

Dimension Kill.

By Sean. F. Stevens.

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#### DIMENSION KILL

The access tunnel down which Leo Firebrand walked was long, dimly lit and oppressively damp and humid. This was only to be expected though, as it was the tunnel that serviced the large and complex air conditioning system of the Great Leader's palace. He paused for a moment, taking a breather in the heavy air and wondered increasingly as to whether this whole experience was nothing more than a dream. It was less than a day previously that he had been visited in his small, shabby office by a man that had called himself "Professor J", an elderly, rather nondescript man who had nonetheless seemed to know a hell of a lot about Firebrand, and that his "Export" business actually involved "exporting" selected human targets to the afterlife, for a fee.

Firebrand had not been concerned about J's knowledge, since, if worst came to worst, he could kill J before the old man would be able to leave his office. But as it turned out, Firebrand had had little to worry about, or so it had seemed.

Professor J had been carrying a heavy suitcase, of the large synthetic leather variety, one that you could easily hide a medium aged child in. J hefted this suitcase and with a visible effort lifted the case and placed it on Firebrand's desk, opening it, and turning the case around. To Firebrand's quiet delight it was packed to the brim with large denomination bills, and as cash was the only language that an assassin like Firebrand spoke, he was suddenly much more partial to the old guy standing in front of him.

"There's ten million dollars in here" J explained "you can count it if you like."

"I'll trust you, for the moment." Firebrand replied with a faint grin. "Who is the target?"

J coughed slightly in embarrassment. "Well, in a certain respect, you are."

A small but very deadly automatic was suddenly in Firebrand's hands and pointed at J, who eyed the weapon nervously.

"If you want to die of old age, instead of here and now, what you say in the next five seconds is going to be real important grand dad." Firebrand hissed, all pretensions of politeness fading.

"I said only in a certain respect." J replied nervously, in a tone that implied he thought this explained everything.

Firebrand waved the gun in a circular motion and J got the hint.

"I'm talking of killing yourself in another dimension." J continued. "Not yourself particularly, but another you, an alternate you."

Firebrand was more than slightly confused but was willing to hear out this seemingly insane person, indeed he had ten million reasons for listening.

"I am from an alternate dimension to yours." J announced. "I have developed a

device that enables me to travel between the dimensions and it has shown me many things, for instance, that the same planets and the same people exist in multiple dimensions."

"So what you're saying is that in your home dimension is a person just the same as me?" Firebrand asked, more to humour the old man than in any actual belief of what he said.

"Not the same in all respects." J replied. "My home planet in my dimension is like your Earth in many ways but it is under the thumb of a dictatorship of uncompromising ruthlessness." and J looked at Firebrand in a way that made him more than a little uncomfortable. "And it is none other than your dimensional alternative self who is the head of state, The Great Leader, he calls himself, a most harsh and brutal man."

Though still not believing a word of J's ramblings, Firebrand was willing to humour this presumably crazed or senile old man if it meant a ten million dollar pay packet and an early retirement. Feigning interest he had questioned J on the Great Leader, and pumped him for all the supposed information J had of the Great Leader's movements during the day and the layout of his palace and suchlike, Leo was willing to sound as convincing as he had to be. It was during this that J revealed that he had already developed a plan for assassinating the Great Leader, but it was a plan that could only be carried out by someone who had the same chromosomes as the Leader, which is where Firebrand came in.

It was Professor J's plan to dimensionally jump into the air conditioning plant room of the royal palace, which was automated and usually had no occupants unless the Great Leader himself unlocked the genetically coded keylock on the plant room's one and only access door. Once there, Firebrand, following directions given to him by J (who would wait in the plant room for Firebrand's return on the completion of the mission), could navigate his way to the gene door. Having the same genetic code as his alternate self, Firebrand could then unlock the door and make his way to the Great Leader's private chambers, where he could kill the tyrant and leave by the same way he came before any alarm could be raised.

"Wait a minute." Firebrand interrupted. "Why can't you just drop yourself in the palace to kill this guy, why do you need me to do all this walking around?"

"For one thing, I'm not a killer like your good self." J replied, in an overly dignified fashion. "But more importantly there is a second security system within the palace itself, it is encoded with the genetic patterns of all the occupants of the palace and would automatically raise the alarm if someone like me, who is not recorded, suddenly appeared in one of the corridors."

"And I of course am on the system, in a manner of speaking." Firebrand murmured, mentally noting that for someone living in a delusion this old man had certainly worked out all the details.

"So will you do this job?" J asked.

Firebrand grinned, staring at the insane old fart and his case full of Leo's potential future bliss. "J, I'm your man." He said.

J shut and locked the suitcase. "I'll bring this with us and hand it to you when the job is done, Deal?" He asked.

"Give half of it to me now and the other half later." Firebrand replied. "It's

customary."

"Ah yes, of course." J replied, nodding to himself as if remembering the procedure. He handed over the money without a twitch and then re-locked the case, his fingers a surprisingly deft blur of movement as they flew over the cases keypad, re-arming it's anti tamper destruct system. Firebrand chuckled inwardly. Now, even if he were forced to ice the crazy old fool for some reason, or ditch him somewhere, the night wouldn't be an entire dead loss.

"Now then come over to where I'm standing." J said, beckoning. "The transport field has a maximum radius of about a metre, so you'll have to stand pretty close."

Firebrand morosely got to his feet and complied to J's wishes, J then pressed a switch on a tiny watch-like device that was strapped to his wrist and with a lurching feeling but no visible interim stage, Firebrand's office suddenly switched places with a dank, dimly lit tunnel with leaky pipes snaking along the walls and ceiling. He had no choice but to believe the old man now and for a second felt a slight twinge of fear.

Firebrand, a professional despite his casual behaviour, let his old military training take over; he focussed his mind on the job and reminded himself of the money at the end of his road. Pushing the vague regrets that he hadn't brought any more powerful weapons - or for that matter any reloads for his seven shot automatic - out of his mind. He nodded to J and walked away, following the tunnel down towards his destiny. Murmuring quiet words of encouragement to Firebrand's retreating back, J placed his case in a small alcove and sat down on it, to wait.

Firebrand finally reached the genetic door and not for the first time reflected on how impossibly strange his life had suddenly become, he made a mental note that he would never take geriatrics for granted ever again.

Professor J had told Firebrand that it was just a matter of placing his palm on the shiny flat metal plate that was in the place a door knob would usually be found, on this otherwise featureless steel door, he did so and after the plate hummed and vibrated for several moments a latch was heard to disengage and the door swung open, it automatically locked again as soon as Firebrand passed through.

Now following J's directions, Firebrand made his way to where the Great Leaders bedroom was supposed to be, since it was still several hours before dawn in this dimension, J had presumed that the Leader would be in bed by now and Firebrand had concurred with this supposition. The decor of the larger part of the palace was embarrassingly gaudy in the way of most dictatorships and was a major contrast from the functional basements and servants areas where Firebrand had made his entrance. But if the main body of the palace was gaudy, when he arrived at the Great Leaders private apartments Firebrand was reminded of some high-class brothel, or something equally decadent.

Trying to ignore the hideously opulent living quarters, Firebrand wondered at not seeing any guards in the palace, he mentally chastised his other self for relying on the computer security system only, but he was nonetheless grateful to him as it made Firebrand's job all the easier. Finally he came to a door that was made of what seemed to be solid gold, it was covered in sculpted reliefs of cherubs, nude women and bizarre bestial forms, all in the act of some indescribable renaissance orgy. If J's directions were to be believed this was the door to the Great Leader's bedroom. Moving with careful stealth Firebrand unlocked the door (once again it had a gene lock) and quietly opened

the door a fraction, the room was in near total darkness and he could hear what sounded like someone in a deep sleep from where he presumed the bed lay.

He drew his automatic and quietly screwed on its silencer, opening the door just wide enough to enter the room. Light from the corridor streamed into the room, just enough for him to make out the form of a naked woman lying on the bed. She was presumably one of the Great Leader's concubine's as J had told Firebrand that the Leader was unmarried. Though seemingly in a deep sleep, the real cause of her heavy slumber was lying on the floor in a syringe. As for the Great Leader, he was nowhere to be seen.

Closing the door, Firebrand tip toed over to the other side of the bedroom, where he had seen a hallway, further up this hall was an open door leading to a well lit room, he quietly edged his way to the doorway and took a quick peek inside. The room appeared to be a kitchen, and much to Firebrand's combined shock and satisfaction, a man who looked exactly like himself, wearing a loose fitting dressing gown and a heavy revolver in a shoulder holster, was calmly standing over a percolator waiting for it to boil, this man was definitely the Great Leader.

Deciding not to take any chances, Firebrand rushed into the room, gun raised. The Great Leader had only enough time to see Firebrand and gasp in shock before Firebrand fired three times in quick succession, the Great Leader's chest and left shoulder exploded in a gory mess as three hollow point bullets did their work, mortally wounded and unable to even scream, the Great Leader collapsed to the floor.

Firebrand walked up to the dying tyrant and standing over him aimed for the head, planning to finish the job. The Great Leader stared up at Firebrand with pain dilated eyes. "How ironic." He gurgled, coughing blood. "I've shot myself." and with one final exhalation closed his eyes and died.

Firebrand bent over the corpse of his alternate self to feel for a pulse, there was none. Satisfied he stood and was about to turn to leave when the unmistakable pattering sound of silenced machine pistol fire preceded what felt like a thousand hammers hitting him in the back and throwing him face first into the opposite wall. Too stunned for a moment to register that he'd been shot many times, Firebrand twisted convulsively to face his attacker, he tried to raise his gun only to notice that there was nothing but a bloody stump where the gun hand had been and that the gun itself was in several pieces on the floor.

Collapsing against the wall in a crumpled half-sitting position, Firebrand knew he had only moments left, he knew a fatal wound when he saw one and recognised several of them as he looked at his blurred reflection in the stainless steel refrigerator door opposite him. He could just see the vague outline of his killer standing in the shadows beyond the doorway to his left.

"Why don't you come out and show yourself, you bastard." Firebrand gasped weakly.

"Why not, indeed." said a voice all too familiar. and someone whom Firebrand had only known as "Professor J" stepped from the shadows to stand in front of him.

J placed his machine pistol on the kitchen buffet and calmly pulled off his grey wrinkled visage to reveal another, very familiar face.

The face of Leo Firebrand.

"I must thank you, Leo." Firebrand-J murmured. "I've travelled many dimensions and found many alternate's of myself, but none of them were as perfect for the job as you were, someone quick enough to kill the great leader, and yet stupid enough to not protect his back."

He chuckled slightly, pulling off the gloves of wrinkled "skin" from his hands, exposing tapering nimble fingers, somewhat thinner than Leo's but otherwise very much the same.

"That was a good three shots you put into our brother, the Great Leader." J observed, kicking the corpse with his foot. "I doubt I could have succeeded in getting one in before he heard or saw me, he never turned his back to a door once, did you notice?" J leered gloatingly.

"Why" Firebrand whispered, sinking fast.

"Power." His other self replied simply. "Our brother here, had it, I wanted it, and now, thanks to you, it's mine."

And the last sound Firebrand heard as life left his body was J's howling laughter, so much like his own.

Dimension Kill.

THE END.

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