



SECOND FEATURE THE FOX



10  
AUG '10

# THE SHIELD

## LAST MISSION!



TRAUTMANN  
RUDY  
GRAY

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THIS REMINDS ME OF SOMETHING SGT. CULLEN--ONE OF MY INSTRUCTORS--SAID TO ME.

WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE, HEROES?

"YOU'RE GOING TO FIND YOURSELF IN A BAD SITUATION. A TIME WHEN EVERYTHING IS ON THE LINE."

I HAVE A DIRECT NEURAL LINK TO THE DEVICE'S DETONATOR.

TRY ANYTHING, SO MUCH AS TWITCH IN A WAY I FIND SUSPICIOUS, AND I'LL TRIGGER IT.

I'D SAY FACING DOWN A CRAZY WOMAN WITH HER FINGER ON THE BUTTON OF A HIGH-TECH DOOMSDAY DEVICE QUALIFIES AS "EVERYTHING ON THE LINE."

WHEN I DO, IT WILL OPEN A HALF-SECOND WORMHOLE BETWEEN THIS PLACE AND A PARTNER DEVICE BLACK SEVEN HAS PLACED IN THE SUN'S CHROMOSPHERE.

SOMETHING ELSE CULLEN TOLD ME

"WHEN YOU'RE IN THAT NO-WIN SITUATION, YOU'VE GOT TWO CHOICES. THE FIRST IS RETREAT."

FOR A HALF-SECOND, THIS PLACE WILL BE THE SURFACE OF THE SUN.

UNLESS YOU'D CARE TO BE REASONABLE AND ALLOW SAFE PASSAGE AWAY FROM HERE FOR ME AND MY MEN.

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

MA'AM, I'M AN OFFICER IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY.

I GIVE YOU MY WORD...

"AND THE SECOND CHOICE IS TO SHOW YOUR ENEMY THAT AN AMERICAN SOLDIER NEVER BACKS AWAY FROM A FIGHT."

HAPPY HARBOR, R.I.

...I'M NOT FEELING VERY REASONABLE TODAY.



LT. JOE HIGGINS—WOUNDED AND LEFT FOR DEAD ON THE FIELD OF BATTLE—RECEIVED A CUTTING EDGE EXPERIMENTAL WARSUIT AND IS NOW THE U.S. ARMY'S VERY OWN SUPERHERO. DISPATCHED ON HIGH-RISK MISSIONS AROUND THE GLOBE, HE IS...

# THE SHIELD

THOUGH EVEN SARN'T CULLEN  
MIGHT THINK TWICE BEFORE  
WADING INTO THIS MESS.

MY ORDERS ARE TO  
TRACK DOWN AND  
DESTROY THE BLACK  
SEVEN ARMS RING.

THE TRAIL LED HERE, WITH BARON  
GESTAPO AND HIS OLD-SCHOOL  
NAZI HARDCASES BUYING A BOMB  
FROM THE BLACK SEVEN BROKER.

THINGS ARE  
NOT GOING  
EXACTLY AS  
PLANNED.

(WE ARE  
BETRAYED!)

(FALL  
BACK TO THE  
U-BOAT! FALL  
BACK!)

# OPERATION: GUNSLINGER

PT. 3 NEVER SAY DIE

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--YOU'RE A LUNATIC--

PROTECT DRAGONFLY! SWARM HIM!

BLACK SEVEN'S JAMMED ALL COMMUNICATIONS IN THE AREA. CAN'T CALL IN TO BASE.

CAN'T GET ONE OF THE GEE-WHIZ BOYS ON THE HORN TO TALK ME THROUGH DEFUSING THE WORLD'S NASTIEST BOMB.

TIME TO DETONATE  
15 SECONDS

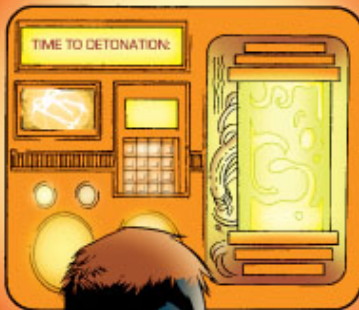
YOUR BOSS WANTS TO BURN THIS PLACE TO A CINDER AROUND YOU.

AND I'M THE LUNATIC?

WHICH MEANS I HAVE TO DO THIS ON MY OWN.

OR WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM A FRIEND.

>>WARSAULT INTRUSION SYSTEMS ACTIVE.  
>>ACCESSING DETONATOR CONTROL SYSTEMS...



TIME TO DETONATE  
10 SECONDS

TIME TO DETONATION  
5 SECONDS

FILES ON YOU SAY YOU CAN MANIPULATE COMPUTER SYSTEMS, MR. TERRIFIC.

MY NANOTECH SYSTEMS ARE ALREADY INSIDE THE DETONATOR. MAYBE YOU CAN PIGGYBACK OFF THEM...

..BEFORE WE'RE ALL COOKED.

WE ARE CUTTING THIS WAY TOO CLOSE.

ALL RIGHT, I'M IN. YOU SURE YOU CAN'T SHUT DOWN THE DETONATOR?

FEELS... WEIRD.

IT'S LIKE THE SUIT'S HARDWIRED COMBAT REFLEXES. JUST SIT BACK AND LET TERRIFIC DO THE DRIVING--

I'M JUST A TRIGGER PULLER, SIR. YOU'RE THE GENIUS.



LINK ESTABLISHED  
(ALLIED TRANSIENT AI: "T-SPHERE"),  
SCANNING DEVICE...  
>>ISOTOPE DETECTED...ISOLATING  
>>TRIGGER TYPE UNKNOWN...SEARCHING  
>>POSSIBLE PROFILE MATCH:  
COBALT CORE EXPLOSIVE...PROBABILITY 57.7%  
**ALERT! FISSILE MATERIAL DETECTED**

NEGATIVE RESULT

SOMETHING'S NOT RIGHT.



WHAT THE HELL?

WE'VE BEEN HAD.

THERE'S JUST ENOUGH RADIOACTIVE MATERIAL HERE TO BE CONVINCING. NO TRIGGER DEVICE.

A DECOY.



BUYING DRAGONFLY AND BLACK SEVEN TIME TO EXFIL.

WHY? IT'S A PRETTY ELABORATE DEVICE JUST TO CON A BUYER OUT OF HIS MONEY.

WHO KNOWS? THEY'RE EX-H.I.V.E., SELLING EXOTIC WEAPONS TO WHOEVER'S GOT THE CASH.

MAYBE THEY GOT A BETTER OFFER.

AND IF THEY'RE TAKING OFFERS, THEN MAYBE IT'S TIME TO STRENGTHEN OUR NEGOTIATING POSITION.

