

Chapter 55

Minneapolis, MN, April 2nd

“Are you ready?” the badger asked. They were in the living room, since Thomas’s bedroom was too small for ten of them, plus Samuel.

Thomas hoped no one pulled the draped open and let the outside world see his naked ass. “Sure,” he said hesitantly. “So long as I can actually pull this off.” Those holding on to him were Gilbert and Laurence, Yating and Yahui, Firmin, still his double, also naked, along with the four Richards who’d returned from Houston with them. Then, Samuel had made sure were dressed and equipped for the infiltration.

“I told you before, Thomas. Numbers—”

“That’s not what I’m worried about,” Thomas cut the badger off. Wasn’t he a mind reader? “It’s targeting the showers. I know I’ve been fucked there nearly as much in my bedroom, but I barely have a sense memory of the place, and it isn’t like I had a chance to test it, for obvious reason.”

“Then aim for your bedroom,” Yating said. “You already got the two of us there.”

“I’d very much prefer you aim for the showers,” Samuel said. “The larger space is to their advantage if—but so long as you’re in the frat, I’m sure they’ll be able to adapt.”

“Oh, now you read my mind,” Thomas said, giving him the glare Samuel thought he’d avoided. He closed his eyes and remembered the humidity, the sound of the water, the press of the bodies, the cock in him, the mouth over—

“Got you,” Firmin said as he caught Thomas and supported his weight.

Thomas opened his eyes in time to see the others move. The margays moved surprisingly fluidly, covered in body armor. They took point, and his frat brothers followed.

Then he felt the world twist around him. Unlike when he teleported, it wasn’t seamless. He knew that he’d been there, and that now he was—falling again, and bouncing on a mattress.

“I have Thomas,” Grant said, turning him on his stomach.

“Me too,” Felix replied.

“You have Firmin,” the kangaroo said. “He needs Society sex for the extra boost so he won’t revert.” Then he lay on top of Thomas.

“We should get Trevor in here,” Felix said. “He really wants some of this ass.”

“I am not having sex with my sister’s boyfriend,” Thomas said, then moaned as Grant pushed in.

“I’ll do it for you,” Firmin replied, then he too was groaning.

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Thomas appeared on the rooftop, stunner hunting rifle in hand. “I’m in position,” he said, zipping up the jacket. The wind had picked up, and the temperature dropped.

“In position,” his voice echoed in his ear. Firmin voicing he was where he’d been directed too. Thomas wondered if having the two of them with the same voice was as confusing to anyone else.

“Thomas, you’re first,” Shila said. “On my signal, your target is the rooftop opposite the road from the frat house.”

“Got it.” This was his starting point because the elevation gave him sight of every other frat’s roofs around Sigma Theta Gamma.

“Once there, take potshots at them. Don’t bother aiming. That’s not your job. Just get noticed, so one of them tells Henry. Same to you Firmin,” she said severely. “You two kids aren’t here to heroically turn the tide. You’re the distraction Henry’s got to focus on so he won’t remember that fleeing is always an option.”

“I know,” Thomas hissed. He’d argued hard enough to be involved more directly, but as soon as he and Firmin were back in his bedroom, the attack force that had been waiting outside received the signal to start their assault. No matter how hard or fast he was fucked. It was impossible for him to be functional in time to take part in that.

So, he and Firmin were going to be the bait. They were the rat who stole Henry’s son.

“Go,” Shila said.

Thomas stood, and with the next heartbeat, he was on the rooftop, looking down at the street. He swallowed as the idea of people battling out smashed into the reality of it. The front of the frat had ice barricades men in body armor used as cover as they fired at the attacking force, who used the vehicles they’d arrived in to same purpose.

Thomas fired at a couple of the defenders and blinked away, ducking down in the process.

“Firmin, go.”

He had no idea if he'd been seen, but the goal wasn't for anyone to see him this time, or even the next or however.

“Thomas, go.”

He stood located a rooftop with line of sight on the firefight and he was there, adding a few shots and blinking and ducking.

The goal was to be seen eventually, but in such a way they had no choice but to work out he was moving through teleportation. That was the only way someone would tell Henry. Anything else and the men outside would simply deal with it themselves.

His time came again, shooting and leaving.

Three more times, and Thomas wondered if anyone was making the connection. Henry had to have told them to—motion out of a window as Thomas lined up his shot. The bat was there, looking, no, glaring at him. Thomas smiled. In all the month he'd lived at the frat, he hadn't seen Henry angry, not really. Even Judith barging into the house had left the bat more offended than angry.

Now, Henry was royally pissed.

“He's seen me,” he said, as the bat stepped away from the window. He went back to picking a target. Before he fired, there was a commotion on the defender side, then they were picking themselves up and reforming the ranks. Thomas wasn't sure, but he thought he'd seen—

A door behind him slammed open, and Thomas turned. An angry hyena stood before the stairwell's door.

With a strangled scream, Thomas teleported himself in the distance, visible over the top of the stairwell just as Chima became a blur.

Shila cursed as Thomas teleported to a roof before he gained any downward velocity. “Firmin, Decoy and run! The fucking hyena's outside. What the fuck is he doing here? Samuel, what happened to him being on the other side of the city?”

Thomas raised his head enough to look over the parapet.

“He's a speedster,” the badger replied. “You have any idea how impossible it is to keep track of those? How come you didn't know he was in the frat?”

As Thomas searched, Firmin appeared on a roof, fired in Chima's direction, then disappeared. In the next blink of an eye, the hyena was standing on that rooftop and Thomas ducked down again.

“I can't see where there are no cameras,” Shila snapped. “And that fucking building barely had any, and what I see out of the phones or the screens isn't helping us any.”

“We like our privacy,” Olavo said.

“Can we focus?” Thomas asked, looking at the sky before peeking over and locking eyes with Chima. “Fuck.” The hyena had vanished already. Thomas picked a roof and dropped into icy cold water. He got himself out of it as fast as he could and cursing. “What do we do now? You guys said we couldn't have him involved because of how fast he is, and I believe you. I think he'd faster than I teleport.” He wanted to look up and see where Chima was, but he was terrified of being seen.

“He isn't,” Olavo said calmly. “For one thing, unlike you, he has to open doors. So just make sure you jump to roof where the doors to the stairs are closed and you'll give yourself the time to teleport away.”

“And how do I know which of the building bothered closing the door to the roof?” Thomas demanded.

“Just don't land on a roof you've already been on then,” Olavo said.

“That's—”

“Guys!” Firmin yelled in the comm. “Help!”

Thomas stood. Firmin was barely keeping ahead of the hyena, the two appearing over the same set of buildings, but with Chima getting closer and closer to getting his hands on Thomas's double.

“Teleport as far as you can see,” Thomas instructed. “Then teleport again before you start falling.” He put the rifle to his shoulder and lined up his shot. He cracked up the stunner as high as it went. Hunting stunner couldn't kill, but sometimes, they needed one hell of his charge to bring down a buck.

“That's taking us out of the prepared battlefield,” Shila complained.

“Deal with it,” Thomas snarled as Firming vanished and Chima stood still, searching. He fired just as the hyena turned in his direction.

“Fine,” the pangolin snapped as Thomas teleported. “Samuel, you deal with the fighting. I have to get

into all the fucking cameras in the city if I want a chance to keep these two idiots alive.”

“Just make sure they keep the speedster away from the battle,” Samuel replied. “If Henry changes his mind and brings him to fight directly—”

“I know,” Shila snapped. “That was why we timed it with him away. Okay, Firmin, I have eyes on you.”

The door behind Thomas slammed open, and Thomas was on another rooftop.

“Firmin, while Thomas has the hyena busy, get your ass back up.”

“You seem to think you know how this works,” Firmin replied. “So why don’t you come here and make it happen?”

“You good?” Thomas asked, appearing on another roof with the impression of a door slamming open behind him.

“How the fuck do you do that? Appearing in the air with nothing under you?”

“Desperation,” Thomas said as the door burst open. “Which is where I’m at now!” He teleported.

“I’m up,” Firmin said. “Where am I going?”

“Look east,” Shila said as Thomas appeared on the next rooftop. “Next teleport you do, Thomas, drop. Firmin’s taking over. Remember, don’t land on a building you’ve already been.”

Maybe you should come here and do it then, Thomas thought before disappearing from the roof and dropping as soon as he appeared on the next one. Cursing as his knee landed another puddle of ice cold water.

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Thomas appeared on the roof and did a quick scan as he dropped for his next landing spot. The landscape had changed so much in the last... hour? Was it more? When he his rifle’s charge emptied? That he had no idea where he was in the city, let alone in relation to the frat. Shila hadn’t bitched in a while, so he figured they’d stayed far enough.

He was down to throwing the rooftop gravel at the hyena to get his attention, or dirty snow, when a roof had a spot where the shadows had kept the snow from melting. Just like this roof. He packed a few in preparation for having to give Firmin an opening.

“Fuck-fuck-fuck,” came in something that wasn’t quite Thomas’s voice.

“Firmin, what’s happening?”

“I’m tapped dry,” his double said, sounding more like Thomas this time. “I’m having trouble keeping your shape.”

“The house,” Shila ordered. “Get your ass there now!”

Thomas stood, located the hyena, and threw the snowball.

“He’s there and they’re fucking him. How long can you keep this up?”

“Who fucking cares how long I can do this?” Thomas said as he appeared on another rooftop. “It’s not like it’s looking like *he’s* running out of steam. How long can he fucking run like that?” No one answered. “Look, we have to subdue him. That’s the only way this ends.”

“I’m open to ideas,” Shila replied. “Jump.”

Thomas was on another rooftop, nearly slipping on an icing puddle as he looked for his next destination.

“I’m only useful for killing their phone and—jump—monitoring you and the speedster. Jump,” he said again just as Thomas appeared on the roof.

He teleported again. “How’s Donal? Is he up to restoring Chima’s memories? And can we get him somewhere I can lure Chima to?” He grabbed handful of roof gravel.

“You’re forgetting you’re on the other side of the river,” she said as Thomas turned to the roof he’d just been on.

“That’s not the problem you think it is when I can...” he trailed off as the hyena didn’t appear on that roof. “Where’s Chima?”

“He’s right... where the fuck is he?”

Thomas ignored the panic in her voice and scanned around. The most likely situation was that Chima had misjudged and ended up on a different building, so all he had to do was wait and—

“There aren’t any cameras in your building?” Shila exclaimed.

By the time Thomas understood what she meant by that, Thomas heard the creaking of a door being opened. He couldn’t afford to turn to see if it was Chima. He teleported to the roof he was looking at, then was staring at an open door.

“Fuck.” He turned to find a roof, only for his foot to slip out from under him. Stars exploded as his head hit the ground, but he pushed through the pain and dizziness. He was on a knee, the cold water helping clear

his mind, when he was the blur, then darkness filled his vision, and the smell of sweaty hyena filled his now.

“Finally,” Chima whispered. The hand holding Thomas’s head pressed against his chest. “Why did you leave, Thomas?” he asked, his voice pained. “You’re family. You’re the only family we have. You can’t imagine how much Sigma Theta Gamma suffered before you left us. I know,” he cooed. “It wasn’t your fault. They took you. But it’s okay now. I have you. I’ll bring you back home, and Henry will fix everything.”

When the stars exploded again, they were followed by darkness.