight: Social, Behavioral, Cultural, Systemic, Strategic, Contextual][Foresight: Anticipation][Strategy: Building, Logistics][Planning: Coverage, Intricacies, Process, Preparation][Manipulation: Indirect, Logical, Mass][Deception: Misdirection, Fabrication, Concealment, Information Control][Psychology: Psychoanalysis][Field Skills: Setting Traps, Tactics][Counteraction: Castling, Navigation, Trap Evasion][Judgement: Decision Making, Situational Awareness, Intuition, Methodical Approach]

Since the Tenet mission started in 2008 (see next part for explanation), this means that TP spent at most 11 years to recruit Tenet's members such as Priya, Neil, Ives and everyone else that's a part of the film and affiliated with Tenet. This would mean that he would also have to spend at least a decade inverted, moving backwards through time as confirmed by Neil at the end of the time. The only way I can see this even being possible is if Tenet made some giant facility that pumps

inverted oxygen and TP and other members of Tenet stayed in it for decades so they can invert backwards all the way back to 2008.

[Intra EI: EM, EE][Adversity Capacity: Mental Fortitude, Perseverance]

With all the pieces in place, The Protagonist was ready to enact his master plan. We can’t know exactly where and how he started, the best we can do is start at the beginning of the film, where FP sets up his own past self’s recruitment.

Part 1: The Kiev Opera Siege



Despite being the opening scene of this movie, this is easily one of the most complicated scenes to analyze in the whole film. This is because we are watching events already manipulated by the future. It also doesn't help that this entire scene only took like 5 minutes and it explained nothing.

Present Perspective:

The Protagonist is introduced as being a part of an undercover CIA team who is already waiting outside the Opera House, waiting for the oncoming Terrorist Attack to happen (obviously implying

they knew the terrorist attack would happen before it already did). TP and his team are seen with two men at the driver and passengers seat, the driver of which says “Wake up the Americans.” in Ukrainian. After the attack happens, we see that they have a collection of false badges to put on their sleeves, waiting to see which Ukrainian special forces show up so they can impersonate them and slip in undetected. It all goes to plan and TP and his team are able to blend in with the Ukrainians.

TP and his team are there to extract a person only known as “Well-Dressed Man’ in the script (WDM). WDM was sitting in a room with a Russian Colonel General and was there to sell what everyone believed to be Plutonium-241 to him when in actuality, it was a piece of The Algorithm. Before TP breaks into the room where WDM is, he spots the (actual) Ukrainian Special Forces gassing the audience of the Opera unconscious, which confuses him. TP successfully infiltrates the room, knocks the Russian General unconscious and gives WDM the CIA code phrase: “We live in a twilight world.” to which WDM responds with the appropriate response phrase of “And there’s no friends at dusk.”

After verifying the WDM, TP explains that the Opera Siege was a setup in order to kill WDM under the cover of a terrorist

attack. WDM is confused, saying to TP: “But I established contact.” TP then explains that his mission is either to rescue him or kill him, and he tells WDM to make up his mind quickly. This is likely a bluff as I’ll explain later that it makes no sense for the TP to have actually gotten the orders to kill WDM here.

[Deception: Bluffing]

TP asks where “the package” is (what they believe to be Plutonium) and WDM informs him that it’s at coat check. He successfully convinces WDM to come with him to their team's rally point but encounters heavy gunfire from the Terrorists that pin him down. On his way out of the audience room, TP spots the Ukrainian forces planting bombs in the audience seats. TP is naturally stumped by this, a Ukrainian Agent notices his confusion and realizes that he’s an imposter and starts questioning who he is. Before he’s gunned down, another member of TP’s team (verifying himself by saying “No friends at dusk, huh?”) shoots the agent and takes over TP’s job of extracting WDM so TP can get to coat check to secure the Plutonium.

TP finds the Plutonium but remains confused at its encapsulation, later stating that he’s never seen a Plutonium container that looks like it. After he gets to his team's rally

point with WDM already there, he demands that WDM and a member of his team (referred to in the script as “Target”) to swap clothes, swap exit routes and take the 241 with them as he no longer trusts that their escape route is fully safe due to his reasoning that the Ukrainians clearly have their own hidden agenda combined with the fact that their way in and out are also Ukrainian. Considering the top secret nature of their mission, he also reasoned that the “Ukrainians” that brought them there wouldn’t actually know what WDM looked like and thus would be fooled by the fake.

[Thinking: Critical][Reasoning: Abductive, Inductive][Field Skills: Tactics, Contingencies][Adaptability: Environmental]

TP goes on a brief side quest to clear the planted bombs from the audience stands and throws them into the empty rows above, leaving the audience unharmed. While doing this, he’s saved by a mysterious stranger (we later learn to be Neil) who inverts a bullet through the shoulder of the man holding TP at gunpoint (TP doesn’t know what inversion is at this point). He succeeds in the side quest and runs out of the Opera House with Target. They both make it back into the truck they came in but the driver grabs Target by the face and says, in Russian, “It’s not the guy!”. The driver then shoots Target in the leg and captures

both Target and The Protagonist.

TP and Target are strapped to chairs where they are tortured for information by the Russians who brought them there. TP has a silver poison pill in his shoulder pocket that would kill him in order to not leak any information, but the Russians discover this and throw it away. The Target “didn’t last 18 minutes” because he truly didn’t have anything to hide (as he’s not the real WDM). So they then proceed to torture TP for 18 whole hours, pulling his teeth out with pliers one by one, hoping that he’ll give up and tell them where the WDM and the “Plutonium-241” is. But the TP doesn’t give up, after 18 hours of torture, he sees that Target is holding out another silver pill for him to bite on. TP pushes his chair over while the Russians aren’t looking and swallows the pill, killing him in action.

[Adversity Capacity: Mental Fortitude, Stress Tolerance, Pain Tolerance, Perseverance, Composure]

TP wakes up in a hospital bed after having surgery done on his jaw. He sees a man standing over him that sarcastically remarks “Welcome to the afterlife” and explains that his team didn’t make it out and was killed by “private Russians” or so they think. TP realizes that the suicide pills given to them were

fake and questions why. The man simply answers that it's a "test". The test was to see if a recruit would choose death over giving up intelligence to the enemy and TP passed.

Now pronounced dead to the world, TP is recruited into a mysterious organization fighting an undisclosed "cold war". The man gives him the interlocking hands gesture and its accompanying code phrase, "Tenet". The Protagonist, now recruited into Tenet. Is placed inside a windmill to wait for a boat to pick him up that takes him to a lab where a scientist will explain the concepts of inversion to him.

Future Perspective:

Remember how I said that there's not one, clear cut explanation for Tenet and that almost anything works, the only difference being levels of complexity? This scene takes it to the extreme. I'll try to formulate events based on the available facts we know and were shown in the film.

We know that:

- Sator was involved, it's outright confirmed near the end of the movie before the Stalsk-12 operation but we see this first hand via the "Ukrainian" drivers that suddenly switched to speaking Russian and tortured TP and Target for

information. As well as the fact that WDM was selling the Plutonium to a Russian General is more than enough to suggest this (apart from the obvious fact that the Plutonium is the last section of the Algorithm that Sator needs).

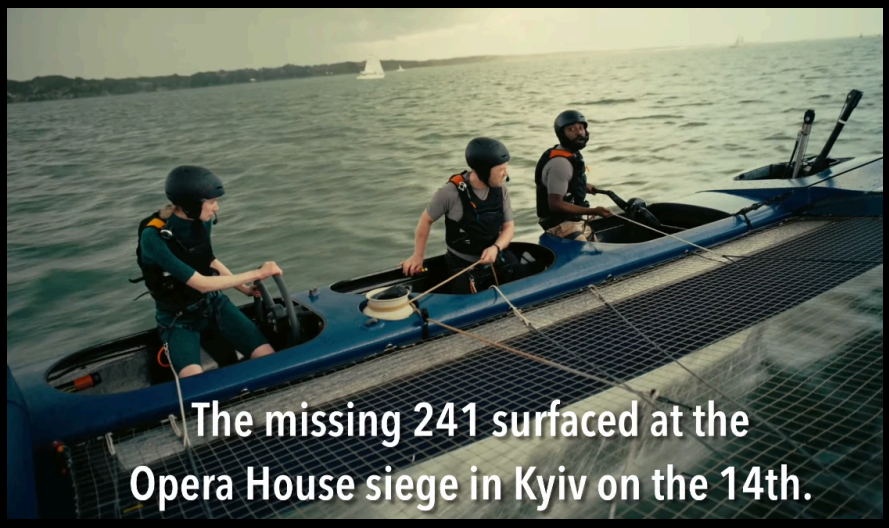
- Ukraine was involved in the scheme and had their own agenda, the fact that they gassed the Terrorist and showed up immediately after the attack happened and also the fact that they attempted to bomb the whole audience suggests this. We also know via Priya and the Tallinn sequence that it was the Ukrainians that walked away with the 241 in the end.
- Future Protagonist/Tenet was also involved. We know this because of the faked pills, the fact that Neil was there, the fact that they extracted TP and the fact they knew what happened at all. The exact methods on how and why he was involved will be discussed below.

Knowing these facts, here's my theory on the complete story:

(Note: Credits to Apocryphate for making the Tenet - The Definitive Analysis Ep 1 video which I'm pretty much stealing word for word as well as the screenshots. I hope he makes more episodes in the future.)

In 2008, either Tenet or Tenet-friendly forces lifted the Plutonium-241 out of a Russian missile site. This is the same 241 that was given to the CIA for it to have “surfaced” at the Opera Siege that WDM was trying to sell to the Russian General.





This was all a part of a plan to get in contact with Sator, who’s averse to dealing with the CIA directly (as shown in the same scene as the screenshot above). The CIA then decides to utilize WDM to pose as an arms dealer to meet with the Russian

General so the two of them can make the exchange in the Opera House, establishing direct contact with Sator in the process.

Because he's "tapped into the intelligence services", Sator learns that the WDM is actually CIA so he himself won't show up to the Opera House although he will remain nearby, in case he needs to perform a temporal pincer. He makes a plan based on the knowledge that the 241 will be at the Opera House on the 14th. From the shadows, he finances and arms a group of Russian Terrorists to break into the Kiev Opera House and hold the audience Hostage. They don't know who they're doing this for, but their mission is to secure the floor and the VIP boxes, taking the WDM with them to get the 241 and leave with it. The Russian General knows this plan which is why he motions to WDM to tell him to stay seated when they arrived at the Opera.



Sator then hedges his bet and deliberately leaks this plan to the CIA so that they formulate a plan of their own to rescue WDM, who employ local Ukrainian sources (Sator's men in disguise) to get the CIA team in and out (Sator made sure to tell his men what WDM looked like just in case.) If the CIA fails to extract WDM then he gets the 241 from the Russian General, if the CIA succeeds then he gets it from the extraction team. This is where The Protagonist comes into play at the beginning of the movie and is also why he didn't receive orders to kill WDM, it would make no sense for him to do that.

This is also where Future Protagonist (FP) comes into play. Remembering that his team was ambushed at the service tunnel by "private Russians". He makes sure Priya tips off the Ukrainians about the entire Terrorist plan which is why they show up instantly. The Ukrainians agenda was to make the Russian Terrorist attack look even worse than it actually was in order to gain support from the public for an anti-Russian war. He makes sure Priya also lets the Ukrainians know that they'll find Russians attempting to escape with Plutonium-241 via the service tunnels. Note that Priya followed this plan thinking this would result in Sator getting the 241, not losing it. This was her goal from the beginning. Meaning that FP saw through Priya's desire to "tie up loose-ends" by herself based on what little he

knew of her in the past (and what little he knows about her now in the future given that he recruited her). He even mistakenly let her believe that tying up loose ends was her role in Tenet when it wasn't, probably just for this exact moment and another one that will come much later.
[Emotional Intelligence: EU, EF][Social Intelligence: Social Skills, Social Awareness, Social Intuition, Leadership][Sensory: Observation] [Foresight: Anticipation]

This also would have required The Protagonist to have seen through Sator's plan that contained multiple contingencies and also had the failsafe of a Temporal Pincer. Remember, all he knows about the Siege is what he himself went through in the past, he couldn't have known to what extent Sator planned the Siege, meaning he figured it out all on his own.
[Reasoning: Logical, Abductive, Inductive][Foresight: Prediction, Anticipation, Preclusion]

But this is where something doesn't add up, Sator's men would have absolutely zero reason to be in the service tunnels. So if they really were there, then that would mean that Sator knew where the 241 was but didn't perform a temporal pincer movement to go and get it. This makes absolutely no sense as the 241 was the last section of the Algorithm he needed, he already has the

other 8 pieces, he would've never just lost sight of it. So what's the deal?

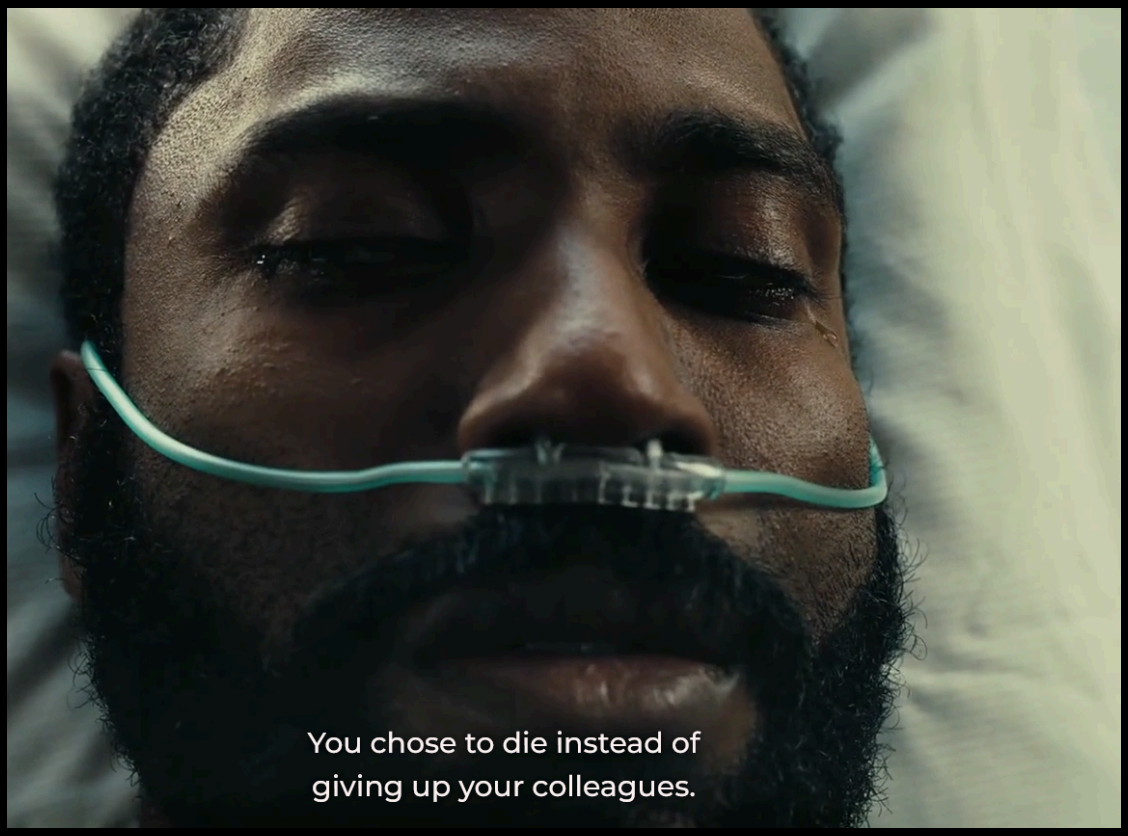
My explanation: The "private Russians" were a lie.

This is where FP's plan came into fruition. After luring the Ukrainians to the service tunnels via Priya, they see TP's CIA team attempting to leave via those same service tunnels. The CIA team are figured out to be cheap disguises of the Ukrainian forces (in the same way that TP was figured out earlier) and they are quickly gunned down as from the Ukrainians POV, they just caught some random people disguised as their own forces attempting to smuggle radioactive material out of the Opera. The Ukrainians then grab the Plutonium-241 and bring it back with them, ready to be transported through northern Europe so it can be at Tallinn right where FP needs it to be. All the while Sator is left with absolutely no idea where the 241 ended up and Priya is also none the wiser to exactly how the Ukrainians got the 241 either. This is so Priya can conclude and earnestly tell TP that it was Sator who killed his team, planting the seed of revenge against Sator into the young Protagonist's mind.

[Inter EI: EU, EF][Social Intelligence: Leadership, Social Awareness, Social Regulation][Thinking: Critical, Creative, Abstract, Systemic][Analysis/Insight: Social, Behavioral, Cultural, Systemic, Strategic][Foresight: Anticipation,

Preclusion][Strategy: Efficiency, Complexity, Building, Fortitude, Forecasting][Planning: Coverage, Intricacies][Manipulation: Indirect, Logical, Individual, Mass][Deception: Misdirection, Fabrication, Concealment, Disguise, Information Control][Psychology: Psychoanalysis, Psychological Warfare, Seeing Through People][Field Skills: Setting Traps, Tactics][Counteraction: Castling, Navigation, Trap Evasion][Mentality: Ruthlessness, Cunning]

The decision to kill his own team and then be the cause for members of Tenet to die must’ve impacted FP pretty hard. As we see in the film afterwards, TP was moved to tears upon hearing that the rest of his team died while he survived, showcasing that he’s a highly empathetic person.



[Inter EI: Empathy][Intra EI: EM, EE][Adversity Capacity: Mental Fortitude, Perseverance][Mentality: Ruthlessness, Tenacity]

Before the mission even began, FP swapped the pill in WDMs jacket for a fake. We know this because the pill that TP took in his past that put him into a coma was actually from WDMs clothes that got swapped onto Target, so why did WDM have a fake pill on him? Logically you could guess that since FP knew that TP would no longer trust his exit, all he would have to do is make sure that the pill in WDMs jacket was a fake but that still doesn't answer the question of why he had a pill to begin with. My

explanation: WDM was originally the one that was going to be indoctrinated into Tenet, he’s a CIA agent just the same as TP, Tenet seems to target them for recruitment more often than not. Perhaps TP’s intervention in the past changed events in the future, a future where WDM was the leader of Tenet.

Either way, this is yet another layer of contingencies from FP. Either the past stays the way it happened in his memory, or something changes and WDM takes the pill as intended, which would erase himself from existence. Showing that he’s prepared to do anything in order to save the world, even if it involves his own demise.
[Planning: Coverage, Preparation, Intricacies, Invincibility][Mentality: Ruthlessness, Tenacity, Maturity]

After this happens and after TP and Target are kidnapped and interrogated. FP simply orders a group of Tenet operatives to wait nearby for TP to take the pill, to which they’ll rescue him after his interrogators leave. This completes his past self introduction into Tenet, setting TP on the path to become what he is now. As a consequence, TP is pronounced dead. This is also a deliberate measure as it’s pertinent that Sator doesn’t know who TP is so that TP can get the drop on him later in the movie. Sator didn’t even know that TP was getting interrogated, just

that an interrogation with two agents was unsuccessful. This also ensured that Posterity wouldn't know who managed to stop them in the end as the person who was actually behind all of this literally died on the same day as the plan came to its successful end. They could've never known that a dead CIA agent was the one that beat them all.

[General Intelligence: Fluid, Crystallized][Thinking: Overall][Strategy: Everything][Planning: Everything][Deception: Misdirection, Fabrication, Concealment, Information Control][Judgement: Overall]

Retrospect:

For those of us who've seen the film but don't remember, this whole thing happens at the exact same time as the Stalsk-12 operation that happens at the end of the film. This is a key detail that will be brought up later in the Stalsk-12 section.

It's also important to note that Priya did NOT know who The Protagonist was, at all, even though it was her own boss. This is because Tenet is founded on "knowledge divided", every single member only knows exactly as much as they need to know and nothing more. Some people know Tenet's purpose while others

don’t, most know what Time Inversion is while some don’t even know that much etc. Priya simply never needed to know what her boss looked like. The proof of Priya not knowing that TP is the younger version of her boss/leader will come later.

In summary: FP stole the 241 in 2008 just to give it to the CIA, indirectly manipulating them to sell it to Sator. He then indirectly manipulated Priya to manipulate Ukraine to being at the service tunnel right where FP already set up the plan for Ukraine to end up with the 241. This tricked both Sator and Priya into not knowing what exactly happened to the 241, leading both of them to draw their own conclusions which furthered The Protagonist’s goals. And all of this also involved seeing through and countering Sator’s grand plan to get the 241 which didn’t end up happening and he walked away from the Siege with absolutely no idea what happened to it. Also all of this was set up to indirectly manipulate his own past self into joining his organization which also concealed the Tenet organization from the future because how could a dead guy possibly be in charge of anything, especially when by the time TP died, Tenet had already won in Stalsk-12.

Oh and just in case anything could have gone wrong, he sent Neil to the Siege specifically to save him which worked.

I count 5 layers of Manipulation, 4 layers of Deception, Planning Coverage that extended from the very beginning to the very end of the mission AND it was all Countering Sator’s plan to get the 241. He did all of this without having any knowledge of what Sator’s plan was because he couldn’t have known any of it despite witnessing aspects of the plan first handedly. He simply saw through Sator that much.

Part 2: Oslo Freeport



This part will cover everything from meeting Priya up until the moment where TP is ready to meet Sator.

Present Perspective:

TP, after being holed up in a windmill for two weeks, is sent on a trip to a science lab where a scientist affiliated with Tenet explains the basics of Time Inversion to him, to which he catches on quite quickly, asking questions about the implications it has on free will. One of the demonstrations of

Time Inversion had him “shooting” a gun towards a piece of rubble. The gun starts off empty and by reverse-pulling the trigger, the bullets jump back into the gun, filling up the magazine. The Protagonist states that the bullets “look like today’s” and requests for the analysis on the material of the bullets to determine where they came from, successfully showcasing his outside-of-the-box thinking and resourcefulness which directly set him up to meet Priya as the bullets are revealed to come from India, from a certain Sanjay Singh. [General Intelligence: Fluid, Crystallized][Adversity Capacity: Mental Fortitude, Perseverance, Impulse Control][Analysis/Insight: Systemic, Overall]

TP, now in India, hits up a CIA contact and requests for some assistance. The contact says he’ll “see who’s on deck” and sets him up with a meeting. The assistance comes in the form of Neil, who introduces himself as somebody who knows quite a lot about TP already despite seemingly having never met before.

Neil comes up with a plan to get into Sanjay’s house and they execute the plan flawlessly. TP holds Sanjay at gunpoint and demands to know where he got the inverted bullets from, but Sanjay has no idea what he’s talking about. This is where Sanjay’s wife, Priya, steps in and flashes her Tenet gang sign

and Priya and TP begin talking while Sanjay sits inside like a cuck.

Priya reveals to TP that the inverted bullets came from a man by the name of Andrei Sator. She explains that Sator is incredibly hard to come into contact with but that she'll set TP up with another contact that will brief him on how to get the job done. With that, TP and Neil flee and TP makes his way to London where Priya's contact could be found.

On that note, remember how I talked about the proof that Priya didn't know who TP was? I'll get that out of the way now

The proof is in this action:



Priya, upon seeing TP breaking into her home, reaches for the alarm and presses it. Now, if Priya really knew that TP was her boss, then this action makes no sense. All she would have to do is just flash her Tenet gesture and code so TP and her can get to talking. Here we can clearly see that she felt threatened with TP's sudden intrusion and only revealed herself to be a Tenet member when TP started talking about the combination of metals of the inverted bullets being unique to India, indicating to her that the man pointing a gun at her husband is somebody who "passed the test" to get into Tenet. I'll reiterate once more that Priya not knowing about TP will be important for later

TP heads on over to London and gets debriefed on the plan to get to Sator via blackmailing his wife, Kat. TP shows keen insight and critical thinking during this whole exchange by rapidly processing the information as well as deeply understanding the situation he's in at an intuitive level. He does this quite often during the course of the film so I'm going to group all his Fluid Intelligence/Adaptability feats into this one lest I keep mentioning it over and over again.

[General Intelligence: Fluid][Adaptability: Cognitive, Environmental]

TP heads on over to Shipley’s where Kat works and engages in the plan to use a copy of the fake painting that Kat authenticated as a means to blackmail her into bringing him to Sator. TP was able to make up a story that he got the painting from a Swiss Banker, traced it back to Arepo (the paintings forger) and wants to get Kat to reveal a way to get into contact with Sator, using the information of the fact that she authenticated a fake painting as leverage to make her give up the information. [Deception: Bluffing, Sophistry, Fabrication, Acting Skills]

However, Kat sees through the lies and says that Sator already knows that the painting is a fake. TP then makes the remark that “People who’ve amassed fortunes such as your husbands generally aren’t okay with being cheated out of any of it”. This is what gets Kat to reveal the information that Sator is purposely using the fake drawing as his hold over Kat as a means to control her. Kat begins spilling everything to TP, revealing her estranged and abusive relationship with Sator. TP then pivots and asks where the painting is, promising her that he can get rid of the painting and therefore remove Sator’s hold over Kat, promising that it’ll give her a second chance at betraying Sator. All in exchange for her giving him that introduction to Sator which TP needs to complete his mission.

Shortly after this, a group of Sator's men make their presence known by sitting at their table. TP simply laughs this off and asks if Kat knew this was going to happen. Kat gets up to leave but TP stops her, kisses her on the neck and puts a phone number in Kat's jacket pocket. This sets up TP's image in Sator's eyes as someone who's simply trying to get with Kat romantically, hiding the truth of the matter that TP needs Sator for more information on his relationship with the future (Posterity).

After Sator's men try and fail at beating TP to a pulp, Kat gets in a car and is driven away, not before seeing TP walk out of the restaurant without a scratch. Realizing TP's potential, she later tries to call the number he gave her and the moment it rings, TP shows up behind her, already waiting nearby. TP then asks where the painting is and Kat finally reveals that (she thinks) it's at Oslo Freeport, one of many Freeports that Sator has set up across the globe. This shows us that TP successfully manipulated Kat AND set up Sator's manipulation while he was at it.

[Inter EI: EU, EP, EF][Intra EI: EM][Adversity Capacity: Composure][Analysis/Insight: Psychological Profiling, Behavioral, Contextual][Strategy: Efficiency, Building][Manipulation: Direct, Indirect, Emotional][Deception:

Misdirection, Concealment][Psychology: Psychoanalysis][Field Skills: Information Gathering][Adaptability: Environmental]

Kat also reveals in the same conversation that art is of no importance to Sator, but the Freeports themselves are. With this, TP links back up with Neil to explain the situation with the Freeports and the deal with the painting. TP sends Neil to go for a tour of Oslo Freeport to see if he can find any way to steal the painting and get away with it, as well as to find what else Sator might be hiding there. TP at this point suspects that Sator would also be hiding the Plutonium-241 there and tells Neil to bring lead-lined gloves (TP doesn't know that the Ukrainians have it at this point). He also tells Neil to keep an eye on what the Freeport's fire safety system is like, in case they can exploit its lockdown procedure to their advantage. This works and Neil reports back that the electronic locks will revert back into normal, pickable locks once there's a lockdown. [Reasoning: Inductive][Planning: Preparation][Field Skills: Information Gathering]

TP notices that the space in the center of the Freeport is too large and seemingly unoccupied. He can't figure out what's meant to be there but it must be something important. He makes an

assumption that that is where Sator is hiding both the painting and the 241, as well as any other inverted material he may have. [Analysis/Insight: Systemic][Sensory: Observation][Reasoning: Abductive, Inductive]

From here on out, the rest of the Oslo plan/strat is mostly Neil's so I'll skip the majority of it. I'll get into why I don't think FP really had a hand in anything that happened at Oslo later in the Future Perspective section.

TP and Neil make it to the center of the Freeport where they discover Sator's Turnstile. An inverted version of TP comes out of the turnstile and starts fighting TP. TP is overwhelmed at first but very quickly adapts to fighting someone moving backwards in time who's operating with their physics, velocity, force etc. completely reversed.
[FSIQ: CPI, FRI][General Intelligence: Fluid]

After the whole fiasco is over. TP and Neil meet up again to discuss the next move forward. Neil remarks that he's seen too much but he's still alive, which means that TP decided to bring him along. TP then explains Tenet's mission, to stop a temporal "cold war" between the present and the future. TP states that

he’s going back to Priya for some answers and will set up Neil as a go-between and reminds him that to Neil, it’s all about Plutonium-241, basically telling him not to mention anything that would give away the fact that he knows about inversion. Once again showcasing TP’s fluid intelligence and adaptability to his environment/circumstances.

[Planning: Process, Coverage][Deception: Info Control][Field Skills: Tactics][Judgement: Decision Making, Situational Awareness, Intuition, Methodical Approach]

Future Perspective:

There’s not much to say about this whole section, honestly. Like I said before, almost everything about the Oslo sequence was Neil’s plan.

Yes, this means that I think that Neil wasn’t informed at all about what mission he was getting into but he could’ve guessed just based on what he did previously at the Opera Siege. I imagine that FP simply told Neil that his past self would be there, in the beginning stages of his journey and then sent him to Mumbai to be on stand-by. The only real feat here is that FP was able to sneak Neil into the CIA or at least has someone inside the FP that can feed information to and from their

services, which is why when TP called a CIA agent for assistance, it’s Neil that showed up.

My evidence to support this is the fact that “knowledge divided” is the entire point of the Tenet organization, it wouldn’t really make much sense for Neil to be told EVERYTHING that needed to happen probably because it would add some unneeded stress. Oh and also because I can’t see a way that Neil’s actions would make complete sense if he knew everything from the beginning.

Part 3: Sator's Yacht



Present Perspective:

TP visits Priya in Mumbai where Priya briefs him again on what a turnstile is and explains that Sator was instructed by Posterity on how to build them. TP asks how Sator is able to do this and Priya says "You have the best chance of finding out" TP reports back that the painting was destroyed and thus their leverage is gone but this is where Priya reveals to TP that the Plutonium-241 isn't in Sator's hands because "he got the [CIA] team, but not the 241". The 241 made it to the Ukrainians hands after the Siege and it's now moving towards Tallinn which Sator doesn't know about (thanks to FP's plan from the future). Priya instructs TP to use the 241 as leverage in order to get TP

inside Sator’s inner circle but without losing control of the Plutonium. She also reminds TP that they’re being attacked by the future and that TP must find out how Sator is helping

TP links back up with Kat and explains that the painting has been destroyed and requests to be introduced to Sator. Kat asks “as what?” to which TP responds with: “I’m a former first secretary from the American Embassy in Riyadh. We met at a party last June. It was June 29th, 7:00 or 7:30. Salmon was on the printed menu but swapped for sea bass on the night, Sator left early and that’s when we met. I came into Shipley’s in London, you ran into me here and wanna show me your yacht.”
Kat responds with “He’ll think we’re having an affair” to which TP then says “Then he’ll wanna meet me.”

This accomplished two things. For one, it gave Kat a reason as to why she knows TP, even if that reason is a lie. Secondly, by getting Kat to spread that lie to Sator, it would further his interest in TP, which will cause him to want to meet him. TP is already well aware of his image that he gave to Sator, he literally beat up 4 of his guys in a restaurant but he told Kat to tell Sator that he’s a diplomat. This dissonance of backstory compared to skills would make Sator come to only one conclusion, TP is an intelligence agent. This goes exactly according to plan

as Sator later tells Kat that “He’s good with his fists for a diplomat”. The meeting between TP and Sator goes along as per TP’s plan.

At the meeting itself, Sator confronts TP if he’s slept with his wife to which TP responds with “Uh, no… Not yet”
[Miscellaneous Feats: Ragebaiting]
Sator then threatens TP with torture and summons over one of his underlings to take TP. Before he has the chance to, TP drops his bombshell line: “Do you like opera?”

This confirms Sator’s suspicions that TP is an intelligence agent because how else would he know about the Opera Siege? Furthermore, it also solidifies Sator recruiting TP. Think of it from Sator’s perspective, he managed to lose track of the 241 at the Opera Siege, he has no idea where it is or where it’s going. A few weeks later, some random guy he doesn’t know comes up to him and reveals that he knows about the Opera Siege and therefore knows about the 241. Sator then draws the conclusion that TP is a CIA agent that was assigned to meet with Sator so that the CIA can locate the 241 and secure it using Sator’s resources in Tallinn, Estonia to which the CIA has no presence in which is why they’d go to Sator just for help. This ignites a spark in Sator as he sensed his opportunity for a second chance

to steal the 241 off the CIA, which is exactly what TP was counting on. Sator makes another meeting with TP for 8am the next day, on his sail boat.

[Inter EI: EU, EF][Intra EI: EM][Thinking: Creative, Holistic, Linear] [Reasoning: Inductive][Analysis/Insight: Psychological Profiling, Behavioral][Foresight: Anticipation][Strategy: Efficiency, Building][Planning: Process, Formulation Speed, Coverage][Manipulation: Indirect][Deception: Misdirection, Concealment][Field Skills: Tactics, Setting Traps][Judgement: Decision Making, Situational Awareness, Methodical Approach][Mentality: Cunning]

On the sail boat, TP and Sator go through negotiating a partnership but before they could finish, Kat unbuckles Sator's harness, throwing him overboard and crashing him against the ocean, knocking him unconscious. TP acts quickly to turn the boat around and rescues Sator from drowning, saving his life. Now with Sator's thanks for saving his life. TP uses that as leverage to secure the partnership with Sator to secure the 241 in Tallinn.

Later that night, TP sneaks out to witness Sator receiving some more gold from Posterity (reminder that his mission was to "find out how Sator is in contact with the future") but gets spotted

and attacked by Volkov. TP is brought in front of Sator and Sator begins interrogating him as to why his business would concern him. Sator questions who TP really is and how he even came by his information about the Opera Siege. TP is able to quickly deflect each question and even hide the fact that he knows about the “We live in a twilight world” CIA codephrase. Throughout this, he remained composed and collected despite having a gun to his head and having been beaten up a good amount.

[Intra EI: EM][Adversity Capacity: Mental Fortitude, Stress Tolerance, Pain Tolerance, Composure]

Sator accepts TP’s bullshit and reminds him that the deal is still on and that he wants Volkov on TP’s team. TP refuses and says that he’ll be the one to steal the 241 with Sator paying him off with his wife Kat acting as the middle man between them.

Future Perspective:

Once more, there’s not a lot to say here. This entire sequence was TP’s plan and I don’t see any real future interference made by Tenet.

The only thing to note here is that Priya gave TP the mission to find out how Sator is helping the future, which is information they're already well aware of as proven by the fact that it's Priya herself that literally explains what The Algorithm is to TP later in the movie (before TP even gets on Sator's boat from Priya's POV in the movies timeline.)

This shows that this was a deliberate action made by Tenet (FP) to deceive his own past self in order to carry out Sator's trapping exactly as planned. Whether Priya was privy to this plan or not is unknowable but I imagine she was. Either way, this is yet another part of the planning process for Stalsk-12. [Social Intelligence: Leadership, Social Awareness, Social Regulation][Strategy: Complexity, Fortitude, Forecasting][Planning: Process, Coverage, Intricacies, Invincibility][Manipulation: Indirect, Logical, Individual][Deception: Concealment, Disguise, Information Control]

Part 4: Tallinn



Present Perspective:

With TP now successfully working with Sator to receive the 241, it was now time for him to move on over to Tallinn in order to collect it.

After Sator tosses him some of the gold he received from the future as an advanced payment for TP, TP then meets back up with Neil at Tallinn and relays how Sator gets messages from the future. He deduced just by looking at Sator receiving the capsule that Sator buries a time capsule, transmits the location and then digs it back up to collect the inverted materials they send back, seemingly instantaneously. He then asks Neil about

the soil samples on the bar of gold that he sent him, showcasing that like the bullets that led him to Priya, he has a keen insight and scientific approach to solving problems. [Reasoning: Deductive][Analysis/Insight: Systemic, Strategic]

Through his conversation with Neil, we learn that TP had already scouted out the convoy that's carrying the Plutonium-241, monitoring it to see how it's tracked and where it is on the highway. Using the information he received that it's in a crowded highway and is monitored via GPS, TP comes up with a plan to steal the 241.

TP gets Neil to recruit people connected to Tenet to show up and follow the convoy in 4 different heavy vehicles, with one of them being a firetruck. He requests that these people bring assault rifles, guns that "make the point without being fired". As I'll get into later, a shootout in broad daylight on a highway is the last thing that TP would want. He then requests a fast car "that doesn't look fast" for he and Neil to sit in to sneak up on the convoy and speed away after the heist is done. He also makes one last (off screen) request to make sure that somebody on their team brings a way to scramble and disable the convoy's radio signals.

The most important part of this all: TP reminds Neil that they have to set all of this up with nothing in the record. Nothing electronic, nothing paper. This is obviously because Sator is in contact with Posterity, the moment they and or Sator get a whiff of anything that enters the record (remember that Sator has access to intelligence services such as the CIA), Sator can then use that information to invert and ambush them once they get the 241. TP reminds Neil that “[Sator’s] ignorance is our only protection”.

With all the pieces in place, Neil gives the signal to 3 of the 4 vehicle teams to get into position one after the other. The vehicles form a square around the convoy (one truck carrying the plutonium, two police cars at the front and back of it). The first truck moves alongside the convoy to its right, the second pulls in front while the third boxes it from behind. With only the convoy’s left side still free, that is where Neil speeds up the car to catch up with the firetruck and drops TP off with it, with him dressed in a fireman's uniform for extra cover. With perfect timing, TP signals the firetruck to begin moving once he gets on it and the firetruck pulls to the left side of the convoy, fully boxing it in.



The convoy was already suspicious at this point considering how many vehicles are so close to them but the firetruck helped to ease their suspicion since it’s also an emergency service along with the police that’s escorting them. This put the drivers mind’s at ease and made them think for a few moments longer that them being boxed up was all a coincidence. With everyone in place, Neil begins counting down from 5. All at once, all

vehicles that surrounded the convoy began closing in on it at once, with the truck that laid in front of the convoy slamming their brakes at the countdowns end. This crushed the two police cars and left the convoy truck itself completely trapped while STILL moving the convoy truck along with it. After this happens, the Tenet team is signalled to begin jamming the convoy's radio signals, preventing the police and the truck itself from calling for backup. At a command and control centre, they comment that the convoy's radio has gone down, but when a commanding officer asks if the truck is still moving, the man who made the call says yes. This makes the commanding officer simply hand-wave away the distress, probably thinking that it was all due to a bug of some kind. After all, there's no possible way for a heist or a robbery to have taken place with two police cars escorting them WHILE the truck was still moving, right?

After this, TP begins to climb on top of the firetrucks ladder, now ready to position himself on top of the truck carrying the 241 to break into it through the roof. He blows the roof open, grabs the 241 from the inside and makes his way back out of the firetruck and back into Neil's car while still on the move. While making his way back into the car, another police car happened to drive by them and signals for them all to pull over, but TP accounted for something like this which is why he

positioned a guy to be on the outside of the firetruck with him so he could shoot the wheels of the police car, leaving them behind and in their dust.

Outside of that small hiccup, TP jumps back into Neil's car and they speed far away from the trucks, with the convoy none the wiser to who stole their Plutonium.
[Social Intelligence: Leadership, Social Cognition, Social Regulation][Thinking: Critical, Creative, Abstract, Lateral][Analysis/Insight: Cultural, Systemic, Strategic][Foresight: Anticipation][Strategy: Efficiency, Logistics, Building, Fortitude, Forecasting][Planning: Process, Preparation, Formulation Speed, Coverage, Intricacies][Deception: Misdirection, Concealment, Disguise, Information Control]Field Skills: Tactics][Judgement: Decision Making, Situational Awareness, Methodical Approach]

Out of nowhere, Inverted Sator pulls up in an inverted car and holds a gun to Kat’s head, forcing him to give up the 241. While Sator is getting close to pulling the trigger, another inverted car suddenly un-crashes itself and inserts itself in the middle

of TP and Sator’s cars.



TP tosses the orange briefcase to Sator’s car. Sator then gets into another car and gets away, leaving Kat in the car alone. TP jumps into Sator’s car to rescue her and succeeds. After this, a gunfight happens and Neil says that he’s going to “call in the cavalry”. TP is confused and asks “What cavalry?!” because he didn’t request any additional backup teams for this mission. TP and Kat are taken to the Freeport at Tallinn where Sator keeps his turnstile and Inverted Sator begins interrogating TP, asking him where the 241 is. TP handed him an empty case, so where is the 241?

TP tries to play dumb but Sator shoots Kat in the stomach, saying that the next shot will be at her head. TP finally gives in and says he left it in the BMW, in the glovebox. Normal Sator then comes out of nowhere and begins beating TP with a pistol,

requesting to know what The Protagonist says before he uses the turnstile to invert (The interrogation hadn’t happened yet from Normal Sator’s POV, confusing I know). TP simply states “I already told you” and Sator says he believes him.

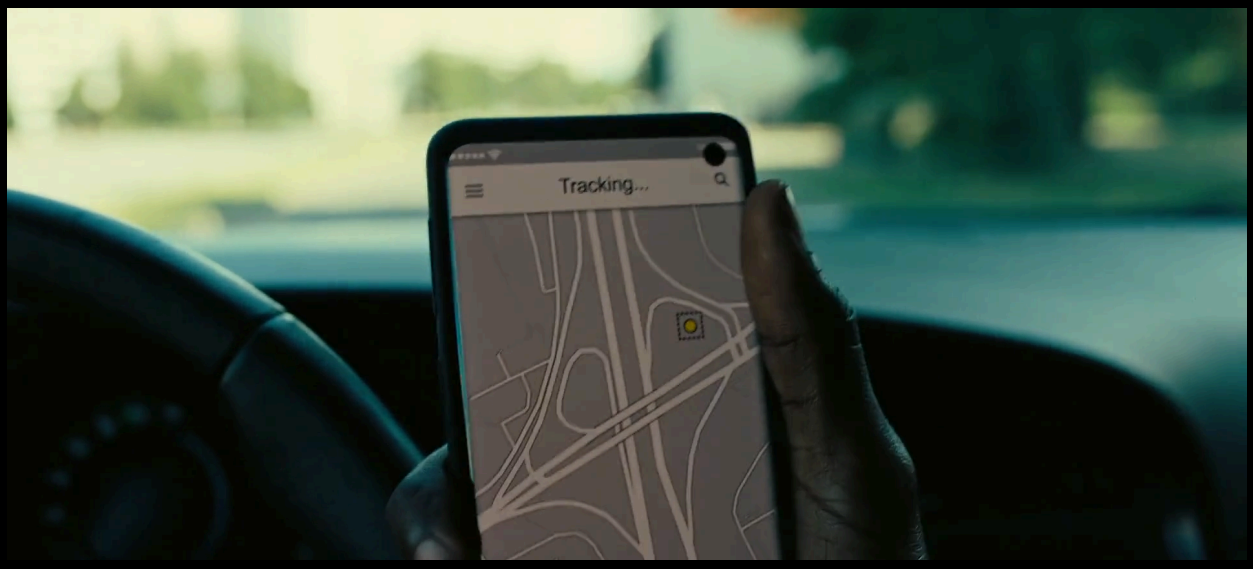
Neil and other Tenet forces lead by Ives show up, running Sator and his men away into the turnstile where they disappeared into the past. TP reveals to them all that he lied about the location of the 241, and now Sator has gone back into the past to retrieve it, being misled by TP. What had actually happened is that before throwing the orange case to Sator, TP had taken the 241 out of the case, tossed the case to Sator and threw the 241 into the car that got in the middle of them. Without anyone looking, he had also placed a tracker inside the orange case. TP explains to Neil that Sator couldn’t have verified the location while still inside the room with them, and that he would’ve shot Kat anyways. “Lying is standard operating procedure.”

[Inter EI: EU][Intra EI: EM][Thinking: Creative, Linear][Reasoning: Inductive][Foresight: Anticipation][Deception: Misdirection, Fabrication][Field Skills: Tactics] [Adaptability: Environmental][Judgement: Decision Making, Situational Awareness][Mentality: Ruthlessness]

TP and Neil learn that Kat being shot with an inverted bullet is bad news and that she'll die within 3 hours unless they invert Kat to stabilize the wound. Ives lets him know that it would take a week for the wound to heal and that they only took control of the facility minutes ago; Sator's men are still in the area. Ives reminds TP that there's no way of bringing him back from inversion using the Tallinn turnstile, this is where TP gives a nod to Neil and they come up with a plan on the spot to use the turnstile at Oslo Freeport, which had an airplane crash through it a week ago, leaving the turnstile wide open. [Thinking: Critical, Creative, Abstract, Linear][Reasoning: Inductive][Strategy: Building][Planning: Formulation Speed, Coverage]

After going through the turnstile, TP takes the opportunity to see if he can save Kat from being shot in the first place. Inverted TP then takes a conventionally moving car to find where the empty box is that Sator would've tossed out of the car upon realizing that it's empty, waiting to see when the box will fly into Sator's car (reverse-dropping it out his window).

On his way to the orange case, TP can be seen looking at his phone to see where the tracker in the case is pointing towards.



This is pretty impressive because remember, this car isn't inverted with him unlike Sator's. The car's friction was inverted, its steering was inverted, its acceleration and braking were inverted yet TP was able to drive on public roads without crashing and paying attention to his phone at the same time without much struggle. This was also during his first ever time experiencing the feeling of being inverted.
[Full-Scale IQ: PSI, FRI, CPI, VSI]

After seeing the case fly into Sator's car, TP starts up his car and goes to chase Sator, who's making his way to TP's past self at the beginning of the mission. TP slides in between his past self's car and Sator's and this is where Sator catches a glimpse of Inverted TP. TP realizes that he was the one who had the 241

all along as the inverted 241 begins reverse-bouncing around the inside of his car, making its way back to his past selves hands. He had given the 241 to himself unknowingly. Seeing this, Sator swerves and crashes into TP, flipping his car over. Sator approaches TP and mocks him before setting his car on fire with TP trapped inside. Sator, now knowing that the 241 was in future-TP's car the whole time, simply walks away and informs his team where the last section of the algorithm is. He now has all 9 sections of The Algorithm in his hands and is getting ready to gather all of them together.

TP falls unconscious as he freezes to death (inverted heat transfer of the fire) but wakes up to find himself in a shipping container heading to Oslo. He was rescued by Neil and they're now inverting back through time to a week before the Tallinn operation to use the Oslo Turnstile to heal Kat.

Future Perspective:

You might have read through this section and thought to yourself: "Really? This was just TP getting outsmarted by Sator, what's the point of this?"

Would you believe me if I told you that his past self getting outsmarted was a part of FP's plan?

After TP and Neil successfully heal Kat using the Oslo Turnstile (which is a section of the film I'm gonna skip entirely for this doc because it didn't require much intelligence to pull off), TP and Neil found themselves a week in the past relative to their Tallinn operation. Using this knowledge, TP decides to visit Priya once more and requests her to tell his past self (which Priya from her POV hadn't even talked to yet) to not let him lose the 241 (because TP only just learnt what The Algorithm was and how dangerous it was after he already lost it). Priya reminds TP that "Ignorance is our ammunition" and asks him to wonder if he knew what the algorithm was, would he have let it fall into Sator's hands?

It is here that TP realizes that Priya *wanted* TP to lose the last section of the algorithm. In her own words, "That is the only way he'll bring together the other 8". TP then realizes "I was supposed to steal it…then lose it?"

"Well mission accomplished."

[Social Intelligence: Leadership, Social Awareness, Social Cognition, Social Regulation][Thinking: Overall][Strategy: Efficiency, Complexity, Fortitude, Logistics][Planning: Coverage, Intricacies, Invincibility, Versatility][Manipulation:

Indirect, Logical, Individual, Mass][Deception: Misdirection, Fabrication, Concealment, Disguise, Information Control][Field Skills: Setting Traps, Tactics][Counteraction: Castling, Navigation, Trap Evasion][Mentality: Cunning]

To elaborate a bit more: The entirety of Part 2 and 3 of this doc was specifically set up JUST for TP to lose The Algorithm to Sator. This is a large part of the logical manipulation of Sator which will be finally realized in the upcoming part of the doc.

Part 5: Stalsk-12



“Hey you never did tell me who recruited you Neil”

“Haven’t you guessed by now? You did! Only not when you thought. You have a future in the past, years ago for me, years from now for you”

“...You’ve known me for years?”

“For me…I think this is the end of a beautiful friendship”

“But for me it’s just the beginning”

“We get up to some stuff, you're gonna love it, you’ll see. This whole operation is a Temporal Pincer”

“Whose?!”

“Yours! You’re only halfway there. I’ll see you at the beginning, friend”

This part will act as a culmination of all the plot points and threads that I've laid out in this document. As for what actually happens in this sequence in the movie, it's not too terribly important. The actual Stalsk-12 mission itself has no direct involvement from FP as far as I can tell, it was a plan entirely made by Ives and Wheeler. As for TP's strat going into it, really the only contribution was to send Kat to deal with Sator on his Yacht. Warning her to kill him AFTER she gets the signal that The Algorithm has been extracted
[Strategy: Blah Blah Blah][Planning: Blah Blah Blah]

At the end of the mission, the implosion that was meant to seal The Algorithm underground goes underway as planned. However, TP, Ives and Neil managed to successfully extract The Algorithm from the site before the implosion. They divide The Algorithm into 3 sections of 3 and promise to never talk to each other again (effectively disbanding Tenet). Neil gives his sections to TP, realizing that he would need to give his life in order for the mission to succeed and walks off into the sunset, dying a lonely death in a place that won't be discovered for centuries. But to understand why this mission was so successful, we must bring all the other parts of this doc together to figure out how exactly The Protagonist saved the world.

A New Dawn:

In true Tenet fashion, we find ourselves at the beginning of the doc. The end of the movie is simply just The Protagonist being confronted with the situation as highlighted in Part 0. No point in me repeating myself over and over again so time to bring into light the key aspect that made The Protagonist's whole plan work.

The Manipulation of Andrei Sator:

If you recall from Part 1 of this doc, The Protagonist's (or "Future Protagonist" as named by the doc) complex Plan for the Opera Siege ended with Sator being blinded to the whereabouts of the Plutonium-241 AKA the last section of The Algorithm that he needed in order to achieve his own mission. Yet as we see through the events of the film before Tallinn, he seemed pretty chill about it all. Like, why didn't he try harder to find it? The gap between the Opera Siege and when The Protagonist makes himself known is an entire month at least. Why wait until The Protagonist told him the location instead of figuring it out for himself? Was he just being cautious? No, it goes far deeper than that.

Because from Sator's POV, he was already guaranteed to win

Why? Simple: The Kiev Opera Siege and Stalsk-12 happened on the exact same day. So from Sator's POV, the events played out as follows:

- Sator and Kat spend some quality time together on his yacht. An argument between them ensues and Kat leaves.
- Just after this (or maybe earlier), Sator learns of "the CIA's plan" (actually just TP's) to sell the 241 to Russians in order to try and make contact with him.
- Sator leaves his yacht to fly to Kiev, leaving the yacht empty for Future Sator and Kat to occupy it during the Stalsk-12 battle. During the Opera Siege, Sator loses track of the 241 and his plan fails, but just as he was wondering how on Earth that could possibly happen, he gets word that an explosion over Stalsk-12 was detected.
- To Sator, this could have meant only one thing, his mission is successful. He just got information about an event that he hasn't gone through yet, the sealing of The Algorithm.

That implosion could have only meant that the burial of The Algorithm was a success. At this point, Sator wasn't even aware of the existence of someone trying to stop him but even if there were, they clearly failed. Since otherwise the implosion wouldn't have happened, right?

Following this, his apparent relaxed attitude towards what happened in the Opera Siege makes a lot more sense. From his POV it didn't matter where the 241 was because he KNOWS that he's *going* to find it and *going* to take it back no matter what. It's an already written future for him.

Then out of nowhere, a full month after the Opera Siege. His Freeport at Oslo is hit with an airplane for seemingly no reason. Maybe he received a newspaper from Posterity that told him about the event or maybe it really was just instincts but either way, he removed Kat's blackmail from the Freeport before the event happened. To him this event obviously would've been strange, why was somebody coming after his blackmail now?

Then in comes this random American that was spotted hanging out with Kat in a restaurant. He managed to take down 4 of his guys and walk away without a scratch. Kat later gives some bullshit, obvious lie that he's just a friend, a diplomat from the US Embassy. Clearly some agent has got hots for his wife so he arranges to meet this man himself at dinner just to gloat about how he's going to kill him. At this dinner, the mysterious man asks Sator "Do you like Opera?" so obviously he can't kill him now, he's clearly not after his wife anyhow. He even just scoffs

it off when The Protagonist kisses his wife on the neck right in front of him

[Miscellaneous Feats: Ragebaiting]

He invites TP to go sailing with him so they can discuss the details of what TP is after. TP explains that he just wants partnership but Sator, ever cautious of the CIA, refuses anyways. Not until he gets to the bottom of what TP is after. After TP saves his life, Sator thanks him and talks a bit about himself, clearly more open to partnership. And that's exactly when TP spills the beans. "The 241 is moving through Northern Europe on its way to long term storage in Trieste. I hear you have resources in Tallinn."

Ah, suddenly it all makes sense to him. This CIA agent faked trying to start an affair with Kat just so he could get into contact with him, the CIA is trying to get the 241 back and wants to freeload off Sator in order to do it, although Sator is probably also dumbfounded at how the CIA also managed to lose the 241. Either way, he's not going to pass up such an easy opportunity to get his rematch with the CIA and finally get the last section of The Algorithm in his hands. Besides, it's not like the CIA knows what a Temporal Pincer is, so he has them covered for sure.

The Tallinn sequence happens and this is the point where Sator is fully assured in his invincibility. He remains inverted after the mission is over, requesting for all sections of The Algorithm to make its way to the Hypocenter at Stalsk-12. He goes back in time to a month ago, the same day as the Kiev Opera Siege and crucially, the last day that he and Kat truly enjoyed each other's company. No wonder why his future self (now his present self) chose that day to be the one that secures the end of the world.

Sator knows that his past self left the yacht to go to Ukraine for the Siege so he arrives on the yacht after his past self called past-Kat back to the boat and after he leaves, gearing up to enjoy the sunset one last time. He’s surprised to see that Kat is already on the boat, he was told that she’d gone ashore (and distinctly remembers needing to call her back). Oh well, it doesn’t matter. He and Kat (who he thinks is just past Kat) pretend to enjoy their time together. Sator is informed that a team of soldiers, half moving forwards and the other inverted, have arrived at Stalsk-12 and are trying to stop the operation. He knows that The Protagonist is behind this, he did leave him his Turnstile at Tallinn, after all. Oh well, it doesn’t matter.

They can try all they wish but his victory was already decided the moment TP stupidly tried to recruit him.

Sator and TP have a brief chat over the phone near the Hypocenters pitt, where The Algorithm will be sealed for centuries for Posterity to dig it back up and use it to reverse the flow of time. TP is just one locked gate away from being able to stop it all, thankfully Sator had already thought ahead and sent Volkov down beforehand to trap them inside, ready to kill whoever dares try and stop him, he even bought a really expensive lock just to be sure. He and TP yap about ideologies before Sator decides he's had enough and orders Volkov to shoot TP in the head. The phone call lasts just long enough for Sator to hear a gunshot before Kat playfully snatches the phone and says "Enough business!" Oh well, that gunshot is all the confirmation he needed. He had done it, he won.

Of course, he hadn't won. The moment that thought entered Sator's head, Kat was already pointing a gun at him and he died shortly after.

(Note: Kat shot Sator BEFORE she got the signal that The Algorithm was extracted. This can be considered an oversight in both TP and FP's planning and I'd have to agree. However, it's ultimately inconsequential to the success of the plan as a

whole. Sator dying before The Algorithm was safely extracted simply sent the location of The Hypocenter to Posterity slightly earlier than they'd like. The Algorithm was extracted anyways so Posterity isn't gonna find anything there regardless, it's just something minor that they would've liked to cover up just to be more safe but everything else they did already more than ensured that.)

Point being, everything I just said in this section just highlights Sator's mindset behind each of his actions. What was behind him getting such a mindset? Despite his EXTREMELY cautious and untrusting nature? The Protagonist's complete Manipulation over events and information. Every single part to this document just showcases exactly how The Protagonist twisted events, feeding Sator the confidence that he was preordained to victory. Even from the very beginning, The Protagonist decided on the Opera Siege to happen on the same day as Stalsk-12 *BEFORE* Sator did, it was over before Sator even knew it. And to do this, he manipulated everyone in Tenet, including his own past self, to do his bidding. He fed everyone just the right amount of information to then feed TP just the right amount in order for him to act the way he did in the past. Any deviation would've been too risky. He's just that good

[Inter EI: EU, EF][Social Intelligence: Leadership, Social Awareness, Social Regulation, Social Cognition, Social Intuition][Thinking: Critical, Creative, Abstract, Systemic, Holistic][Reasoning: Logical, Deductive, Abductive, Inductive][Analysis/Insight: Social, Behavioral, Cultural, Systemic, Strategic][Foresight: Anticipation, Preclusion][Strategy: Efficiency, Complexity, Building, Fortitude, Forecasting, Logistics][Planning: Coverage, Intricacies, Invincibility, Process, Versatility][Manipulation: Indirect, Logical, Individual, Mass, Methods][Deception: Misdirection, Fabrication, Concealment, Disguise, Information Control][Psychology: Psychoanalysis, Hot Reading, Seeing Through People][Field Skills: Setting Traps, Tactics][Counteraction: Castling, Navigation, Trap Evasion] [Judgement: Decision Making, Situational Awareness, Intuition, Methodical Approach][Mentality: Tenacity, Ruthlessness, Cunning, Maturity]

The Manipulation of Posterity:

Now after all of that, it only leaves us with the question of *Why?* Why did The Protagonist go to such lengths to deceive Sator? I'm guessing that most of you probably already know the answer: It's because Sator was Posterity's only point of contact.

To understand this, we must understand exactly how Posterity planned their operation in the first place. As I said in the beginning, we know next to nothing about Posterity, not even their names, they're only called "a group of scientists" or just "the future". The only information we get about them comes from Neil and Priya explaining The Algorithm and its purpose. But from what little we know, we can derive their plan of action.

Firstly, they chose Sator to be their one and only ambassador in the past. Why? Well as Priya explains: "He was in the right place at the right time" (referring to the collapse of the Soviet Union). But this isn't really a good enough answer as we know that Sator was born and raised in Stalsk-12, a secret city that was never opened to the public. On paper, Sator didn't even exist, so how would Posterity have even found him? IMO the most likely explanation is that Sator became powerful and influenced anyways in the unknown timeline before Posterity decided to act. They realized that they could contact him in his adolescence and have full faith that he'd be intelligent enough to be able to handle any obstacles in the past by himself. They wagered correctly.

From this we can derive Posterity's actions from their POV:

- First, they sorted through records of people in the past, finding the best possible candidate that met the conditions of being 16 or above during the collapse of the Soviet Union and someone who is intelligent and hungry for power. From this, they found Sator
- Next, they inverted objects to specific points in the past. Capsules of Gold, forged LLC documents etc. All sent for Sator combined with instructions for Sator written in Russian. Instructing him on his next steps and guiding him on future events that haven't happened for him yet.
- Finally, they give Sator his final instructions. Once he's collected all the pieces of The Algorithm, he is to bury it all in one place, sealing it underground for them to collect. He's also given a smartwatch that will transmit the location of the buried Algorithm to Posterity upon his death.

After inverting the last object back to Sator, they instantaneously get a message from him, the location of the Hypocenter. They can't believe their eyes, it really worked. Wasting no time, they hurry over to the ruins of Stalsk-12 to uncover The Algorithm. They find the Hypocenter, they excavate the area and find…

Nothing. The Algorithm is missing. They panic, they start going over their notes, trying to figure out where exactly they went wrong but again, they find nothing. Just think from their POV, how exactly can they possibly fix this? Invert another capsule to Sator's past telling him to stop whoever or whatever it was that stopped him? They don't even know if anyone was behind the missing Algorithm in the first place let alone that someone stopped Sator. He could've just failed due to incompetence. Furthermore, sending another capsule with more instructions would be pointless, they already sent instructions to Sator, sending more capsules with contradictory instructions would just confuse Sator even more, he would probably elect to not help them at all. Posterity was utterly defeated, they cannot even *begin* to formulate a plan to get The Algorithm back anymore. It's truly gone forever.

And that is how The Protagonist outsmarted the future. I said it in Part 1 but The Protagonist had no record as he was already pronounced dead at the Opera Siege and he covered his tracks so flawlessly that nothing about himself or Tenet ever leaked to the public. He fought a war against the future and won without them ever knowing it

[Social Intelligence: Everything][Thinking: Everything][Reasoning: Everything][Analysis/Insight:

Everything][Foresight: Everything][Strategy:
Everything][Planning: Everything][Manipulation:
Everything][Deception: Everything][Field Skills:
Everything][Counteraction: Everything] [Judgement:
Everything][Mentality: Everything]

Retrospect:

And that about sums it up for The Protagonist. He planned for a decade to build an organization that will only be important and active for one month. He kept everything a secret, plugged in every hole, tied up every loose end. Every member of Tenet is either dead or gone, its army disbanded, every record of its existence removed. The Algorithm was split amongst two people who will never see each other again, and will bury it someplace that will never be uncovered.

So what more is left? Well there is still one more loose end. Who else could it be other than the person in charge of loose ends?

Conclusion:



“We’re the people saving the world from what might have been. The world could never know what could’ve happened. Even if they did, they wouldn’t care. Nobody cares about the bomb that didn’t go off, only the one that did”

Before the Stalsk-12 operation, Kat and TP briefly catch up with each other. During this conversation, TP hands Kat a cellphone and tells her to press the Talk button, state her time and

location, and then hang up if she ever feels threatened.



A while after the Stalsk-12 mission, when Kat is with her son, she spots a suspicious car parked just outside the school her son goes to. Inside the car is Priya along with an assassin, mere moments away from tying up a loose end. Priya clearly believed that Kat knew too much and had to be dealt with but just before she could, The Protagonist (who I guess at this point could now be called FP) quickly gets into the backseat and shoots the assassin from behind. Priya is confused, how could he have possibly known when and where Priya was going to kill Kat? That’s when The Protagonist pulls out a cellphone that plays a recording of Kat’s voice: “Cannon Place, 3 o’clock. Probably nothing I’m…”



Seconds after hearing this, Kat is seen saying that exact line (“Cannon Place, 3 o’clock. Probably nothing I’m…”) AFTER the phone call. So what happened?

This feat was essentially a combined feat of TP and FP. More so than all the others.

First, TP saw through Priya’s bullshit about promising to leave Kat alone after the mission is done, Priya even said to herself “What good is someone's word in our line of business?” but promised anyway. TP specifically said to tell “whoever is in charge of tying up loose ends” the same thing if she didn’t have the authority to do that. Regardless of if it was Priya herself or someone else, he knew that Kat’s safety was likely still in jeopardy. Additionally, when he handed her the phone, he made

sure to tell her specifically to reveal the minimal amount of information possible, just the time and location.

At an unknown point after the mission, The Protagonist would've gotten a call from Kat, the very same that he plays to Priya later. Knowing that she's most likely in danger, he uses one of the few turnstiles still available to him to invert back far enough in time to get to Cannon Place in England before Priya shoots Kat. He then uninverts and waits until Priya pulls up with her car. This is when we get the scene I described above. The Protagonist having a record of a phone call that hasn't happened yet

But how could he guarantee that specifically Priya would show up? He couldn't, but that's where FP came in. Once again I bring up foreshadowing from Part 1 of this doc, remember when I said that Priya was likely put in charge of "tying up loose ends" for only two reasons? This is the other reason. FP knew that Priya specifically thought that her job was to tie up loose ends, so he used that when he recruited her into Tenet, lying to her about that being her real purpose within the Tenet organization. He did that and even utilized it in the Opera Siege just so he could guarantee that Priya would show up to kill Kat so that his own past self can kill her in his future.

Priya: “*I* have to be the one to tie up loose ends.”

TP: “That was never your job.”

Priya: “Then whose was it?”

TP: “Mine. I’ve realized I haven’t been working for you, we’ve both been working for me. I’m the protagonist.”

[Inter EI: EU, EF][Thinking: Overall][Reasoning: Overall][Foresight: Anticipation, Preclusion][Strategy: Efficiency, Complexity, Fortitude, Forecasting][Planning: Coverage, Intricacies, Process][Manipulation: Indirect, Logical, Individual][Deception: Misdirection, Fabrication, Concealment, Disguise, Information Control][Psychology: Psychoanalysis, Hot Reading, Seeing Through People][Miscellaneous Feats: Aura Farming]

And with that, the movie ends. The Protagonist sits in Priya’s car and watches as Kat and her son walk away to lead safe and

happy lives.



And with that, that’s the end of the doc. Special shoutout to the members of r/IntelligenceScaling who kept me motivated to finish this doc.

Thank you all so much for reading!



(A picture of Akane for all your troubles)

Debunks:

I'll be using this section to quell any debunks that might befall upon this doc or The Protagonist. I'll update this section with any and all debunks that come my way, just to save me from having to rehash old conversations multiple times.

Debunk 1: "Tenet is a deterministic film"

You'll have noticed that I assumed that every character in Tenet had agency over their own actions and that changing the past was indeed possible for this entire document.

This debunk is the most reasonable and concise out of all of them. It's the belief of the vast majority of people that have analyzed Tenet that the film portrays fate/destiny in a beautiful/accurate way. The characters simply go through the motions, acting out a prewritten path. The future simply recreated whatever they saw in the past. Even people such as Welby Coffeespill, who's probably the person who understands the most about the events of the film than anyone else, has come to this conclusion. Naturally, this conclusion makes this whole doc kind of worthless or at least it lowers the credibility of several interpretations, as everything that was planned was simply always fated to happen.

However, this premise is false. Nolan very clearly made Tenet with the concept of the characters free will and agency in mind and there are multiple points of evidence for this. I'll start with the literal introduction to Inversion.

Part 1: The Literal Introduction of Inversion

During the Lab sequence when Inversion and its properties are first introduced, the scene plays out as follows: The scientist gets The Protagonist to hold his hand over an inverted bullet. The Protagonist hovers his hand over the bullet, and nothing happens. Then the scientist lady says "You had to have dropped it."

Suddenly when The Protagonist *wills* the bullet into his hand, it happens. That's when the scientist lady explains "From your perspective, the bullet flew into your hand. From the bullets perspective, you dropped it. Either way we run the tape, *you made it happen*."

That last line is the most important part, nothing happened when The Protagonist held his hand over the bullet, it's only when he willed it to happen that it actually moved. If Nolan really

wanted to make the world of Tenet completely deterministic, then a character's will and agency would be irrelevant

It becomes even more clear when TP asks “What about free will?” The scientist lady responds with “The bullet wouldn’t have moved if you didn’t put your hand there.”

Therein lies the “reality” that Neil described. The world they live in is neither fully deterministic nor fully free either. More on that in the following part.

Part 2: “What’s happened, happened.”

That exact line from Neil is brought up several times within the film and is also used by people who believe the “Tenet is fully deterministic” interpretation as exact confirmation that their interpretation is true. But this could not be further from the truth and we really don’t need to go much further than when that quote is fully explained at the end of the film:

TP: “But can we change things if we do it differently?”
Neil: “What’s happened, happened. Which is an expression of faith in the mechanics of the world, ***not an excuse to do nothing.”***

TP: “Fate?”

Neil: “Call it what you want.”

TP: “What do you call it?”

Neil: “Reality.”

That “not an excuse to do nothing” line compounds with another piece of evidence in favour of agency that some people tend to overlook. During the scene where Neil explains The Algorithm to TP, TP asks the question about Posterity “Doesn’t us being here now mean that it never happened, that we stopped them?” and Neil responded to that crucially with “Optimistically I’d say that’s right”.

If Tenet were truly deterministic, the answer to that question is a simple “Yes.” But if the answer to that is just “Yes.”, then why did Neil say that it’s not an excuse to do nothing? If even existing in the present which Posterity was aiming to destroy means that they never succeeded, then that is the biggest excuse ever to do literally nothing. As clearly no matter what they do, it would be in line with the actions/fate that lead to Posterity not succeeding in their plans in the first place.

Ok, whatever. Posterity was mistaken in their goal anyways

because changing the past is outright impossible in Tenet as confirmed by Priya ("If that universe can exist, we don't live in it.")...right?

Part 3: "That's unknowable."

First of all, I wouldn't really take Priya's word on anything. If you've been paying attention to this doc then you'd know her entire job is to practically lie to TP about everything to keep him on track on the path FP set out for him. TP is a person who's shown numerous times to be curious about changing events that happened in the past and literally went to Priya in that scene to request her to do exactly that. It's simply far more convenient for her to tell TP that it's impossible rather than tell him the truth which could jeopardize the mission. Anyways…

There has never been a single time in the entire film where they expressed exact confirmation that changing the past is impossible. In fact, it's the exact opposite. Several times throughout the film the assumption that the past CAN change is brought up and taken seriously as the literal motivation of the antagonists and thus the entire plot of the film rests upon the fact that Posterity changing the past is a real threat. I'm sure

the group of scientists that invented Inversion technology in the film would know that better than anyone else.

Anyways, the FIRST time the “What’s happened, happened” line is brought up is even more telling than the last time. During the Tallinn sequence, TP goes to Neil and asks “Sator threatened to shoot Kat in the past, if he goes back and actually shoots her, what happens to her here?”
Once again, if Tenet was TRULY deterministic, then the answer to this question from Neil would be “Nah don’t worry about it fam, that’s impossible.” but it wasn’t. His actual response was *“That’s unknowable. If you’re there to make a change you’re not here to observe its effect.”*
Unknowable, not impossible.

Later on in this exchange, Neil realizes that TP takes the idea of Sator shooting Kat in the past seriously and decides to go back and make sure it doesn’t happen. Neil tries to stop him and says “If you go back, you might give him exactly what he wants.” TP ignores him and continues the plan anyways.

When that sequence ends and TP inverting himself gives Sator what he wanted, Neil is the one to say: “I tried to warn you.”

This exchange is literally NEIL HIMSELF trying to stop TP from going through events that have already happened, thereby it's him trying to change the past.

I can go on and on with examples of Neil among others personally confirming that Tenet isn't entirely deterministic but I've had enough of this doc at this point. I encourage anyone to go back through the film and note how many times the question of "Can we change things if we do it differently?" or "What about free will?" is asked by The Protagonist and note how many times the answer to those questions are "No." and "It's not real." (Spoiler Alert: They never answer those questions so simply.)

Conclusion:

Tenet is neither fully deterministic nor fully free. Determinism HAS to exist in some capacity in order for Inversion to even be possible. What could explain this dichotomy? My personal interpretation is this: **"The past doesn't change unless you make it change."**

This makes the most amount of sense to me because the past simply remains the past. Whatever's happened, happened, and will continue to keep happening just as it always did until someone comes along and deliberately changes it. But for people still

experiencing that “past”, any changes made to it are unknowable because for them, it’s already happened.

I’ll refer anyone who uses determinism to debunk any part of this doc to this section.