

Meeting of Jackals

By: Digital Doom

The room was pin drop quiet. He needed to say something. Nerves tying his stomach into knots. Not knowing what to say, not knowing what to do. It was a feeling of utter hopelessness. Hundreds of pairs of eyes were glued to his every movement.

Times like these made Sam wish he was still a runner. His wife needed him to do this meeting. She needed the people to see the runner turned corp to know that this story was the truth. Sam wished he had SinDee on his shoulder instead of the lapel microphone.

He looked out over the people in attendance. Not people, media. These creatures were of a different breed. They looked for weakness, looked for anything that they could use to fill their thirty second sound byte. Heartless creatures that all had an agenda. To make the corporation that they worked for look good while everything else was fair game. The game this time, Sojin Inc.

Looking out over the jackals, he reflected on what got them to this point.

“We have to get that engineer and the prototype if possible. That would put us ahead of Ares for the military contracts.” Sojin said flatly. “Do you have a way to get him to work for us? Something deniable?”

“Of course,” Sam said. “I still have some contacts in Detroit that may be able to help.”

“I will let you get it setup then.” She walked over and kissed me on the cheek. He turned and kissed her fully on the lips. She giggled, then headed out for a meeting she had scheduled previously.

He watched her leave, appreciating the grace she always showed. His stomach fluttering as it always did when she was around. He is so enamored with her. Shaking his head he cleared his thoughts. Time to make some calls.

The first three calls all were to deadlines. The numbers no longer in use. ‘Dreck’ he thought, ‘down to two more numbers.’ The last two contacts weren’t as promising as the previous ones, so he had little hope of getting through.

The fourth call rang. That surprised him. He thought that the line would go to the normal message of 'This number has been disconnected or is no longer in service.' What he had heard the last three numbers.

On the fourth ring a female voice answered, no video. "Hello?" a silky voice questioned. "Who is this?"

He asked, "I am looking for Ronnie."

The unknown woman replied, "I'm afraid you have a wrong number. I have had this one for about a year."

"Sorry to bother you mam." he stated as he ended the call. 'Frag it, only one number left.'

He punched in the last number into the throw away comlink he was carrying. It only rang once.

The video showed a chubby dwarf with a long beard and a cigar sticking out of his mouth. Sam smiled, he should have known Calvin would keep the same number. This fixer is always able to get what people want, he just isn't always trustworthy.

"Calvin, how are you doing chummer?" Sam asked.

"Fine Rankin, how are you doing? I hear you have gone legit."

"I have. That is part of why I am calling you. I need to hire a team in your area."

Thinking about this, Calvin said, "Send me the information. I will look it over and let you know."

Sam sent the data packet to Calvin's number then disconnected the call.

An hour later Sam got a text, "Got a team that will get you your man. They will contact you at this number when ready for pick-up. Money agreed to."

He smiled, this was going so well. Now it was in the hands of professionals. He went into his wife's office, a large smile on his face.

She glanced up at him as he entered, noticing the smile on his face. "I assume you have the assets in place for the job?"

"You assume correctly." he said smugly.

She started smiling at that. "This will put us ahead of Ares for R&D and will give us a new weapon that is ready for military contracts. We should have a new contract before the end of the month."

He smiled, "Maybe we should celebrate?" he glanced at a couch that was in her office.

She laughed out loud, "Not right now, perv. I have work to do."

He smiled and headed to his office. He had work to do too, and arrangements to make for a pickup.

In his office, started making calls. He called the Detroit field office and set up a van for pickup when he calls next. There would be a security team ready to get the asset and his family. He also told them to expect a prototype weapon that would be extremely important to the company.

After the call Sam decided to call it a night. He headed home where he was hoping his wife would be waiting. She was. There was a candlelight dinner on the table, some classical music playing, 'Metallica' he thought to himself hearing the music. They had a nice evening, and an even better night.

The next day there were some messages waiting. Emergency messages. Sam rushed into the office where he could listen to the secure emergency messages. Something had gone badly.

Marcus was waiting for him in his office when Sam arrived. "What do we have Marcus?" Sam asked.

"The team that was hired has killed the family of the target. They breached the contract and are asking for more money. They are saying they know who is behind them being hired, which I doubt."

"Have you already found their safe house?" he asked knowing Marcus and his team would have already been looking for them.

"We have. I knew you would have wanted that."

"Alright, do we have any data on this yet?"

"We do. There are 5 runners at the safe house, and at least one of the targets kids. From what we can tell, they have killed his wife and one of the kids."

"Send in the HRT."

"Yes sir."

Launching the HRT was admitting the failure of the mission. Sojin Inc will have to have a good story for launching the fighters. The HRT was made up of Sojin's best fighters in Detroit. Two heavy weapons specialists, a mage, a decker, and a rigger to fly the VTOL and drones. Enough firepower to destroy a small city. They would be operating out of their jurisdiction, in Knight Errant contracted territory. This would be tricky.

The waiting was killing him. Stress from not knowing what is going on eating at him. His stomach was churning, almost like when he was waiting for a target when he was a runner. Just this time, there was nothing in his control.

He got a call, finally. The captain of the HRT was on the line. "Sir, we have the target and the prototype. We failed to get there before the death of his children."

That news hit Sam like a punch in the gut. They wanted his family to be safe, making him want to be a part of the company. Like most of the leadership, the company was proud of never causing the deaths of family members of the 'new employees'. Now that record was ruined.

Sam was starting to get ready an excuse for the media about moving the HRT when his comlink rang again. "Sir, this is Dispatcher West, the HRT is no longer responding to calls. We have lost contact with them. All we know is that the runners were taken care of and they had the target. Now nothing."

"I understand, try and get out in front of this. Did they take a VTOL or one of the armored vans?"

"One of the vans."

"Thank you, send out a security team and try to get this under wraps before any corp or government official catches wind of it."

"Yes sir." then the line went dead.

Dreck. Now what the frag are we going to do. He had to let his wife know, she would not be happy.

The camera flashes and drones hovering brought him back to the carnage of a press conference. Sam walked out to the podium, hating this part of his new life.

"Good evening everyone, thank you all for coming. By now you all heard about our HRT being hit in Detroit. We have a little more information on this attack and we wanted to get it out to you and into the open, showing we have nothing to hide."

He looked out across the audience. They were captivated into silence, a rarity for media types. He continued, "Our team was doing a fast move training through the streets of Detroit when a team of Shadowrunners slammed into the van." A video of the attack was up on the AR screen above the stage. Some editing was done to make the runners from the house to be seen in the video.

"Those involved with the attack seemed to be trying to slow down our reaction time in Detroit. They seemed to be hitting several corporations in the area, including Sojin Inc's assets."

He looked around the room, one of the reporters yelled out, "Did they get your assets?"

"No, we found the runners after they hit our van, and took them out. Our extraterritoriality lets us defend our assets the way we deem necessary, and in this case we saw that as with extreme prejudice."

The media let out a gasp, no major corporation has ever admitted to killing someone in the defense of their assets. Everyone knew it happened, just none admitted to it. Sam looked out at the reporters, "our teams have given us the proof you will need from these events. I have been cleared to release these files to you," he opened them up in AR for the reporters. "I also wanted to thank you for coming, both here and in VR. Thank you."

As he turned to leave the stage the media erupted in a frenzy. Questions were thrown at him, the buzzing making even one word indistinguishable from any other. Ignoring the feeding frenzy of the jackals, he strutted off the stage.

His wife was waiting there for him when he was finished.

"You did good my love."

"I hate that part of the job. It makes me wish I was still SINless."

She giggled, "We could arrange that, but that would mean losing me."

That wasn't worth the price.