

Soiled Pants

Part 3

We gathered with the team that the little gnome set up at a parking garage in Renton. The team flew in using an Aires Dragon helicopter. There were five of them, all wearing heavy armor and carrying medium machineguns. One of them did not have any visible firearm, but had a lot of fetishes and markings on his armor. Obviously he is the spell slinger.

The gnome, I found out his name is Maxwell but I continue to think of him as a yard gnome, started bringing the rest of the team up to speed.

“We need to take one of them alive, I don’t care which one as these are the men that killed our CEO.”

There was a silence that could pierce the loudest arena.

A large troll stepped forward, “Let us get these fraggers!”

I get the feeling that everyone liked this Sojin lady. “We need to get something from them and figure out who hired them.”

“Hoah!” the security force all say in unison.

We all climbed into several armored vans that have the Sojin Inc logo on them. We drove through town to a dark alleyway. Spilling out into the alley I recognize it as the one I met the ghoul who helped me a few days before.

I notice the manhole cover drop into place as the security team is moving into position.

“Everyone, be careful. Ghouls are in this area. They should leave us alone, but keep your eyes open.” I warned.

Our drones zipped around the enemy safe house, not seeing any movement. Thermal imaging showed at least 4 people inside the shanty.

Looking at the safe house, I would call it little more than a pile of rubble. If I didn’t know there were people in there, I would have thought it was just a pile of a building. It looks as if a two story building collapsed on itself and the basement was made into a living area. I didn’t see a way down, but the team we were with already got things ready to go in.

“Sir, we are ready.” The bigger of the two trolls said.

“Do it.” The gnome replied.

A moment later there was a loud explosion. A directional charge was set off in a clearing that was made in the rubble. A circle collapsed into the ground revealing a nice entry point. The security team all jumped into the hole with their guns ready, the gnome and I stayed topside while they did their jobs.

As soon as the last man jumped into the hole we heard a loud explosion. The ground under us shook, then fell away. I tried to jump back, but fell into the black void that appeared under my feet.

I hit the ground hard, on my hands and knees. I felt dizzy, I must have hit my head on the landing, and fell over.

I opened my eyes on a warm, sandy beach. A gorgeous blond next to me wearing a string bikini. Dana had a cold drink up to her lips, saw me looking at her and smiled.

"Sam, I love you." She took a drink and set her cold glass in the hot sand.

"Dana, I..." Blackness swirled around me. I heard an explosion, then small arms fire. I looked around and realized I was in a dusty basement. The team is fighting a couple people down in a tunnel. I see several dead among our numbers, one guy has his upper body buried under debris from the falling building. His lower body wasn't moving.

I found the gnome partially buried under some rubble. "Max, hey." I started digging him out.

"I'm alright." He replied as he started coming to. "Did we.."

Just then a bullet ripped into my shoulder.

"Dreck!" I dropped to the ground. "Frag that hurts." I had never been shot before.

A moment later I hear, "All clear" from somewhere. Max leaned over me, he looked like dreck, and started a med kit on me. A minute or so later I felt better, other than the hole in my shoulder. I needed new armor now too.

I got onto my feet, one of the remaining security force was dragging a person toward us. It was one of the runners.

I looked at the elf that the security person was dragging. I recognized him. He was a semi-trusted runner that I had worked with in Portland.

"Scorch? What the frag man? You took a wet work job? That dreck isn't like you."

"Frag you Rankin! If you hadn't killed Mr. J I wouldn't have taken the job."

Killed Mr. J? I didn't kill anyone recently that I knew of.

"I didn.."

"All your contacts are dead. All your friends are dead. Your girlfriend is dead. And your mother is about to die. All because" he was ranting.

"My mother?!"

"Yes, your mother. She is under the sites of Headsplitter. All because of the dreck you pulled."

My stomach dropped. Headsplitter never missed. He was a better sniper than I was, and I was damn good.

I tried calling my mother. It went straight to voice mail. I left a message and called again with the same outcome.

"You fragger!" I swore, "I am gonna kill you if anything happens to her!"

It was too late and I already knew it. My mother, my last living relative is dead and there is nothing I can do about it. My guts knotted, I fought to keep from vomiting.

Mom.

I was in a haze for the rest of the day, not knowing what was going on or who I was even with.

I later realized that I was in a safe house. With me is Max and two of the guards, one of the troll shooters and the mage.

I could hear slapping of fist to face in a back room. I shook my head, "Max, where are we?"

"We are safe. I have one of our best interrogators questioning the shadowrunner. While you were... Recuperating, we did recover the cube. I have the interrogator trying to find out as much info as we can about the operation that these runners are involved in."

"Thanks Max."

"I do have some bad news for you, your mother..."

I already knew, but my heart sank anyway. "Yeah, I know."

"I will keep pressing everything here, why don't you go get some rest. I left a bottle of whiskey on a bed in the back for you."

"Thanks," I stumbled off. I drained the entire bottle in just a few gulps and drunkenly passed out.

My dreams were a mix of screams, explosions, and white dresses. Then more explosions and blood. I woke in a cold sweat, not sure if it was from the dreams or from the whiskey. Max was in the room sitting at a chair fiddling with a cyberdeck.

He was wearing a green button up shirt, black slacks, and a green fedora, looking even more like a yard gnome. If my head wasn't pounding I probably would have laughed.

"Oh good, you are awake." Max was saying as I sat up fighting vertigo. "I got some information you need and I need your help also."

I sat up, shaking off the lingering fear from the dream.

"What is it Max?" I moaned.

"First, Aires is the corp that hired the runners. I have their Johnson's data file and location. I have already put a team on him as over watch for now."

"Ok." I gave a halfhearted smile.

"Secondly, I need a finger."

I flipped him off. "Can I go back to sleep now?"

The gnome laughed. "I need you to put your finger in this hole." He lifted up a small cube, approximately 10 cm x 10 cm. There was a hole in one side where he was pointing. There also seemed to be some dried blood on that side.

“What is that?”

“That is the cube. It needs a fingerprint that was assigned to it to be useful. If you fail 3 times it will cut off your finger.”

“It looks like it already got someone.” Looking around I notice one of the shooters has a bandage on his finger. “Oh” I say.

I put my finger into the cube. It instantly clamps down tight on my finger. I feel a prick on the tip of my finger, like a needle drawing a little blood. I hear some mechanical sound and the cube released my finger.

A hologram projection of Sojin appeared.

She started talking. “Sam, if you are seeing this than I must be dead. I wanted to tell you that no matter what happened I never regretted marrying you.”

“What the frag?” I got married? I didn’t remember any of this. Damn.

“As my sole surviving family member I leave to you control of Sojin Inc. I wanted you to know that I did truly love you. I know that we were only together a short time before we got married, but I feel as if I have known you my entire life. Sam,” she smiled, “I want you to know that you are a good man.”

She turned off screen for a moment and a file appeared in the screen. “Here is some things that Maxwell will need to make things right. I want you to take my place as CEO of Sojin Inc. You my love are the new owner of Sojin Inc. I hope you have a long good life. I hope to find you in the afterlife.” The video went blank, then a file opened.

Max moved in and looked over the files. He looked at me. “This is a link to her lawyer. There is also an encrypted file that is asking for a password.” Max stated. “Do you know what it can be?”

“I have no fragging idea. Some dreck head laced me with enough Lace to keep me from remembering anything. The last few months are just a blur that I can’t make any sense of.” I looked up to the little gnome, “I have no idea what is...” I stumbled off realizing something no one would ever know.

“Max, I have to go find my van.”

“Ok. I will see to it for you.”

A few hours later the Sojin Security vehicle rolled up to the van in the parking garage. I jumped out and moved to the sliding door of my van, Max right on my heels. I turned to the gnome, “Wait here.”

“But,” he started to protest.

“Wait here!” I exclaimed, my frustration flowing through my words.

I entered my van, sliding the door shut and making sure the lock was in place.

“It’s about time you get here,” a mechanical voice chirped, “I was starting to think you forgot me or died.” SinDee was even mouthier than usual. “Maybe I should just shoot you before you leave next time. I don’t like being alone.”

I rolled my eyes before I remembered she couldn't see me. "Shut it SinDee. I need something from you."

SinDee got quiet, a small light flashing in the site of the weapon. The sniper rifle finished her task and put a text on the screen of the scope. It read, 'We are being listened to. Digitally and using a microphone.'

I sent her a text through my internal comlink, 'Any idea who is listening?'

'I think it is your little friend'

Max. Why would he be listening in? unless...

I texted SinDee, 'Play that recording that we use on runs. Talking to self 1.5'

Noise of me talking to myself started playing through the guns internal speaker. It was loud enough to be distracting to me and loud enough to cover up any conversation I have with SinDee or my comlink.

"SinDee," I whispered, "I want you to do a search of Maxwell, cross-reference Sojin Inc."

30 seconds later she said, "Done"

"Show me."

An info packet opened up on a data reader that I attached to SinDee's IO port. I opened it up.

Maxwell Ritchie is the President of Sojin Inc's firearms and security division. He has been at the company since the company started and is considered extremely loyal to the founder and CEO Mrs. Sojin.

<Pic attached>

I opened the pic. In it was a large troll wearing an very formal tux with sholder length black hair and a friendly smile despite his two large tusks jutting up out of his lower jaw. This was not the person telling him he was Max.

"SinDee, authenticate photo. See what other pics you can get of Mr. Maxwell Ritchie."

<Searching> came across the screen.

A few moments later it was confirmed. There were dozens of pictures of Mr. Ritchie and Miss Sojin all across the matrix.

Ok, I can play games too. I will go along as if nothing changed. We will see what is what.

I pulled out a small .22 revolver and shoved it in my boot. I may need an old school firearm with no connection at all. Then I asked SinDee one final question, "SinDee, did I give you any passcode that I would need for the cube?"

She replied, "No, but Sojin did. The passcode is the date you were married."

"Seeing I have no memory, when was that and why didn't you tell be earlier? Before you told me that you never met her."

"She asked me to not tell you unless you needed to know and you had to ask directly for the passcode. The passcode is the date 7 days ago."

“Thank you. I am pissed at you for not telling me, but I will get over it if I survive.”

“Rankin, I think you should know that someone is trying to hack into my system.”

“Shut down talking to self 1.5, then shut your network connection down. Power yourself down for a time if need be. I will be back as soon as I can. If you don’t hear from me in 30 days you know what to do.”

“Roger” she stated simply then powered down.

I opened the door and found an uneasy gnome pacing in front of my van door. I wanted to kill the little creature, but I need to find out what the frag is going on first.

“You get the info you were looking for Sam?” the gnome asked, his voice now getting irritating to me.

“Nope, no passcodes. My network that I store everything on is fried.”

I lifted up an external storage device that I always kept in plain view in the back of my van that I knew was wiped but had a very strong data bomb ‘scrambled’ in the mess.

“Mind if my decker gives it a go?” Max asked politely.

“No, of course not.” I smiled in reply. Then thought to myself, ‘you will need a new decker after this one goes off.’

We all went back to the safe house. I went up to Max, “Max, do we have a comlink I can use? I would like to check on things while I am laying low. Maybe I can figure out the passcode to this cube.”

“I can get you one in a little bit, I think my decker is on it right now. We only allow one comlink in the safe house making it harder to be traced back here.”

“Ok, just let me know when.” Then I went back to contemplating his demise.

The next day the damn gnome finally brought me a comlink. I already knew without checking that it would be bugged.

I started calling all my contacts one last time. There were no answers anywhere. All of my friends were dead, I just was confirming this. I was feeling utterly alone.

I then heard a scream from the back room, startled I jumped up and started back there. Max got there first. He slipped into the room trying to shut the door before I could see in there. I saw enough to know that the data bomb did its job and fried the decker. This brought a smile to my lips as I turned away to watch the Trid.

While the gnome and his goons were in the back room fruitlessly working on their now brain fried compatriot, I decided to open the cube. They would be in there for some time yet.

I went back to the bunks and climbed into mine, after shutting the door. I had my back to the door so I could ditch the cube if anyone came in.

I put my finger into the cube and it locked on me again. Then it asked for the passcode. I said the data. A video file started playing.

A picture of a middle age human appeared on screen. He was finely dressed and was in some sort of office. Sojin was next to him.

She started talking, "Samuel, this is Marcus. He works for me in the home office. He is also the only other person besides you that I trust. If you are seeing this than I need you to go to the home office and meet up with Marcus. He will already know what to do."

Marcus started talking now in a deep and gravelly voice, "Sam, do not trust anyone that may be claiming to be part of Sojin Inc. We have a mole in the company and they are feeding info to our enemies. As soon as you get this I need you to come in and start this process that your wife has started. I also need you to understand that there are some massive powers at work here. If you need me to set up a pick up call me at my office number day or night. I will have it forwarded to my personal comlink." A comlink number flashed on the screen, "Sam know this, your wife loves you very much, and that is why we are going through such great lengths to get you out of your past. Come in where I can explain everything."

Sojin started talking, "No matter what you think, things are not what they seem. Know this, we are doing all of this for you. I love you my husband. If I can't see you in life, may we be together in the after."

It clicked off. I pulled my finger out and put the cube back in my pocket. I need to find a way out of this place and over to the home office.