

Neon City Nights : Fortune's "Favors"

by Rourkie

"No, no-no-no nooo! This can't be happening! Not today, not now..."

"I can assure you sir, within 99.7% probability that you are not experiencing a hallucination, and what you are presently perceiving is quite real."

"Shut up, Cirex! *Now* is not the time."

"Entering Silent Mode."

The rabbit glanced at himself in the mirror with a sigh and a frown. Denial had gotten him this far, but now that it really mattered, it would carry him no further. His XRC suit had grown too snug to wear.

As he stared back at his body, the round rabbit mused on his humble upbringing, and how he had gotten to this particular, unthinkable problem. He was certainly talented: eleven major heists between the ages of 16 and 21 was impressive by anyone's standards. After his financial future had been more than secured, he could afford to pick and choose which targets to lift, almost always mostly for sport; it wasn't like he needed the money.

The last 3 years had seen five more jobs, but four of them had been what he considered to be "security consultation" jobs. He would return the object or objects he stole within 24 hours, (of course taking a photo with them before returning them,) simply for bragging rights. Most of those jobs were doubly successful in that the facilities in question responded by increasing their security protocols to Post-Nano regulations once he had returned their property. It wasn't so much that the rabbit was being philanthropic as it was that the "thrill of the chase" no longer challenged him. He'd hoped that forcing his toughest opponents to evolve would create a higher benchmark, but thus far, he hadn't truly found a score worthy of his untenable skill, until now. Tonight was going to be his grandest performance in years, provided he could get his XRC to zip up.

He shouldn't have been surprised, really. Now that he'd been semi-retired, the rabbit didn't nearly get as much exercise as he used to (though at 24 year-cycles past, perhaps "semi-retired" wasn't quite the right term to use), and if he was being honest with himself, which was just about the only person he could ever truly be honest *with*, the truth was simple: he was getting fat and lazy. Without a critical need to stay in shape, routine exercises were replaced with routine excuses, and each day the round rabbit's denial grew a little larger, matched only by his softening stomach and thickening thighs.

The last job he had taken was 15 months ago, and even *then* XRC had been snug around his waist. The job went off almost without a hitch, save for the couple of times where he surprised himself by being out of breath from what should have been a simple climb or a quick sprint. The following night was even worse, and although he easily alluded the authorities when returning the bauble that he'd taken, he was sore for three whole days afterwards. At that point, he had vowed to get a gym membership, just in case something big came up, so that he would at least be more prepared.

Since that night, he had gone up another three pant sizes (or really four, if he was *really* being honest with

himself, considering it had taken him several tries that morning to get the waist to cinch properly), which also happened to coincidentally be the total number of times he had to the gym before getting distracted by other sources of entertainment. Coming into “new” money combined with being bored has never been good for anyone's waistline, and when the hangers-on at the oxy-bar tell you how sexy you look, even with an extra 5 or 10 pounds, it becomes very easy to ignore the problem of a shrinking waistband, especially when you could send your threads to your tailor for refitting, yet again.

The XRC, on the other hand, could not be tailored. Fitted for him when he was 17 year-cycles as a proof of concept, it was bound to be a little snug on the rabbit at 24, even if he had kept in shape. The suit had some give to it, made to stretch at odd contortions that the wearer might have needed to make during infiltration. But stretching too far would cause functionality and efficacy to significantly suffer. Last time he wore it, the suit had stretched over his plump thighs and rounded belly with just a little bit of light tugging, but even that small amount of stretching had cost him 12.8% of the suit's functionality. Now he couldn't even pull the suit up past mid-thigh without having to squish and push his leg fat into the suit. The ridges built into the suit weren't just stretched to their functional limits, they were struggling to stay stitched together as they bulged unflatteringly around his body.

Still panting just from the effort of squeezing his lower half into the suit, morbid curiosity got the better of the rabbit. He pulled the scale out of the closet, where he had stored it after it was “getting in the way,” collecting dust more than it was being used. The suit's fabric creaked ominously as he placed the massometer where he would have room to use it, grunting at the effort of simply having to bend in the middle to pick it up off the ground. The last time he had weighed himself was that single week he went to the gym. Back then, he had been mortified to discover he'd solidly broken 200 pounds, the meter's archaic LED screen settling at 208. Even then, that number was way too high for his tastes, considering he was just under 5 and 8/12 feet.

A slow dread crept over him when the rabbit realized he couldn't even see the current number without leaning forward to look past the crest of his belly. In blood red, the digits flashed back a death sentence to any master thief: 286. He did the math, though it couldn't possibly be right. There was no way he could have gained 78 pounds in 15 months. He was only about 170 when he got the suit, which meant he had put on a good 116 lbs. since then, in 7 years. (*Don't lie to yourself, you know that most of that weight was in the last three years.*) He finally mustered enough guts to take a critical look at himself in the giant bathroom mirror at the damage that partying every night instead of working out had done to his once lean and lithe body.

The XRC looked like a split sausage casing, the cream-colored fur of his torso overwhelming the reflection that stared back. He looked like the Marshmallow Bunny in those Puffybrand Treats on holovid. Except the mascot on the holovids had a pleasant pudginess to his rotund frame, whereas the rabbit reflected back at him on the mirrored glass in front of him had grown *too* plump and was starting to grow too squishy to have that same charming roundness that made the sugary lapine icon so adored.

His legs were huge – even through the suit, he could see the natural muscle that had settled there throughout his whole life had all but disappeared, and no matter how hard he tried, he couldn't spread his legs wide enough so that his thighs weren't touching. Not that he could see much of them anyway without having to lift the apron of his belly out of the way. On his last heist, his stomach had domed out in front of him, a rounded form the suit had shaped efficiently to spread its strain, which made him look slightly pregnant when he finally got the suit zipped up. Now, it hung over the zipper, spilling out on all sides in a giant muffin top, or perhaps more like melting ice cream, with two giant marshmallows resting on top: his once pert pecs, now undeniable moobs, which threatened to prevent the rabbit from crossing his meaty arms if they got much bigger.

He frowned at just how much cream-colored fur from his underbelly was showing now. The rabbit was fond of the usually more prominent mottled grey and brown pattern of the fur on his arms and legs, he thought it

made him look distinguished. He switched the mirror to reverse mode to display his backside, so he could at least admire it from behind, though his behind definitely took up the most space in the image. It hadn't escaped the influx of calories either; the rabbit could see places where the stitching on the suit was already starting to pop, the liquid crystal sheening in rainbow patterns as the display tubes also stretched to hold in his ample ass. Large love handles bulged above, creating a shelf of pudge above his rear, a series of rolls where his fat bunched up as it filled out his frame.

Discouraged by what he saw, he switched the view back to his front, where the rabbit blushed. He noticed for the first time that his belly completely obscured his crotch. If he'd kept up with a healthy sex life, he might have realized how his privates had been methodically covered by his growing belly, but the last couple of months his libido had been at an all-time low, and his appetite had skyrocketed. He still couldn't believe how large he'd grown, and how much he'd let himself go simply because of success. But then came the thought: *why shouldn't he enjoy it?* He had risen to every challenge and succeeded, even if his success had now made those challenges that much harder to rise up to now.

He contemplated on just what that could mean. Not only was his size a sign of his success, but it provided a level of difficulty he had never considered before. He had worked so hard to stay in shape to perfect his craft, but could he truly call himself a master if he still couldn't be a master thief with so much *more* of him to hide now, and with it being that much harder to move and run? Who cared if he was approaching the size of a whale? The idea of having to relearn his craft for a larger frame thrilled him and filled him with excitement. It was a perfect chance to start fresh, from the beginning, and relive the triumph of becoming the best all over again. The best *and* the biggest.

His contacts and colleagues would think he was crazy, and they would have sooner died than see him standing there, ruining the priceless, one-of-a-kind, several-million Yuan suit simply from trying it on. The very idea was taboo; it was suicide for a thief to lose his skills like this, and yet, it filled the rabbit with life. He'd start from square one, start small, and work his way back up. He considered a new alias, but decided against it. Why not flaunt his success, and let everyone know who was *really* the biggest name on the black market?

But before he started any of that, there was one last order of business.

"Cirex, capture video from the west bathroom mirror."

"Right away, sir," his house responded, and a blinking red light could be seen in the corner of the display. Knowing he wouldn't be able to zip up his suit no matter how hard he tried, the rabbit did the next best thing. He slipped his fat arms into the arms of the XRC, having to lean back to accommodate for the stretching fabric.

After almost managing to succeed to get the suit around his fat, flabby frame, the rabbit bent forward, stretching the XRC to its maximum capacity. The pressure strained the fabric and shattered the crystal tubes, spraying an iridescent arc across the mirror and the bathroom, the liquid suspended in air for a moment before evaporating into the air.

The feeling was like nothing he had experienced before. For a moment, he felt like a caterpillar emerging from a crystal cocoon. Surrounded by the colored droplets and shattered glass which formed a beautiful array.

The rabbit laughed, fairly certain no living creature would get to truly witness the beauty he had just experienced. 7 years ago, he would have been horrified by what had just happened, but now he thought it was the perfect way to start his new life; baptism by crystal.

"Cirex, call Shen."

“Right away, sir.”

“Shen? Hi it’s Koji. Yes, it’s been a while... Too long, I agree. I wish this was a social call, we should go out for drinks soon, but do you remember the XRC prototype you made for me?... Yeah, yeah, the one I wouldn’t let you upgrade or replace because of nostalgic reasons.... Well... it’s finally worn out. I need another one... Yes... well, get enough material for two... no, I... not quite. Just don’t start until I can meet you and you can take my new measurements.... A lot has changed in seven years. It’s hard to explain, I’ll just send you the video, I think you’ll enjoy it... Just watch it, you’re in for a big surprise.”