

# My Shopping Buddy

R.C. was walking down Hawkings Street in Mechanicsville [Tolkeen Kingdom] when a familiar figure stepped out of an alleyway. Nim in his human form approached R.C. as he stood stunned. "Close your jaw soldier, the flies are looking to land." Nim said by way of greeting. "Come with me, I want to introduce you to somebody."

"Yes, Sir, umm, Nim... Sir" said R.C., not quite sure how to address a superior officer who has suddenly jumped out of an alley at you.

Nim led the way through a series of back alleys across a couple of the city's major blocks. He finally stopped in front of a small run down building with corrugated metal siding that looked like it had already been through a war. He knocked on the door and then waited.

A slot in the door opened and a pair of yellow-green robotic eyes stared out. A poorly synthesised voice said, "State your business."

"We're here to see Clausavius. It's Nim."

"Nim who?" the robot bleeped.

"Just Nim. Go now, automaton."

The slot closed. A clanking whirr sounded from within and for a while there was no further sound. Nim crossed his arms over his muscular chest. Finally the

door to the building opened. A man with skin as black as night, wearing a white lab coat, stood there, except where his head should have been there were a dozen thick round tentacles of varying lengths each ending in a blue-irised eye. An electronic device with a speaker embedded in it on his chest spoke in a voice not much more refined than that of the robot who had answered the door. "Welcome Nim. Oh you've brought a friend."

"Kek-clic-mic-sep-dip-fah-ra-oj, my friend. This is one of my lowly grunts, R.C. R.C., this is Kek-oj."

Kek-oj thrust out his hand. R.C. took it tentatively. They shook. Kek-oj said, "Lets go on into the lab then."

He led them into the building's interior. The lab was a mess of electronics and almost a literal treasure-trove of crystals ranging from quartzes, garnets, and topazes, up to emeralds, rubies, and diamonds. Sitting alone on one table was a robotic arm held up into the air. The hand on the end of it began to wave to them. Kek-oj waved back to it. Nim waved and prodded R.C. to do the same. The hand gave them a thumbs up. Nim said, "So, I brought R.C. here to pick up some spy toys for an upcoming mission."

By this point, RC was staring around quite interestedly as there were many nifty things in the workshop to catch his attention.

Kek-oj asked, "What is the mission? Or will you have to kill me if I know? I've heard the stories about the fire breathing rabbit you know."

"What rabbit?" Nim asked innocently.

Kek-oj picked up a sphere about the size of a baseball. He tossed it to R.C. who fumbled to catch it. He missed but the ball stopped short of hitting the floor and hovered there. R.C. picked it up. Kek-oj told him, "Read it if you'd like."

R.C. did so. At first the machine was a senseless jumble. Slowly sections of it began to reveal themselves as devices, more like parts really. It took a couple minutes, but he had a rough understanding of what it was all about. Much of it was unintelligible though. "A lot of it escapes me." he said.

"I mean", he added, "I know what it does, but I can't for the life of me figure out why it does it. Cause and effect just sometimes seem to start or finish without each other in there."

"It's techno-wizardry. Unless you are one there is a lot of it not going to make a lot of sense." Kek-oj began. "Magic has its own ways and don't always connect up with the science. That's the joy, and the power of techno-wizardry."

Nim asked R.C., "So what does that sphere do?"

R.C. replied, "It's a mechanical eye with a recording function. It operates in the visual range as well as the infrared and ultraviolet ranges."

R.C. turned the ball in his hands and a videodisc popped out of it. He read the disc. "The last thing that it saw prior to be turned on this time was a woman in a

pair of coveralls sliding out from underneath of a hover car. The hover car was somewhere other than here."

Kek-oj clapped, "Good work R.C. Now Nim, about the mission..."

"It's a spy op in and around Chi-Town." said Nim.

"Hmm, he's going to need the next-gen up from the eye he has right now. I've heard nasty tales about the astral spies inside of the Fortress City. <He rummaged around a drawer.> This one will be good. It sees the invisible including astral beings."

Nim asked, "What protection does the device have itself? Won't it stick out like a sore thumb to any psychic?"

"Sadly none. It will require very careful use to avoid detection. When it is off it's nothing to any psychic that doesn't touch it or have the ability to read an object. The nondescript, seemingly opaque nature of the eye is a good help for such situations. I'd love to be able to make this one with a soft, giving shell so that it could be passed off as a juvenile's toy. <He turned to R.C.> What other technical machines are you taking with you? What do you generally intend to do? Maybe I can lend you some other machines."

"Well, Master Kek-oj, from what Commander Nim tells me, we have a lot of surveillance work to do." replied R.C., absently turning the Magic Eye in his hands.

"I have nearly all the bases covered in regards to standard observation equipment. You know, Vid

Recorders, Audio Taps, and Motion Sensors of various types. Some tracer bugs to track coming and going of various things. Going to have one heck of a data-gathering network running once I get settled in. The poor bastards won't be able to empty their bladders without me knowing how often they do it, and how long it takes for them to get out of their armour to accomplish the job." R.C. added with a smirk.

"I should also be able to create gaps in their security systems, or simply mess them up so bad they won't think them reliable if I really put my mind to it." he said, making a knowing little tapping motion towards his forehead at this statement.

"What I might really need are something along the following lines, if you have anything like it" said R.C. "First, I figure I am going to be doing some climbing to place some of this stuff, and climbing gear and rope would be rather suspicious to be toting around a city. If you have anything that can let me stick to walls like a spider, it would come in real handy. It has to be good and inconspicuous though."

Kek-oj pulled one eye-ended tentacle down from the middle of the mass and scratched it near the end with his fingernail. He said, "That's easy enough. I have something around here. I think, this container here. Yes."

He opened a large plastic shipping container and rummaged around inside of it. He pulled out a disc-like

object with two pairs of cables coming out of it. The disc part had several irregular stones stuck into it. A gold coloured strand spiralled around the length of the cables. Kek-oj gave it a shake and a long thin strap dropped into sight. He took the strap, threw it over his eyestalks, and pulled it down so the disk hung from his neck. The first cable he took and wrapped around his right arm. He tied it off in a simple loop at his wrist. The next he wrapped around his left arm. The other two cables he wrapped around his legs. He said, "You'll put it under most or all of your clothes. If you like you can also put the main unit at your back. The neck strap is adjustable."

He went over to the wall and concentrated for a brief moment. He put his hands high up on the wall. He then lifted his legs one at a time and put the toes of his shoes on the wall. He clung to the wall a moment, bending some of his eyes back toward R.C. and Nim. He then proceeded to climb up the wall. At the ceiling he carefully placed one hand on it, then the other. He told them, "This is the hardest part and I find it terribly tiring."

Kek-oj got entirely on the ceiling. He freed one hand and waved awkwardly at them. Then he turned around and made his way back down the wall. When he was standing normal he said, "A single charge is good for about half an hour."

R.C. thought for a bit longer about what he needed, and then said, "Also, this is Chi-town and burbs we are

talking about. The C.S. Mutts and their handlers are going to be a problem no matter how you spin it. Do you have anything I could use to distract them? They latch onto active magic right quick, so perhaps sending them on a few wild goose chases at critical moments would prevent them from sniffing me out while I'm working. I can hide fairly well if I need to, but it puts a serious short-circuit in my capabilities to do so. I would rather just send them off in the other direction, after a more visible target."

Nim said, "I like the way that you think, R.C. I know exactly what Kek-oj has that would work well for distraction. You remember those ovum with the rabbit skins."

Two of Kek-oj's several pairs of eyestalks turned and looked at each other. Then he raised his right hand with his index finger extended. "Yes, of course. You had me for a moment when you said rabbit skins. You meant bouncing, or rubber. Yes, I have a half dozen of those."

Kek-oj went and rummaged around in a drawer of a desk against the far wall. He came back with a cardboard box. He pulled out an object about the size of an egg. He took it and threw it at the floor. It bounced several times before settling on the floor. Kek-oj pulled out a small gun-like object and fired at the egg. It went skidding on a zig-zag back and forth across the floor. Nim retrieved it and gave it a gentle toss back at Kek-oj who said, "The bouncing is simple science. Now if you charge it up it

turns invisible. Charge it and toss it. The magic scent will go away from you. Not visible like you suggested, though."

He thought for a moment and then said, "I suppose something smaller and sticky on one side could be put on someone and give the C.S. Mutts a live target to follow. Just a simple spell result. I know the perfect one. I'll have six made up and Nim can pass them along to you."

R.C. frowned a bit, setting the Eye down on a nearby desk. "I wish I could ask for more, Master Kek-oj, as this stuff fascinates me. But frankly, it would just be too dangerous to take too much stuff with me into a hotbed of hostile sensitives like at Chi-town."