Chapter 140: Fire with Fire

Luford Perez - Sensorial Corporation

"---And that concludes my presentation." Luford thanked his audience before retreating back into his seat.

He let out a sigh, as he knew the results weren't likely to tilt in his favor today.

His brother, Harold, had amply prepared a comprehensive action plan coupled with the sweet promise of high profits and bonuses. It was hard to believe he still held more sway over the executives after today. This was especially the case when Luford's presentation involved asking the company to take a pay cut to endure these hard times together so they could focus on developing new products for various neglected submarkets.

Luford surveyed the table and confirmed his suspicions. A majority of all the younger executives in attendance avoided looking him in the eye, while only the older bunch showed their support for him. Unfortunately for Luford, the former outnumbered the latter.

The voting phase quickly came and went, and as he had expected, his brother's plan had won the majority. That meant his plans to take aggressive actions against another corporation would commence.

It was the first time in many years that they would be taking such hostile actions against another company. Luford's father, the hospitalized CEO, had taught the brothers to only use force as a last resort, as it served better as a deterrence. While Luford knew his brother's plan went against those teachings, he was powerless to do anything.

"Luford, the vote has ended," Harold reminded. "You will put your full support behind the majority decision, correct?"

"Yes…"

He knew there was no sense in being a sore loser, as they would only weaken them further when they were already vulnerable.

"Perfect. You can focus on your duties in the QA department. Oh, and work with our special operation units when you can. You're the most knowledgeable about cybernetics, right?"

Having decided that we didn't want to entrust the power armor to any of our employees, it was settled that Thorne and I would be the ones infiltrating Sensorial Corporation's warehouse in their headquarters.

While we would have backups, they would wait a distance away in the peripherals. That was because they simply couldn't keep up with us without the power supply and heat sinks that our power armor offered. Even armed with our Shades, it was too dangerous for them to keep pace with us.

"This feels just like the time we snuck into QuickLinks's headquarters," Thorne muttered.

"Yeah, except we were going in for the kill. This time, we're aiming for a more peaceful resolution, so try not to kill anyone if we don't have to. You have the tranquilizers prepared? Make sure you don't poke yourself with them because I ain't carry you out." I replied.

I felt around for the metal tube on my waist where I had secured the tranquilizers, as it would be embarrassing if anything went wrong on my end after saying that. The lid was properly on, but all it needed was just a brush with that needle within and we'd be in for some trouble while in the middle of enemy territory.

With our preparations complete, we donned our active camouflage and made our way to the front gate of the compound.

Sensorial Corporation had active sensors periodically scanning their immediate surroundings, but we had tested them out the day before. Our in-house version of the Shade was able to hide from their sensors, which honestly wasn't much of a surprise for me.

Despite how specialized they were in detection, with ten points in stealth tech, it was hard for me to believe an E-Class Corporation would have comparable technology.

We chose to go through the front gate because it was simply easier to go in with their cars rather than to scale their high walls. We waited for one of their cars to return to their premises and tagged along.

The next part would've been historically our greatest challenge to bypass, even with our stealth capabilities. The entrance to each building had not only powerful sensors but also weight sensors.

Thankfully, all the work I had put into the power armor recently reminded me of an already-made solution to our woes. I still had to fine-tune the armors with a sound-dampening load out or we wouldn't be getting by any guards.

It wasn't that hard, though. One of the first things I had ever made was the sound-canceling shoes and the same principles applied in this case.

Just in case, we waited until the guards at the doors were in the middle of changing shifts before taking action. They would be distracted while greeting their peers, which would help hide any noises if things went wrong.

I eyed the section where the pressure plates started and where it ended, deep into the corridor. My optics recorded precise details of it and Kiri quickly let me know the distance I needed to cover.

After waiting for several minutes, a new set of guards came to relieve their co-workers just on time. We followed them into the lobby of the warehouse building.

"How's it going—"

As soon as they started chatting, I began sprinting down toward the corridor. When I made it to where the weight sensors began, I leaped with the entire might of the power armor and activated the command for the modified jetpack.

I had optimized it before our trip up to Aegis for space conditions, but as we had experienced in our gigs since we came back, it was still usable in atmospheric conditions. The issue was hiding the sound and emissions it gave off. In order to fully conceal those outputs, we could only use it in low-power settings.

I looked down as my body flew over the pressure plates, going deeper into the hallway. I didn't even bother to look back to see how Thorne was doing with his heavier body, as I was nervous if I could make the distance of over fifteen meters.

Fed with the calculations from my cybernetics, the jetpack performed as expected, and I soon found myself on the other side of the weight sensors.

It took me a second to regain my bearing around the landing before I turned around to find Thorne directly behind me.

Yeah, I don't need to worry about a cyborg. I know better than most how powerful his legs are.

We continued on into the warehouse and soon came upon several doors. We weren't able to get schematics of buildings within their headquarters, so we had to carefully navigate through the facility.

I would've preferred to hack into their systems to get a more accurate map, but that meant they would discover our infiltration sooner or later. For this occasion, I wanted to keep our adversaries in the dark as much as possible.

I cautiously proceeded by scanning for any personnel with the Argus before sending out the Nyes to scout the surrounding rooms. There was a surprisingly low number of people around, considering they should be moving their wares pretty often.

We soon spotted the entrance to the main warehouse and were forced to wait at the door as our sensors picked up a large group of people within.

So that's where everyone was…

I signaled for Thorne to watch our backs while I monitored the situation with a Nye.

"Hurry up and bring out the products if you want to keep your jobs. The CTO is waiting for you all to move it!" A person who appeared to be the warehouse manager shouted.

Following the workers, I found them carrying crates to one corner of the building with ample open space.

It didn't take long for me to figure out what they were doing as I watched a man in a lab coat open up the crates to take out the cybernetic within. He inspected the product from every angle before proceeding to open it up to do the same with its internals.

He even brought a small handheld device against the implant that caused electric arcs to form.

"You see this too, right, Thorne?"

"Uhh, I'm busy watching our backs."

"So you have no idea what you're looking at, got it."

"Can't say I can refute that one." He shrugged.

"I can't blame you. We're shorthanded in the intel department and spec op teams for a reason. It's not that easy to train both field competency and knowledge, but you need both to effectively infiltrate and identify what others are up to."

"Rollo…This isn't the time. Do we wait here for them to leave, or what?"

"Hmm…They don't have signal jammers up so we can take some distances from my Nyes. Let's retreat into one of the empty rooms we cleared earlier."

While we moved, I didn't stop observing the employee from Sensorial Corporation perform tests on their products. I'm not sure why, but we lucked out since their inspectors came just before we made our move. The chances of our plot being discovered just drastically lowered. While we could still negotiate even if they caught on, making them sweat a little, titled the future negotiations in our favor.

The man in the white coat, who I believe was their CTO, was fully absorbed in his work while the others around him began to lose interest.

"That should be everything. Sir, we'll be waiting in the break room. Please let us know if you need anything!" The warehouse manager respectfully reported.

Their superior in the lab coat ignored them as he unceasingly worked. The warehouse employees soon filed out toward a different exit from the ones we used.

"Okay, let's go." I tapped on Thorne's shoulder.

With no one on the other side of the door, we quietly entered into the greater warehouse and I swiftly made my way toward where our hard-working CTO was.

As I closed the distance, Thorne quickly sent me a message.

'Should I knock him out and restrain him?'

'It's fine. Let him be. Just keep your eyes on him.'

He was now working on a large detection device meant to be used in fixed positions, and I took a moment to observe how he performed his duties. He was quite fast, but thorough as well, while following standard quality assurance procedures. The pile of devices he had yet to inspect was growing smaller while the completed grew larger by the minute.

Having seen enough, I walked over to the completed pile and began scouring for cameras. I found the one overlooking us and sent a Nye to be right on top of it. Then I moved out of the frame and fired an electronic intrusion round at it from my Suri.

I quickly opened up the port to connect my Nye to it. They would now be receiving the feed through my Nye, after a little editing of course. It wasn't disrupting the camera at all, so their cyber security experts shouldn't notice unless they knew what to look for.

With my basis covered, I began to sabotage all the devices in the CTO's completed pile. We weren't looking to do anything extreme that would injure the consumers, but we needed something noticeable to drum up news of their unreliability.

I rigged the devices to trip at random times in the not-so-distant future. It wasn't elegant, but got the job done.

The tinkerer in me took over, and I lost myself to performing my tampering and before I knew it, Thorne was shaking me out of it.

"Rollo! Read your goddamn messages! What are you doing, zoning out while in enemy territory?"

"Sorry…It's a bad habit I picked up. I know… Did something happen?"

Instead of replying, he pointed over behind me where I found the CTO unconscious and restrained on the ground.

"Uhh, what happened?"

"He noticed is what happened! You need to be more alert for god's sake. We're in enemy territory!"

Oops..now what? I'd rather not do anything to alert them to our sabotage, but is it too late?