

Moving Day
by Christian O'Kane

The official name of the organization was the Longbow division of the Freedom corporation. To the legitimate governments of the world they were a superhero organization that was a little too militant for their liking. Arachnos called them an annoyance and meddling amateurs. The countless villains that have fought them have far harsher names. The men and women in the red and white costumes were a common sight in some parts of the Rogue isles. What the soldiers lacked in actual super abilities they made up for with idealism and large amounts of high tech firepower. In spite of being called an annoyance, the group was becoming a serious problem, interfering with Arachnos operations all over.

Strela had tangled with them on several occasions. She had a scar on her left side from the high powered rifle of a Longbow rifleman. The man had been debating her removal of large amounts of cash from a bank in Paragon City. But today she had a far less violent meeting in mind.

Standing on a corner some thirty meters away was a tall figure clad completely in a white and red body hugging suit. Strela knew that suit was made of the most advanced materials available and was proof against the guns and knives that most of the local thugs carried. It also gave the wearer good protection against most of the weapons Arachnos troopers used.

The archer nocked an arrow to her bow and took careful aim at the white clad figure. With a snap her arrow was launched towards its target. The missile silently and swiftly soared through the air before hitting the ground at the Longbow soldier's feet. There was an ear splitting crack and a flash and the soldier was sent flying into a wall before she tumbled to the pavement.

Strela walked over to the prostrate form of the Longbow Guardian. The red and white clad woman looked up at her with a dazed glare. She grabbed the shirt of the woman and pulled her up off the ground a little. "You'll learn to leave me alone you stupid meddling fools!" Strela shouted out loud for any onlooker to hear. And with the deftness of years of practice she stuffed a small tightly wrapped object down the blouse of the Longbow soldier. "Contact me if Longbow is interested," the super whispered. She lingered there for a moment till she heard the loud whine of a jet pack telling of a Longbow Eagle coming to the rescue of the guardian. Then the archer turned and raced off into the ruins of an abandoned hotel.

Two days after her encounter with the Longbow rifleman Strela's cell phone rang. She opened the phone up. "Hello."

"Yes," a voice said over the phone. "We are interested."

She laughed. "Good. 3:30pm in Pocket D. I'll bring the rest of the item. You bring two hundred thousand dollars."

Pocket D is a hard place to describe. The difficulty lay not in what the place was, it was a night club, filled with loud music and flashing lights like a score of similar places in Paragon city. The difficulty lay in where the club was. For on one side of the massive club was a door leading to Paragon city. On the other side, was a similar door leading to the Rogue Isles. The doors were only a few hundred meters apart and yet they led to places that were separated by over a thousand kilometers.

The main room was a massive thing, the size of an aircraft hangar. It was filled with a large crowd of people, dancing, singing, drinking, standing, sitting or just talking. On either side walls were massive windows that looked out onto a world that made no sense. There was no ground, just an endless sky that the entire nightclub seemed to be floating in. The only things visible were several islands of stone and rock floating about like a child's balloon. No one knew exactly where Pocket D actually was but it certainly wasn't on planet earth. Most assumed it wasn't even in the same dimension.

Flanking the main hall were two smaller areas. Each contained several bars and a large number of booths and tables. Strela was now seated in one of the booths that was tucked into a quiet corner. On the table in front of her was a glass filled with a mix of vodka and iced tea but the woman had scarcely touched it except for a few sips. Perched on the seat next to her was her bow and a small quiver filled with arrows.

The man sat down on the bench opposite Strela without a word or a comment. He was wearing a drab looking black jacket and dungaree pants that seemed ordinary. His black hair was cut very short and betrayed his occupation as either the military or law enforcement. By the hard and steady gaze he gave her it was plain this man was an experienced soldier. Probably an officer. "You have the item?"

The woman placed a small paper wrapped bundle on the table between them. "You have the money?"

He placed a single unmarked credit card on the table and picked up the package. Upon opening the bundle he found four small flash drives of the types sold cheaply in most stores. Out came a small little palmtop computer and he quickly examined the contents of one of the drives. "The complete log and course of a council Q ship. Very nice," the man muttered.

Strela tapped one of the flash drives that was marked with a blob of green paint. "The real treasure is on this one." The woman picked up the credit card and swiped it with a portable card reader.

The officer took the marked drive and inserted into the side of the palmtop. He examined the files inside for a few moments as his eyes grew wide with amazement. "Oh good lord! Now THIS is worth it." He looked up at her with a broad grin on his face. "You were the one who killed Albert Kuhn?"

"He got in the way." She looked up from the reader. "Besides he was a filthy monster."

"With his evil experiments Kuhn stopped being human a long time ago." He took another credit card from his pocket and handed it to her. "This is a bonus for getting rid of him. You did justice a great service."

She picked up the new card. "When I said he was a monster I meant that literally. He injected himself with something and changed into," the woman paused for a moment searching for the right words. "A demon. It's the only word that fits."

There was a look of surprise on the man's face that vanished as quickly as it had appeared. "So he took to experimenting on himself. That is surprising. I thought he was smarter than that." He looked down at the palmtop again, scanning more information.

Strela took a sip of her drink. "I also ran into his last experiment. I have a description on here." She tapped one of the flash drives.

"What was it?" The officer inserted the flash drive into the palmtop.

"I'm not sure what she is now but she was once human," she said in a whisper.

The man stiffened. "Is she dangerous?"

Strela shrugged. "I'm not sure. She didn't attack me but she did rip up the council pretty well."

He smiled. "That's good!"

Strela examined the back of the card and found a phone number written there. She tapped the number with a finger but didn't speak.

"In case you have something else we might want," the man explained.

She took a sip from her drink and then stood up. "Excuse me but I need to sell a man a television." With that she turned and walked away.

"Did she say television?" The officer asked out loud. Surprised.

The item in question was four feet high, two feet wide and weighed over two hundred pounds. It was a cabinet made of dark mahogany with a fine, rich grain. That alone would make it valuable but this was not just a piece of decorative furniture. Set in the center close to the top on the front was a small television screen barely nine inches in size. Strela's contacts had called it a rare, 1939 television set. More so that the manufacturer was willing to pay a large amount of money to get the rare treasure. All the agents for the corporation knew was that it had been recovered from the Freakshow. Those cybernetic gang members were always collecting and stealing bits of technology. That it was in the possession of a villainess was not mentioned.

There was an agent for the company waiting for her in St. Martial with \$15,000. To get that money all she had to do was get it there, all two hundred fragile pounds of it, intact. Complicating things was the fact that Strela and the TV were on Mercy Island and some twenty miles of ocean lay between the two islands. She usually just flew between the two islands but not when trying to carry something that weighed more than she did. And just carrying the thing onto one of the ferries was not an option. She'd be attacked a dozen times over before she even got near the ferry boat landing. From her pocket she took out a small cell phone and quickly dialed a number. After several moments there was a loud click.

"Da?" A voice on the phone said.

Strela knew little about the person attached to that voice. All she knew was that he was called Alexi Bolden, The Hammer of the Proletariat. He seemed to be dedicated to fighting Arachnos and improving the lot of the terribly oppressed workers of the Rogue Isles. A good person fighting in a bad place.

"I need a favor Boris," she explained. "I have a delicate but heavy item I need to get over to St Martial today."

"How big?" The voice asked.

"A meter and a half high, half a meter wide and weighing around 90 kilograms," the woman responded.

"Easily done," Boris said simply. "I'll have the mover there in fifteen minutes. He'll be at your back door."

"Who?" She asked.

"Why the mover of course!"

The Mover Boris mentioned stood over two meters tall and weighted at least a ton, all of it muscles. He was wearing a battered plaid shirt and denim jeans. Thick, shaggy hair dropped down around a face with a bushy beard and mustache and deep, piercing eyes. "I'm da Mover," he said in a voice as deep and booming as a howitzer blast. "I move tings."

Strela noted that he was a full meter taller and a thousand kilograms heavier than she was.

"Where exactly do you want to take it?" the massive male asked.

"221 Queens port road, Black Mariah, St. Martial " Strela answered.

The massive figure nodded. "All right." He picked up the television and the electrical appliance looked tiny in his massive hands. The Mover turned in the direction of St Martial, cocked his arm back and tossed the TV into the air. Moving at an incredible speed the television raced towards the horizon and soon vanished from sight.

Strela let out a shriek and launched herself into the air. The woman hurtled through the air desperately trying to catch the television. Slowly she gained on the flying television and soon she caught sight of the brown rectangle. But no matter how fast she moved the object seemed to move faster.

The woman and the television raced forward and downward. She saw the earth racing up towards them at a frightening speed. She also saw something there on the ground waiting for them. The Mover.

The massive figure was standing there with a large catcher's mitt in one hand. "Incoming!" He shouted. The television raced towards the ground and straight into the oversized mitt. It struck with a soft thump.

The Mover deposited the electrical appliance on the ground in front of him. It looked intact.

Strela landed next to it and examined the TV closely. It was intact. Not even a smudge of dirt on it. She wheeled about and glowered at the tall figure. "How did you do that?"

"It's all in da wrist!" He commented simply and flexed his right hand.

Strela stood there for a moment unsure if she should, yell, scream or thank him. She looked around at where they had landed. "Where are we?"

"221 Queens port road, Black Mariah, St. Martial," the massive male said and pointed to a building off to one side of the parking lot. The building was a tall, brick structure with a neatly cut lawn out front. The shrubs surrounding the doors were finely manicured. Two men in full armor stood at the entrance. She noticed that there was no sign identifying who was in the building, just an address. A figure came out of the front entrance and swiftly made his way down the walkway towards Strela at high speed.

"I'm done here!" The Mover said as he eyed the man headed towards them.

She smiled at the massive man. "Thank you! I owe you a big favor."

He smiled revealing a impressively large set of teeth. Then he moved backward one step and vanished. No lights or odd sounds, no flashy of special effects. The massive figure just

disappeared instantly leaving Strela a little surprised at how someone so big could just vanish that quickly. With the Mover gone Strela turned her attention to the approaching figure.

The man from the building was wearing a business suit that was of middling quality telling of a middle level official in the corporation. The man was probably hoping to do well enough to be assigned somewhere far away from the Rogue Isles. Many companies had offices of some sort in the Isles. It was too important a place to ignore. But most did not like being there. They preferred places like Berlin, Moscow, Rome and New York where the guards didn't need advanced battle rifles and body armor and the local ruler wasn't a raving lunatic bent on world domination. The only companies and corporations that liked Rogue Isles were ones that weren't welcome in Rome, Moscow, Berlin and New York. Most were banned from those places for reasons like theft, corruption, fraud, graft, massive pollution, worker exploitation and human rights violations. This particular corporation had a lot of contracts with the American government. Contracts that earned them a huge profit and they wouldn't do anything that would endanger them. They wouldn't allow even the slightest rumor of scandal or wrong doing be associated with their company. And just having an office in St Martial would spark rumors of scandal and graft. So that meant a low key presence.

The new arrival bowed to Strela. "Good afternoon!" My name is Arthur Wilson. It's a pleasure to meet you. You've brought the item. Good," the man said in a calm dignified tone. "Let's go inside where things are more private." He waved a hand towards a group of workers who rushed forward with a large freight cart. The workers gently placed the television onto the cart and started to wheel it towards the building.

They went through a large freight door and down a long hallway. Passing through a smaller door took them into a brightly lit room with walls of dark paneling and expensive furniture including a large meeting table.

On the table was a platter filled with a variety of sandwiches. Next to that were an assortment of different drinks some alcoholic, some carbonated along with coffee and tea both hot and iced. She felt like she was in a board meeting for some company instead of selling stolen goods. But was it still stealing if you were giving back to the people who had made it?

The door opened and another person entered. The new arrival was wearing a pair of jeans and a white smock both of which were worn and had seen better days. He had a small tool case in one hand and a laptop in the other.

"This is our expert," Arthur Wilson announced and pointed to the man. "He will be confirming the validity of the item before we will purchase it."

Without a word the man walked straight over to the television. He produced a small screwdriver and in a few swift movements removed the screws holding the back on. The man studied the interior of the television intently for a moment and then broke into a large smile. "A model RT23. In fine condition for a 1939 model. Where did you find it?" He asked excitedly.

"I got it from the Freakshow. I've no idea who they stole it from," Strela answered as she took a sandwich off the table. "They could have taken it from almost anywhere in the world."

"This looks to be all original," the man commented with a broad grin on his face. "Whoever had it took very good care of it."

"The Freakshow are violent and strange but they are very respectful of electronics," Strela examined the sandwich and found it to be ham and Swiss cheese. "Almost worship it."

The expert opened his laptop and examined something on the screen. "The serial number doesn't match any of the known examples but it is a legitimate number. It was sold to the Gimbels Department store on July 31, 1939. I wonder where it's been for seventy years." He looked up from the laptop and stared at Strela. "You've no clue of its past?"

Strela shook her head. "None. We found no trace of its past. Odd thing is no one has advertised that it had been stolen. If a collector had it before the Freakshow they're keeping quiet. They probably had stolen it from someone else." She took a bite of the sandwich and discovered it was really good cheese and fine quality ham. "Could it be a copy? The Freakshow are excellent at copying any sort of electronics."

The expert shook his head. "No. I do see some repairs and replacements but this is definitely not a reproduction."

"Then do we have a sale?" Strela asked hopefully.

"If the price is still what was advertised," Arthur Wilson answered.

Strela took another bite of the sandwich and chewed for a moment. "It is."

The executive smiled. "Good! Then we have a deal." He extended his hand.

The archer took it and they shook hands for a moment. "Where are you taking it?"

He looked again at the TV and patted it gently. "This little lady is going to the Museum of Television and Radio in New York."

"It's good to have her coming home again. Especially after being stolen by the Freakshow," the expert commented. "I wonder how many times it's been stolen?"

Strela laughed. "This is the Rogue Isles. Theft and stealing are a national past time here."

The End