

my mouth water. I could earn millions on this. I could even do a series on shadowrunners; the infamous children of the night, who stole from the rich megacorps. I could tell how they extracted scientists from one lifetime contract to another, or stole information to sell to the highest bidder. The royalties alone would keep me in style for years.

I sat there with a dazed look on my face as we drove up to the gate.

"Where's your pass?" the guard inquired.

"Oh...Umm...Here."

I felt the sweat run down my back as I waited to see if the delivery cover would fool the security guard, but everything went as planned. Wheels took us in and parked. She told us to call if there was a change in the pick up site. As we got out, Target and Flax each took a box.

Sapphire said, "Remember you two are the muscle for those heavy boxes, Swiss's the boss's son, and you Mr. J., are the driver of the van who wanted to see the inside of Ares Headquarters. Remember, the names on the badges are your names now."

"Yeah, yeah," mutters Flax.

We walked over to the main doors and stepped into the lobby, if you could call it that, and looked at all the display models of Ares weaponry. At least, it wasn't as bad as the Aztechnology freaks with their rainforest lobby. We went over to a security station to check in, and I couldn't help but fear the fact that I couldn't see any security. According to the information I got from Ms. Deal, this place was crawling with security. Just looking around, you would believe that all you had to do was walk in and take anything you wanted. I didn't see any cameras or other security devices and there seemed to be only wageslaves and buyers in the show room. I wondered how many people had died, because they didn't see through that illusion of openness and vulnerability.

"Badges," the guard demanded.

After we showed our badges, he escorted us to the elevator. I touched a button and up we went. At the eighth floor we got off and headed down the corridor to the right. We had to show our badges at each check point, and I used mine to open the doors. We eventually got to the room where they were keeping the information I wanted. There were two guards there who hadn't been on the guard schedule I had acquired. I was thinking of a way that we could get past them when Target stepped forward. His hand blurred as both guards slumped to the ground. We grabbed the bodies and dragged them inside with us. Sapphire walked over to the computer and connected the interface wire to her datajack. She pulled another wire out of her pocket and plugged it into another datajack. While she was busy, I reviewed what I had not been able to see. I had to slow it to twenty to one (my maximum) before

Targets attacks stopped blurring, and even then they were faster than anything else I had ever seen. I wondered if this story was worth the death of those two security guards. They were just two guys at the wrong place at the wrong time. It's scary to think about how easy it is for a person that has Cyberware and Bioware to kill someone that hasn't.

Sapphire still sat there as if she was in a coma. Two minutes after I was done, she woke up and unplugged the interface wires.

"Slot and run."

"You're done already?" I asked.

"No problem, the Ice in there was light and most of it was grey."

"You got the file?"

She handed me a memory block and said, "It's all on there."

"Then lets get out of here."

We were almost to the elevator when the sirens went off. I casually walked up to the check point we were closest to and

usually lose the majority of their intelligence in the process. Target must of had a mnemonic enhancer at a very high level to be able to remember a map, in detail, that he had studied all of two minutes, an hour ago. We reached the stairs with no problems and started down.

"This is Jester calling the King's horses. Alternate route C in effect."

We got to the first floor when the mycoprotein really hit the fan. We had just passed a corridor, when a security response team turned the opposite corner.

"Frag! Everyone take cover," Flax yelled as he hosed the corpsec guards with his machine gun. Swiss caught a round in his arm and went nuts. He stood up and walked to the center of the corridor. Then he started casting what looked like balls of lightning down the corridor, while foaming at the mouth. After the second one, the moans had stopped. He collapsed as he was trying to get off a fourth. The others had stopped firing to

out of there in seconds. Wheels stopped briefly to have Target remove the Willy Lilly sign before proceeding at a more sedate speed.

The rest of the ride gave me a chance to think about all the money I had just made. The money didn't do as much for me as the excitement did. Shadowrunning was definitely living on the edge. Maybe it's about time I started a new career. I asked Jester, "Do you think I got what it takes to be a shadowrunner?"

"Shadowrunning isn't so much a profession as a state of mind. Are you willing to put your life on the line and kill for money?"

"Don't some runners do it for more than money?"

"Some but they're the ones with so much that they no longer need to run for money. The only reason they run is for excitement."

I wondered if I was willing to kill for money. I was doing it by proxy in hiring others to do it for me, but could I do it myself? I tabled that for later consideration.

The more I thought about it the more I realized that the average person wouldn't believe the truth about shadowrunners. They would always be the paragons of light or darkness to the public. The truth is that they are neither. The term shadowrunners tells it all. They live in the shadow. Neither in the light of common good or the darkness of evil, they live a life between, where might makes right. I'm not sure that that's a world I would enjoy living in.

"Here you are Mr. Green," Wheels said.

I looked outside and saw my station. "How did you find out my real name?"

"Shadowrunners watch the news too. The mask put us off but your voice is the same." she said.

I could still hear them laughing as they drove off. After thinking about it, I laughed too.

"They live in the shadow. Neither in the light of common good or the darkness of evil, they live a life between where might makes right..."

said, "What's going on?"

"There's shadowrunners in the building. Just sit tight, and the computer will trace them down."

I didn't know what Swiss was doing when he started muttering and making gestures, but when the guard screeched I figured out that he cast a spell on the guard. On Tri-V the mages were always yelling out strings of incantations and making expressive gestures towards their target, I guess that's the difference between real life and movies. I didn't have much time to consider as Flax and Target got everyone's weapons out of the flower boxes.

"No more need for subtlety," Flax said as he jacked the first round into his mini-Gatling gun.

We started off again using random security cards to go through doors. It took me about three turns before I realized that we were no longer on the same route we had followed on the way up.

"Where are we going?"

"The elevators will be deathtraps, so we're going to use the stairs," Target said.

"How do you know which way to go?"

"I memorized the map."

That comment brought home to me the extent of his enhancements. The goblinization process is long and tramatizing to trolls in particular. They

watch.

"Damn that crazy shark shaman." Jester said to no one in particular, "Every time he gets hurt he goes berserk, and almost fries himself casting that damn lightning bomb."

"Come on, this place is going to be crawling with security in a minute. Pick up Swiss and let's get out of here."

I was the only one without a gun so I picked up Swiss and flipped him over my shoulder. It refused to open when we carded it. Target blurred again, and the door flew off its hinges with a screech and hit the street outside about seven feet away. We were hurrying out the door, when Wheels turned the corner and picked us up.

"The dwarf need a hospital?" the truck inquired.

"Not yet," Jester said with a smile.

"Well, strap in and prepare for the 'magic mountain' ride."

"What!?"

"She means prepare for some turbulence," Jester explained.

The rest of the ride home was a nightmare. Imagine going through the middle of rush hour traffic at 80KPH, weaving in and out of lanes with barely two centimeters of clearance. The sound of cars smashing followed us, as other drivers belatedly reacted to our presence. We were

POETRY

One Of His Angels

(To Roderick "Rat Daddy" Gary)

*One fall day
you went away,
but you never said
you would forever stay.
So with this in mind
we would like to say,
as you watch us while we daily pray,
for the Lord to bless you and
keep you safely in his heart,
for you may be one of his angels now,
but in our memories
you will never part.*

*We love you,
your S.G. Rho Sweethearts*

K. Wadesimmons