

# Soiled Pants

## Part 2

I went to sleep in the back of my van after moving it a few blocks away. I didn't want to be woke up by anyone that would be watching for me. I checked my van for trackers before I went to sleep.

I dreamt of a beautiful woman, dancing with me in a clean black tie party. Her puffy lips were so inviting.

I woke up with a bang on the side of the van. I sat up and quickly checked my scanners. It was a man getting into his car next to mine. His door hitting the side of my van. He didn't even leave a note. I wanted to shoot him just on principal, but I let him go without ever knowing I was in the van.

I had too much work to do.

First thing though, I headed to a stuffer shack and got some soycaf. I needed the boost. Real coffee would be better, but who could afford that dreck anymore?

I climbed back into the back of my van with my soycaf and a sloppy breakfast soyrito. I set my comlink to search for any information I could find on Sojin Inc, the Sojin Jackrabbit, and anything relating to the Cube.

I then ate my breakfast while trying to call all of my chummers.

Mr. Johnson... no answer.

My fixer... no answer.

A rigger friend of mine who was close to me.... No answer. Not one of my closer contacts were answering. What to do...

I tried one last contact, one that would not like hearing from me, but one who owed me a favor and would not turn down my request.

It only rang twice.

"Yacco." A cartoony voice said and an animated icon of an old black and white cartoon character from the last century showed on my screen.

"Hey Yacco, I am sorry to bother you but I am in some dreck. I need to cash in my chip I hold."

"Rankin, ok, but after this we are even. I don't owe you dreck."

"Understood."

I told him everything I knew up to this point. I didn't leave anything out. I knew Yacco enough to know that he would not use any of this info to betray me. He was working for Digital Doom after all.

Yacco said he got it and hung up without anything else being said. A moment later my message notification let me know I had a text from him saying 'give me 3 hours' then a picture from my phone disappeared. A moment later it was back and another text said 'sorry, I did it again.'

Yacco has a habit of taking things without asking, not usually on purpose.

Not knowing what else to do I started talking to SinDee. She didn't have anything interesting to say, so we just chatted over what could be going on. It might not help, but SinDee would be recording the conversation so we could go over everything at a later date. Suddenly SinDee beeped.

"Rankin, someone is trying to override me and put me in maintenance mode. My firewall won't hold up too long."

Dreck, something is about to go down and I won't have my best tool. I grabbed my Predator V, shutting off the wireless functions and turning on the palm connector for the smartlink. A moment later someone knocked on the side of the van.

I holstered the pistol, checked the sensors (which were all blacked out), and zipped up my armored coat. The knocking happened again.

I stood up, glancing at SinDee, she was shut down, and opened the sliding door.

What I saw was not only unexpected, but boggled my mind. I was expecting gunmen in a semicircle around my van aiming assault rifles at me. What I did see was a small little gnome wearing a sheepish grin, dark hair, a black overcoat and blue jeans. He had a pair of very old (new looking) vans on and to top it off he was wearing a fedora. A real life fragging fedora.

I felt as if I had seen him before, but I couldn't place it. His demeanor was laid back and relaxed. He either had some major backup nearby or he knew me somehow.

"Sam, I've been looking all over for you."

What the frag? This tiny imp knew my name.

"Uh..." was all I could say.

"Oh. You don't know who I am do you?"

"No I don't"

"If you would be willing to come with me I may be able to help clear things up for you." He said with a genuine smile.

"I will not leave my van here. I need to move it somewhere safer."

"It will be safe here now. We have purchased the parking garage and have since closed it to the public. You will be allowed access whenever you like as you are a major stockholder in Sinjin Inc."

I did a double take, "What was that?"

"You are a major stockholder in Sinjin Inc."

Frag, I heard him right. Not knowing what else to do I decided to go with him. "Could you please unjam my comlink?"

"Of course." He closed his eyes and when he opened them again my comlink was working. I had a message from my search that there was a packet waiting for me to look at. I would have to look at it later as I was not going to look at it in front of whoever this was.

"Right this way Mr. Mincer."

At the mention of my last name I flinched. No one but my mom knew that also.

He led me to a black Thunderbird, but it wasn't a Thunderbird... This VTOL was different. It had an odd symbol on the side.

"What is that?" I asked.

"A Sojin V216. It is the newest vehicle built by Sojin Inc. We are aiming at Aires to get a foothold in military spending. This one is better than the Thunderbird in every way."

We boarded the VTOL and I took a seat. These were oversized seats, fitting for a troll. The gnome looked like a toddler sitting in the front seat of a car. I almost laughed out loud.

"Mr. Mincer, We are heading to Sojin HQ in Tacoma. There you will get a brief on recent events and be brought up to speed. How much time did you lose sir?"

"From what I can tell, about a month."

"Dreck, so you don't know anything about this. Do you remember Sojin?"

"The blond, I woke up with her head next to me on a bed in Redmond. Other than that, I have never seen her before."

"Do you know your father?"

"My mother said I was conceived when she was raped. She contemplated aborting me. She says she is glad she didn't now, but when I was a teen she would say she wished she did."

"Your father," he put his hand up stopping me from speaking, "his name doesn't matter right now. When he found out about you, he wrote you into his will. Recently he passed away, and some PI's were sent out to look for you. Sojin found you first. She had a business proposition for you. During the negotiations you both went through some dreck, and you saved her ass. At least we thought you did."

I went to ask a question, but the gnome stopped me with a look again.

"Mr. Mincer, you are the owner of 1% of Ares Macrotechnology."

I sat silent. Not knowing what to say.

"Sojin wanted to buy off your shares and in trade you would get 10% of Sojin Inc. You agreed but said you had to clean up some of your past. We got you pardoned from the UCAS and even got you a legitimate SIN. You were supposed to meet with Sojin a few days ago and come in to the Sojin Inc family. When you too didn't show, I started looking for you."

"I found out that Ares put a price on your head, through a subsidiary, to hurt Sojin. They were hoping that they could get rid of you and get her to sell off the company."

"Needless to say, something went wrong and the runners failed to do their job. Sojin is dead and you are free."

"Um. I'm not sure what to say. I don't remember Sojin, I don't remember what happened." I stated. "So, what now?"

The gnome looked at me perplexed, then said, "We need to find the cube. Once we have it we can fix everything."

"Um, what is this cube? I mean, I have never seen it as far as I know."

"The cube is a small black cube that stores encrypted data. It was always with Sojin. It has her 'Last will and Testaments' along with blue prints, stockholder information, and more. This cube is the heart of Sojin Inc. If you don't have it, we must find it or Sojin Inc. Will not survive the next few days."

Dreck. Now I have to find an item to not only figure out what I am involved in, but to secure my future as well.

I asked the little man, "Do you have any idea where this cube can be located?"

"Not for sure, Ares did the hit, but they may not have the cube yet. I have the safe house location for the runners that hit you. We could drop in and see if they have the cube. I can run matrix cover, and get you a team from our security agents that would survive if we got into a fire fight."

"That sounds like a great idea." I stated.

The little gnome said, "Now the shit is gonna hit the friggin fan."