

... RUNNING THE SHADOWS ...

"I'll give you 800 nuyen for the bug," Jones said, setting the insectoid drone down after a minute's appraisal. The dapper dwarf had scowled at its condition, but he'd also hummed to himself. A sure sign of interest.

"900. It's worth more than that, even scuffed," Horse said. He'd never cared for the stereotype, but for negotiations, he didn't have a problem playing the role of "stoic Indian."

"Many Matrix sources say 1K," Raimée said absently from her seat on the back of the couch as she searched the Matrix. "Blue Book says 900, though." Squirt, the troll on the couch below her, grunted; the technomancer's hand movements had accidentally jostled the autodoc working on his gunshot wound.

"It's tough to move right now. Maybe if I wait, sure, but I was under the impression you needed the money now," Jones said, arching an eyebrow and indicating the team's safehouse. The converted warehouse was big enough for the team, including Squirt, as well as Banshee's vehicles and drones. It wasn't palatial, but cozy enough for them to lay low for about a week while Federated-Boeing looked for them, at least.

"Take the money, Horse, before Raimée kills me," the troll said. He grimaced and waved his hand at the chip that still lay between the dwarf and Horse. "That there's more important, anyway. Don't let Jonesy grab that for less than five K on top of the original price."

The dwarf scowled again. "Horse, you didn't tell me you were letting Squirt do the talking."

A clatter resounded through the warehouse. Everyone turned to the source; Banshee, her arms covered with grease and scratches, had thrown her wrench down in disgust.

"He don't need to. We checked the place out, but you didn't tell us about the new biometrics on the maglocks they got. If I'd known, I could've studied up on them and brought better tools," the elf said, pointing a long finger at Jones. "That's what brought the heat down, and now we're asking for more. Your screwup, not ours."

While Banshee was right, Horse wished at that moment that he could silence the elf. He looked at Raimée, but there was no help there; the technomancer was hyper-focused on erasing their data-trail and laying down false trails, if need be. And since Banshee had spoken up in Squirt's defense (and her own, said a voice in his head), there was no way that the troll would deny what she said. Horse shrugged.

"She's right. But," he said, watching the fixer's face go impassive, "I'm not putting the blame on you, I'm putting it on Johnson. Whoever he is, I think he can spare another five, don't you? He seemed to want those drone specs badly enough."

"I think so. He didn't tell me who he worked for, but I found out anyway—it's MCT, and that information and four extra K is what I'll give you," Jones said, slapping his palm down on the table.

"Agreed." Horse glanced at Banshee, who nodded back. Yeah, that would bear investigating ... later.