

# Finding a Decker

By: Digital Doom

There were too many enemies. Bullets and spells flying past his position, allies screaming in pain. Blood and guts flying everywhere. He took aim at an Azi soldier and pulled the trigger, his Sojin SSE Smart SR jumped in his hands and the enemy soldier's head disappeared in a red mist of blood and gore.

A nearby explosion pulled him out of his staring where the mist was now settling. "Fall back!" he yelled. His squad moved from cover to cover, moving back to the 'safety' of their transport. Seeing the overwhelming numbers against them, he moved, running toward the T-Bird that brought them in. "Get on the bird!" he screamed at his men.

He turned to scan the battlefield, hoping all his men were with him. He noticed that he was alone. His men little more than ground meat spewn across the battlefield. He turned to get back into the T-bird as a missile flew at it, striking the VTOL right in the side, blowing it to pieces. Shrapnel flew past him, and through him, as the concussion of the blast picked him up off his feet, then everything went black.

Isac woke up in a cold sweat. The same nightmare ripping him out of his dreams as happens at least a few times a week. The worst mission of his life and he was reliving it night after night. He clenched his mechanical fist, one of the many gifts he got from that night. Then he got up out of his sweat soaked bed and took a shower.

He got ready to leave, going to his job that was lined up for the day. He knew that what he did wasn't sanctioned by the government he served, but that government turned their back on him with the fight against the Azies that night. He was all that was left from his team, everyone else was dead. Now he was going to make a team for doing missions, that he would decide what they would take. He was building a shadowrun team.

As a sniper and a rigger, he still needed a decker, a mage, and hopefully another fighter or two. He has a new Vertical Takeoff or Landing (VTOL) that has been heavily modified from the funds the United Canadian and American States (UCAS) gave him as they retired him from their service.

His first step is to hire a decker. He needed someone that could do background checks, search the underground jobs, and cover their digital tracks.

That night he had an 'interview' with a decker that had a little rep, at least he was heard about from some of the fellas in the bar. He would have him do a simple job and request a vid of the

job so he can watch it later to see what the decker can do. He had to see the job to learn how far he could trust the deckers skills.

The decker that came into the private back room that he had rented was a tall elf with dark hair, a leather jacket, and a leather case holding a cyberdeck. The elf looked rugged, like he belonged to one of the local biker gangs. His look put doubts into Isacs thoughts.

He stretched out his hand, "Byte?" he asked.

The elf took his hand and shook it with a firm grip, "Yes, and you must be Mr. Johnson?"

Isac nodded. "I have a job for you. If it works out we can decide if you are willing to join a dedicated team for doing jobs."

"Ok, what do you need me to do and what is the pay?" the elf smirked as he said it.

#### **A few hours later.....**

The decker didn't complete the job. Not only did he fail to break into Aztechnology's matrix, but he also failed to get away from the black IC that fried his brain. Too bad, Isac thought, I actually liked this guy. He tossed the body of the decker out into the alley. The ghouls or the police would find him and he would disappear, not being a problem for either Isac or the bar this far into the slums of the city that was once called Portland, before the elves took it and a large part of the Pacific Northwest to make their own country.

He decided that he had to move to the megaplex known as Seattle. The west coast port for the UCAS is more of a city state surrounded by the Salish Shidhe Council. The metroplex also has a large pool of ready to hire deckers. Some of them are dreck hot, Dodger, Yacco, Digital Doom and the like. Any of these guys would be a huge bonus for the team. He sent a message to a fixer he knew hoping to get a good decker. He knew if she could, Quickfingers would get him in touch with a good one.

He flew into Seattle and landed in a hole in the barrens. One that was already set up as a safe haven for this port of call. He got out and paid the local gang to watch after his baby, locked it up and set up the auto defenses. The VTOL, he still needed to name it, will be safe as he goes out to hire his crew.

He got a message from Quickfingers, an image of a beautiful elf was on the screen as she started talking. "Sprocket, I found a decent decker for you to check out. He will meet you at the Purple Dino. He goes by Chips. I told him to ask the bartender for Sprocket. You know the routine. Hope everything is good for you. Chat with you later chummer." she ended the message.

He smiled. Any decker that she could find for him would be hot dreck.

### **Later that night...**

Sitting in the back room of the Purple Dino, Isac was scanning the holovid, absentmindedly watching the Urban Brawl game. This decker was late. He should have been here five minutes ago, and he was paying for the back room with good New Yen. A moment later there was a knock at the door.

“Come”

A large troll with bright purple hair between two large black horns that rolled back like a ram horns without circling around stepped in. He was huge. “I just got word, Chips won’t be making the meet. He had a run in with Knight Errant and took a round to the dome.”

“Dreck, I really need a decker. Can’t get any good jobs other than smuggling without one. Thanks for letting me know Barney. Here is your money for the room.”

“Keep it. Just remember me for your next meet.” the big troll stated with a smirk on his face.

### **The next day...**

It was beginning to feel like he had been cursed. Two deckers down and nothing to show for it. How many more will it take before he finds one that will work out for him and his budding team?

He put out another job to some fixers, hoping for someone that is known, but willing to try anyone. Close to lunch, his comm rang. He answered it without even checking the number. He was making mistakes.

On the screen was a flat vid of a character that seemed to fit in an old time cartoon. A brown wolf-like character that, if his memory was serving, was always trying to capture a bird in the deserts of North America. He just couldn’t remember what it was called.

The cartoon face was fully animated and the lips were moving in sync with the words coming out. That is when he realized the person on the other side was talking to him.

“Sprocket?” a cartoony voice asked.

“Yes, I am Sprocket. And you are?”

“They call me Wiley.” the cartoon voice said, “and I hear that you are looking for a dataslinger to cut into a tough job and maybe join up with you for a long term proposition.”

“Who sent you my way? I need to know what fixer I need to pay.”

“I found you on my own. It was too easy as you leave a matrix echo like you wouldn’t believe.”

“Ok, that is something that I will need to get fixed eventually. First things first, seeing you don’t have a fixer I will even throw in their finders fee if you can complete the job. If you do, we will discuss the future prospects in a new team I am building.”

“The pay for this job?”

“Including the finders fee puts the job at 110K Y.”

“And the job?”

“It is the same job that two others have failed, and died trying. I need a data file from Aztechnology. The file is in their main system. Payment is upon delivery of the data packet.”

“Deal, I will have the data for you in two days.”

Sprocket sent the info on the packet to Wiley’s comm. He will need the name of the file. He started a mental timer, two days to see if he will have a new decker. He logged into the message board he used for passing info to his fixers, marked the job as pending, and deleted all traces of his matrix logging in, or at least he hoped he deleted his tracks. After the chat he had with Wiley, well, he didn’t know for sure.

### **Two days later...**

Isac “Sprocket” Winkerman, former sergeant in the UCAS army, was tuning up the VTOL getting it ready for a smuggling run he had lined up. His comm chirped. He glanced at the number, it belonged to the decker he had hired. Well, time to see if he had what it took.

“Wiley, how did the job go?”

“Very well, thank you. Here is the data. It is encrypted and I will send you the decryption key when I get a confirmation of payment.”

Isac looked at the name of the file and the size of it and knew it was what he was looking for. He smiled, and sent the payment. A few moments later a decryption code came across. He looked over the data, a cursory glance, and knew it was what he needed.

“Thank you Wiley, can we meet in person and discuss you joining the team?”

“I will meet with you at the Purple Dino. Bring your team and we can discuss the options.”

Isac agreed to meet with him that night at 2100 hours. He had a few calls to make before the meet. Sparks and Ringer will need to be there. Sparks, he knew, would not be a problem as his classes will be done long before the meeting, Ringer though... he does do odd jobs on his own. He better start making the calls.

By 2000 all the arrangements were made. The back room for the Purple Dino was reserved, both Sparks and Ringer were scheduled to be there, and his credstick was 1k New Yen lighter. He knew this meeting was important, his team needed a decker, and this one just hacked a mega corporation and survived to tell the tale.

He walked into the bar, nodded to Barney and headed to the back room. Barney sent in his dwarven bartender to take an order. He ordered a pitcher of ale, some finger foods, and turned on the white noise generator so no one could overhear. The generator was not needed as this room was built into a faraday cage. No signals in or out. He also knew it was warded from astural snooping, Sparks does the maintenance for the ward regularly.

The first of his guests was one of the team members. Ringer walked in, his chrome head and red eyes glowing slightly in the dim light. Isac stood and shook the man's hand. His mechanical hand had a strong grip, but not one that hurt. "Good to see you Sprocket."

"You too Ringer. You are armed a little heavy for a meet and greet. Do you have plans for tonight?"

Ringer just smiled silently.

A moment later Professor Sparkes walked in. He was still in his suit and hat, looking totally out of place in this part of Seattle. The barrens are usually a place for the low lifes, gangers, and homeless who squat in the ruins of the neighborhood. Sparkes moved in, shook both mens hands and traded greetings, then he moved back to the private bathroom for a minute. When he came out he was dressed in black leather armor with arcane sigils on his jacket. His hair was now pink at the tips, moving darker red as it moves toward the roots.

A few minutes later there was a knock at the door. Sprocket stood and answered it. Standing at the door was a little orc, who looked to be in her early teens, but it was so hard to tell the age of orcs unless you know them. This orc had long blond hair, a toothy smile, and was slender of build. If she was a human she would be pretty, but he wasn't attracted to orcs.

She stuck out her hand and asked, "Mr. Johnson?"

Sprocket snickered. "Call me Sprocket." he motioned to a seat and started introductions. The mage and gunslinger both shook her hand. She told them all that she was Wiley. Sprocket

looked over at Barney, who nodded knowingly, and shut the door. The nod from Barney was his signal that this was the person he was waiting for.

Wiley, her real name was Janice, was even younger than he thought. She was barely of legal age, but had the intelligence of a college graduate. She walked them through how she hacked the data off of the mega corp. She was energetic and proud of what she did. She was eating up the room's energy and sending it back in spades. Her energy and enthusiasm was infectious.

Sparks, the ever stoic professor, was smiling and following along with her story, even when he hated tech. He was loving her descriptions and following along. Ringer was sitting on the edge of his chair, he usually did, but he was listening with intent and not the bored expression that he usually wore. From the way everyone was getting along he knew she would be part of the team.

“Ok team, we have a job that will make us all a good share of money. I would rather plan it out at the safehouse just up the road.” He added a disappearing tag to Wiley’s comm so she could find the safehouse.

They all headed out to the safehouse to start planning.

### **A few days later...**

A fireball flew down the alley, just missing Wiley. She dove around a corner as it flew by. Sprocket yelled, “She went left!”

There was a rapping of automatic fire ahead. The sound of rounds hitting flesh. Dreck, he thought we need her alive.

Sprocket flew around the corner and saw what he feared. A cyberdeck splayed in pieces, the owner humped in a puddle of blood. Why did Wiley have to double cross them? Then he realized he was face to face with a dozen gun toting elves. Sprocket recalled his drones to come to his aid if need be. A moment later Sparks came up, and found the same, half of the guns now pointing his way.

“We don’t want any trouble from you Ancients, we were just after her.” Sprocket pointed at the now dead decker.

“Take her and leave.” one of the elves stated coldly.

Ringer moved out of the shadows, startling a few of the gangers, and picked up the body and her destroyed gear. Then the three shadowrunners all disappeared around the corner. They moved strategically to avoid being followed. They got back to the safehouse and started working.

Sparks tried to heal the decker, she was too far gone. Her gear was wiped, an emp was found in the middle of her deck that was linked to her heartbeat. All the data was destroyed upon her death. Now the 1 million New Yen that was supposed to be theirs was nowhere to be found. They had no idea where the money was moved, only that this decker had stolen it from the team. Now they will have to hire someone to try and get some of it back after the high value job they had just taken.

“We will have to hire another decker, one for finding our money, and one for the team.”

“First, do we need two different ones? Secondly, do you think we can get our money?” Ringer asked.

“No, they don’t have to be different, just need a decker. And for your second, I think we can get the money. We can’t do it, just need to hire someone that can.”

In the end they had to hire two different hackers. One to find the money, who took a 50% cut of the money from the account, and one to try out for the team. Out of the million, they ended up with 600K. There was an extra 200k in the account that Wiley put the money into.

That will pay off some of the reason Sparks got into the business. Sprocket did owe him, so he gave him his portion. 400k should just about pay off his debt. Now they will need to hire another decker.

### **A few weeks later...**

His drone strafed the car that was fleeing the safehouse. He opened fire with the Panther Auto Cannon again, striking the car across the top and engine block. The car exploded. Another decker down. This one tried to kill him. Luckily, Ringer saw the wanted ad for Sprocket. 500k will bring out some bounty hunters and get his decker to turn on him. Now, he needed another decker. Preferably one that can make the mess of being wanted go away.

We really need a way to break our decker curse...

### **The next day...**

Walking into the Purple Dino always seems out of place in the rundown neighborhood known as the Redmond Barrens. This bar resembled something from out of the 1980’s right down to the classical music blaring through the speakers. Metallica, AC/DC, Van Hallen, and others blaring loudly and statically through an old jukebox.

The inside of the bar had uneven wood floors, old and sticky wooden tables and a miss match bunch of chairs. The mirror behind the bar is scratched but not broken. There is a haze of cigar and cigarette smoke hanging in the air.

Sprocket walked into the bar like he owned the place. He stepped up to the bar and ordered a shot of Jameson Synthahol. Looked around for the owner, who wasn't present at the moment. He leans over the bar and waves for the dwarven bartender. The short dwarf walks over, bringing a step stool so he can see over the bar. In a gruff voice he asks, "What else you need Sprocket?"

"When's the boss coming in tonight Shorty?" he asked.

"Not sure, He said he had some business to deal with. He told me to give you this if you came in asking for him." The dwarf handed him a real manilla folder. A paper one. It was so out of place that Sprocket almost didn't know how to take it.

"Thanks," was all he could say.

Shorty replied, "Use the back room. No one has reserved it for tonight anyway."

He went back into the dark back room, locked the door and started going through the papers in the folder. Within 10 minutes, he was smiling slyly. He now had a decker, or at least he hoped he did.

### **The next week...**

The team was in the living room of the safe house waiting for the new decker to show up. This one is a little different. This one, Sprocket knew would work out. He is a gifted decker, a talented pickpocket, and a member of his family. His cousin Tylor would be joining the team. He is now going by a new name, one given to him from the decker Digital Doom. From now on he is known as Yacco.

Yes, we have finally broken the technology curse that has been plaguing this team. We now have a decker. Next..... Well, next we will see what we need.