

Eddie's Tools Part 2

The Job

Barney, a large troll with sweeping horns that frame his bright purple shoulder length hair who wears a brown trench coat and has a pistol on his hip in an obvious quickdraw holster, is preparing for the evening run with the rest of the team. Picking up his tools and attaching them to his belt he lets everyone know he is ready.

The team is made up of a decker, Yacco who is a small beardless dwarf with the tendency of taking things that don't belong to him without knowing it. A rigger, Sprocket, who is a human wearing his usual leather jacket with the logo from an old game called 'Gears of Warfare', bright pink mohawk, and pink combat boots. A mage, Sinder is a beautiful human of hispanic descent who is wearing a black tight fitting bodysuit with a couple crystals embroidered into it. And finally our adept, Shade, he looked like he was an elf with bushy eyebrows. He had a little bit of dark hair coming off of the back of his ears. His dark skin and hair stood out from the normal elves in this area. Wearing a black bodysuit and a black hooded cape, he looked more like he belonged in a matrix game than running the shadows.

This crew and I would be infiltrating and removing some rare tools of Rock and Roll from before any of us were born, out of the Museum of Music and History in Seattle. The location of the museum tells us that Knight Errant, the current local police on contract with the city, would respond in less than 3 minutes with patrol officers and less than 7 minutes with HRT (High-threat Response Team). We had to get in, get our tools, and get out without tripping the alarms if possible.

The plan was solid, the team, all professionals, we had the layout of security, the rounds the guards make, the type of drones used, dreck, we even knew how many mages and spirits were at the location. We knew everything we needed for this run, but as fate has it, everything goes sideways thanks to Mr. Murphy.

We arrived at the museum right before midnight in two different vans, mine and Sprocket's. I parked my van in a parking garage one block to the south of the museum, and Sprocket parked his one block to the west. Both north and east has tunnels into the underground or sewers that can be used as an escape. This would give us the best chance of escape if we were found out.

We all met in the alley that ran behind the museum, where cargo trucks would bring the items for display or study. There was a fence and an empty security guardpost, that would be manned during the daylight hours. At night they were relying on the electronic security and the electrified fence. They didn't have a technowizard like Yacco on their side. The museum security spider might be good, but he will never know we were there. Yacco had our backs.

“Fence is disabled for the next 30 seconds, Go.” Yacco said over comms.

We pushed through the fence closing the gate with only a few seconds to spare. “Please get the time right, I would rather not have to silence the alarm and stop KE from getting here. It would be easier to do things right the first time.” Yacco complained.

We moved up to the back door, almost as soon as we got there the lock clicked. Shade moved in first, followed by me then a Doberman drone with Sinder moving in last. She had cast some spell on herself creating a slight shimmer around her body. It stayed with her as we moved. I figured it was some sort of body enhancement or armor. Fraggin mages.

The hall that we entered to was utilitarian in decor. Plane metal posts holding up the ceiling, concrete floor, and overhead light bulbs exposed to the elements. It resembles any other warehouse that he had ever seen. The dim night lights barely giving off enough to walk down the hall in. Luckily trolls with cybereyes can see in the dark.

The team moved in bounds down the hall to the one door that leads into the main museum. The light on the maglock next to it glowing a faint red in color. Over comms, Yacco said, “One minute the door will be open. Alarm bypassed for 30 seconds.” We picked up our pace to the door, peeling off and pairing up on either side of the door. Shade and Sinder on one side, me and the drone on the other.

The door lock went green, we pushed through the door, clearing the hall behind. The lights were a little brighter here, an industrial carpet and white walls gleaming and reflecting the dim light. There were doors on either side of the hall, and another security locked door at the end of the hall. Knowing where they were, they headed to the security door.

In front of the security door I stopped the team, pointing down at the floor. There was a small puddle of blood and a drag mark to the first door on our left. I pointed at Shade and then the door, he nodded and slowly entered. A moment later he came out and said it was clear. A security guard was dead with a bullet hole in his head.

That put a wrinkle in the plan. Fraggin Mr. Murphy and his laws. I hate it when he shows his face to a plan. “Ok, things have gotten interesting. Our job is the same. I am guessing there is another team here, so keep your eyes open. Hopefully we won’t run into them.” I said to the team.

“B,” Yacco said over comms, “their decker has fried the spider. I see evidence that the main CPU is under their control. I am trying to figure out who they are and what they are going after so we can, hopefully, avoid them.”

“Thanks Yacco,” I said, turning to the rest of the team, “let’s keep on mission.” then I opened the security door moving through to the main display floor.

We entered into the Ancient Music Hall. VR photos of composers long dead flicker in the low light. Violins, Drums, bells, pianos and other ancient instruments line the displays. A faint sound of music in AR playing Mozart, Beethoven, and Bach. Shaking my head I turned off my AR display. "I thought they would shut the AR stuff down at night." I said in sub-vocal.

"They do," Yacco said, "someone had turned it all back on. DRECK!" then there was a click.

"Yacco, what's going on?" there was no answer.

Shade turned to us, "Looks like we do this the old fashioned way."

I laughed, "Old fashioned theft for classical instruments."

We got quiet and started moving to the classical music hall, and our target.

We moved into the hall and checked everything. There was no one here. We found the guitar we had to take, I found the optional one, and Shade was looking for the guitar pics as I started verifying the tools. Both guitars were legit.

As I finished checking the instruments, Shade came back and said, "The pics are missing. I can't get on the network to figure out where they are." Then we heard a shot ring out.

"Dreck, we need our fraggin decker." Sinder was saying. There are spirits fighting upstairs. They don't know we are here yet, but the fight is sure to set off alarms."

"Ok, Shade take Sinder and the Doberman over to the stairwell. I will pack up these instruments and the other few we chose for ourselves and meet you there in three minutes."

Shade grunted and slipped silently away, Sinder and a humming mechanical drone of death following.

I finished packing the instruments, five in total, the two guitars, a violin, a flute, and a trumpet that belonged to Dizzy Gillespie, a famous Jazz musician from over a hundred years ago. I slung them all over my shoulder and hurried to the stairway. It took just under the three minutes I said it would take.

The Doberman was at the bottom of the stairs waiting for me. Sprocket's voice came through a speaker quietly, "Shade and Sinder went up. They are at the top floor door waiting for you. Load the tools on my drone and I will have it move to a van. I think you guys can handle anything coming your way."

I nodded, knowing his sensors can see me, and loaded the instruments onto the back of the drone. After making sure they wouldn't fall off I said, "Go" and went through the door as the

Doberman drone started moving off to one of the escape routes. He will bring the instruments to one of the vans, completing most of the job.

I got upstairs and saw Sinder slumped next to the door. Knowing a few mages, I knew she was projecting in Astural space. Shade was looking through the window in the door. He says using subvocal mics that were around his neck, "Looks like three runners fighting a couple guards. One of them has a large bag."

"Wait. Don't engage yet." I stated.

Then there was a loud click on our comms channel, "Barney, Sinder, Sp<Static> Can any of you hear me <Static> It's Yacco."

Sinder was first to respond, "I hear you. We need you. What is going on here?"

"Another team is here taking some of the <static> items. Not the ones we are going after. I got pics of them<static> the cameras before their decker knocked me out. He thought I <static> spider." He giggled. "Sending pics now."

I opened the packet Yacco sent us, and the color left me. Shade noticed, "Sup B?"

I looked at the pic again, my gut churning at seeing him again. "One of the runners I know. He is not going to leave any witnesses, even other runners. His team may be included in that. I think he killed one of my friends on a run."

Shade and Sinder looked at me.

"I am not going in there if we don't have to. I won't stop myself from killing him if I do."

Yacco piped up, "The guitar pics <static> downstairs in another case. They are starting some renovations <static> have started moving things today. They are in this case." He sent a pin to a case on an overlay map.

We hurried back down the stairs and got the items out of the case. We took them all, it looked like guitar pics from several different bands of the old world.

"We should leave, I will verify the pics on the way out." I stated not wanting to be here any longer than we needed to.

Shade grabbed the pics and put them in a bag, tossing the bag to me. I started looking at them as we moved down the hall. Then Sinder said, "Stop."

I froze. She came back passing me saying “Back, go back. There is a KE watcher that just appeared.”

I looked at her funny, wondering how she knew it was a KE spirit. I didn’t say anything, just followed her back into the main room. There was now some red and blue lights flickering outside the windows. Not a lot yet, but some.

“Dreck, Yacco did the alarm get triggered?” Shade asked.

“It <static> I couldn’t stop it. <static> someone is jam<static> my system making hacking and comms <static>” he replied.

I jumped into the lead and was heading toward the side exit. The one on the west side was closest to a sewer opening that we all can fit into. I rounded a corner and ran face to face into Jimmy. Frag.

Jimmy was a big human who’s face looked like a model. His perfectly chiseled chin, white toothy smile, and blond hair looking as flawlessly as any politician. His muscles bulging in the suit he wore. He had a nickel plated Ruger Super Warhawk in his hand.

He raised his pistol toward me, then a flicker of recognition of me. “Barney?”

“You know anyone else with this hair? Frag, Jimmy. I thought you got out of this business.”

“I did. Just had something that had to be done first. What the frag are you”

I interrupted. “Police are here, I want to get out.”

“Good to see you Barney.” he was fingering his pistol as he started moving around us. I kept facing him as we moved. Backing away toward the area we were going to. Shade and Sinder were both looking at the exchange, obviously questioning everything that just happened.

They moved around me toward our exit. I continued to watch Jimmy. As soon as he went around the corner I turned and hurried down the hall. Then the shot slammed into my back. Pain slamming through my shoulder, knocking me against the wall.

Jimmy yelled, “Sorry Barney, I can’t have you people as witnesses. The people wouldn’t like the exposure if I were seen.”

He fired again, slamming into my chest. My armor taking most of the blow, but the pain still shot electric tingles through my chest. I brought up my pistol and fired a burst. All three of my shots missed.

A moment later I saw a fireball go screaming down the hall toward Jimmy. The last thing I saw was him pulling back right before the fireball exploded in the end of the hall. Then everything went black.

Jimmy, a representative in the United Canadian American States (UCAS) with a bright future, and I was an Archaeologist looking for funding of an expedition in one of the old cities that were buried under volcanic stone during the Great Ghost Dance. Jimmy got me the funding, and then a lot more.

He came to me, shaking my hand in his firm, for a human, grip. "Here you go my friend. The funding you need. You will have to ship the items to Ares for processing, but you will have access to them for your investigation."

I smiled, "Thank you my friend. Glad you could help."

Then I saw stars, felt nauseous, and woke up.

I saw that we were in a tunnel. I could smell sewage and hear the heavy breathing of the very large person carrying me. There was no one on the team that could do that. I started looking around and saw Sinder. She was in front leading us down the tunnel.

I looked to the person carrying me, and got dizzy and passed out again.

"Frag it Jimmy, why are you getting into that kind of work?" I asked.

Jimmy, now a senator smiled at me and said, "Ares has reneged on their funding of my campaign. I need a lot of money now to fight off the Republican who is trying to take my state from me. This is the only way I know how to do that." He pulled a ski mask over his face and picked up his pistol. "I need the money by Friday, this job will do just that."

"Ok, but I am sending a guy to help you. He is a good shot and will be valuable to you for the job. He goes by Bullseye."

"Have him meet me at the McQ's on 132nd."

"Will do. Good luck my friend."

Light swirled around my vision.

“I’m sorry Barney, he died. Took a round in the back of the head.”

That wasn’t possible, Bullseye was so careful. Nothing should have gotten behind him. My brother. Frag it.

“What do you mean?” I asked almost in tears.

Echoing voices penetrated the fog of the dream. I shook my head and awoke once again.

I was laying in the safehouse on a cot. Sinder was just removing a medkit from me. “Sorry, I tried to heal you, but I didn’t know you had so much cyber. We did use a medkit on you, but you should see a doctor. There is still a bullet in your back.”

That is why it was so hard to breath. Pain shooting with every breath. It felt like I had a couple broken ribs too. That fraggin gun had some punch.

I sat up, grimacing as I did so. “Is Yacco here?”

“He is, I’ll send him in.” then she left the room.

A few minutes later Yacco came in. “Yes boss?” he asked.

“I need a favor from you. Something that will make this worthwhile for me.”

“No problem, what is it?”

We went over the plan and I left him to it. He would be busy for the next few hours.

I got up and went into the main room. It took everything I had to walk out there.

Shade looked at me, “You ok?”

“Been better. Who carried me here?”

The smaller man said, “I did.”

“How?”

“Doesn’t matter, I got you here. We have a meet with the Johnson tonight at 8. You good to go to it or should I bring you to ‘Da Doctor’” he air quoted around Da Doctor, “to fix you up?”

“No I can make it.” I stated flatly.

He looked at me, then offered a chair. I took it and settled down for a rest. We had a few hours until the meet.

I dozed off.

When I woke up everyone was up and preparing for the meet. I got up, slowly, and started doing the same. I looked at everyone and said, "After the meet, let's come back here. I will pass out the items that you all chose for yourselves."

"We already did that. Your guitar is over there. We decided you also get all the other guitar pics we got. You earned it after those shots."

I nodded. "Sprocket, can you drive? I'm in no shape."

"No problem." he replied.

We arrived at the same club I met the team at, Pier 6. We went in and we were quickly moved to a private room. Yacco checked his pockets when we got back there, and handed Sinder her pistol. "Sorry" he said.

"How the dreck?" She pulled up her dress she was wearing revealing a holster up high on her thigh. She replaced her pistol and fixed her dress. No sooner had she finished than two people walked in tailed by my fixer, Sam.

Sam spoke up, "Team, this is Mr. and Mrs. Johnson. They would like to see the items to make sure they are not damaged before paying full price."

I opened the guitar case and the wooden pic box and pushed them across the table, hiding my wincing as I did. The Johnsons carefully looked everything over, reading my notes proving the items are real, and smiled, nodding to Sam. Then without any work they closed the cases and left with them.

Sam hurriedly pulled out a pile of credsticks. Here is the amount agreed to, and here is another 25k for getting everything undamaged."

Sinder, Sprocket, Shade, and Yacco were all happy with a job well done. I still had some things to do. "Yacco can you stay for a few? I need you and Sam for something." They agreed and everyone else left. I knew I would be seeing them later.

"Sam, We ran into Jimmy. I asked Yacco to put together some security video."

"Are you sure you want to do that? You have known him a long time."

“He shot me. I would have left it if it wasn’t for him.”

“Ok, send the video. I’ll send it to a reporter friend of mine who will not balk at outing a politician.”

Yacco sent over the data packet. I sent him an extra 5k New Yen. “Thank you Barney,” he said. “See you around.” and he left.

“I got your guitar.” I said.

Sam smiled warmly, “Thank you my friend. Here is the bonus for that. I will swing by your place and get it later tonight.”

“Okay. See you then.” I liked how he gave me the money before I gave up the item.

As I was walking out of the club, I noticed the two Lone Star officers that chased me out of the other bar a few days ago sitting by the front door. Frag it, I was in no condition to run.

I walked up to them and said, “You are waiting for me I presume?” Come to find out they didn’t know I was there.

“Can we talk to you in private?” one of the officers inquired.

“Sure, follow me.” we went back into a private room. I slotted 200Y to the bartender to allow us to go back.

I shut the door behind the officers. They both sat at the table and didn’t try anything. I went over and sat down. “What can I do for you two gentlemen?”

“Dr. Jones, I am Detective Murf. I have some news for you that is of utter importance.” He was using my legal name, so it wasn’t anything I did as a runner.

“Your mother, well there is no easy way to say it, she has passed away.”

“What happened?”

“An accident at work. The corporation she worked for has made you an offer, and we are here to give it to you.”

“What do you mean an accident?”

“Someone broke into the corporations location to acquire some tech. Your mother was there at the time and got hit. Before she could be saved, one of the runners tossed a grenade into the

room. It landed right on your mother. By corporate standards it is a workplace accident. A security failure.”

I held back tears. I talked with mom just last week. I was supposed to go visit her soon for her birthday. Frag it all to dreck!

“What is their offer?” I croaked out.

“They are offering you 200k New Yen and your mother's possessions shipped to you at no cost to you if you do not pursue the accident any further.”

I sobbed audibly before I realized it. I stifled another sob and said, “Fine. I agree.” I was in no shape to do anything now anyway. I would just have to do whatever through the shadows instead of through the courts.

“Sign here,” Murf was holding out a data pad. I signed it with my legal name, then he tossed me a credstick.

“Again, Dr. Jones, I am sorry. I hope you get the closure you need from this.”

I nodded and watched the two men leave. With that credstick I knew I was going to be retiring now. I just wish it was through work, not the death of my mother.

Two months later I opened my new bar. It is in Redmond, outside of touristville, but close enough to have some money coming in from the brave tourists.

I stepped back and looked at my bar. The sign read, “The Purple Dino”

Thanks, mom.