

Title: 16k city

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Summary: Rebellion in a futuristic dystopian society that sees the perspective and values of 2 men from opposite sides; reversed.

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As the enhancer entered Bomber's blood stream, his heart raced, his muscles swelled, every fibre of his body tingled with an indescribable sensation. Noises and images in the background began to fade and for a split second he almost forgot who he was and what he was doing. All that remained was the growing rush of power, accompanied by a lustful rage and the almost overwhelming urge to smash his surroundings to pieces with no care or thought for the consequences or his own survival.

On the verge of submission, he held back, the will to accomplish something greater than his own self indulgence kicked in and took over. His heart rate slowed and the rage dissipated as quickly as it had developed. Clarity returned. The power of the enhancer was now his to control and with it he would beat kid J before the day was out.

He checked his heads up display to confirm his own mental calculations. He was making record time, travelling northbound at 120kph, 500 stories high, hitching on the underside of a city transport, the ground 2k below him .

The rest of his journey up through the Lowers had been programmed in by his controller Jean, down at UFF base camp. He had 8 seconds left hitching undetected on the city transport until his next hitch shift, at which point if his controllers calculations were right and his own timing perfect, with one jump in the right direction, he could land on a larger Lowers city transport that was moving up through the levels and not just along.

Bomber used the last few seconds before his hitch shift to scan for the authorities or anything else that could be following him. Jumpers were been blown out of the sky recently and he was taking no chances.

He allowed the suction pads in one hand to release so he could twist his head around and down. The view was chaotic mess, a blur of colour to all but the keenest of eyes as tens of thousands of transports raced along different levels of the Lowers. Sky bridges and pedestrian walkways linking the main tower blocks were filled with hordes of people rushing about their business. The lower down he looked the darker the view became, the ground itself no longer visible through the mass of steel, flesh and concrete blocking his view.

Bomber had grown to hate the Lowers, he had grown to hate the ground level , he lived these recent years solely for the undergrounds free falling ,and not just for the sport ,but for the chance to penetrate through the dividing lines and the class barriers of 16k City , to hitch right to the top , where the only thing above him was the purple sky and the feeling of freedom.

Bombers jump suit buzzed him , signalling a three seconds count down before his hitch shift to the vertical city transport. His visual scan of the area around him had picked up nothing. The authorities

were unaware of his presence as was anyone else in the city, only the UFF followers watching the jump on the pirate broadcast would be able to see him. He re-attached his free hanging arm back to the underside of transport. He was ready , the strength enhancer had now taken full effect , making him not only stronger and faster , but also smarter, his reaction times were now nearly impossibly fast. He watched the three, two, one count down on his heads up display , he looked left, the transport he was waiting for was there to his side .

He released the suction pads on his boots and hung on the now stationary sky cab with his arms only .He has done this move a thousand times before. He rocked backwards and bended his knees, then kicked his legs out in front of him as his weight swayed forward. Finally he released the suction pads on his hands before his weight swayed back again. For what seemed like an eternity he was airborne, performing a back flip 500 stories up. The vertically transport rose to meet him as he descended towards it. He landed lightly and immediately engaged his boots suction pads as the transport began to accelerate rapidly up though the levels.

As bomber gained altitude time appeared to speed up with each city story level he passed. Seconds blended into minutes and before he knew it he had hitch shifted again and again , landing finally on a vertical transport that was licensed to go right through the class barrier separating the Lowers and the Lowermids section of 16k City.

1000 stories up, he cringed as the transport slowed and eased its way through a window in the invisible force field. Windows were opened at specific times and places by the city controllers, they were mostly safe to use, Bomber relied on them, but things occasionally went wrong.

As he passed through the class barrier unharmed ,he knew time was short as the transport docked with a familiar thud to the Global K tower block. He quickly climbed down from the transports roof and entered the building undetected with the other passengers just before the transport pulled away and the external docking doors sealed shut. On entry to the building his jump suit began a 60 second count down before deactivation of its camouflage mode. As if waiting for the countdown his controllers voice came through on the 2 way radio in his helmet.

“Bomber” said Jean

“Sneak route needed?” relied bomber.

“Patience Bomber, upload in progress”

“Time Jean ?”

“90 seconds” said Jean “we got your GPS signal , head from your location 100 meters east down the main corridor and enter the boiler room to the door on the left ,its clear so sit tight for the download”

“On route”

Bomber reached the boiler room with a few seconds to spare before his suits Camouflage mode powered down. While waiting he wondered how far Kid J would be at this stage. Probably not passed the first class barrier yet he thought with a grin on his face, but then again he knew Kid J was not in such of a hurry to reach the Uppers. Kid J would take time to show boat, Kid J’s followers

watching the UFF pirate broadcast would expect nothing less. Bomber didn't care for show boating or for the love of the fans, he'd had enough of the Lovers and wanted up top as quick as possible, he'd served his time in the class wars, he'd done his part for the underground. All he wanted now was to be at the top of the tower block, waiting on the fall point for Kid J. He wanted to be there first, to take in the view and savour the fresh air and the sun while he could. It was like a drug, a drug he could never get enough of before his free fall back to Lovers. Back to the crowds and the stench, the shadows and the endless glow of incandescent lights, back to his life and everything he had grown to hate.

###

In times past Kid J had cared not about the politics behind the scenes or for the big picture, he had been there for the rush, for the buzz and to win no matter what. However the recent time he had spent in the Lovers, his contact with the underground and more so his contact with Jean through the UFF was beginning to change all that. His simple but dated philosophy of live for the moment had served him perfectly well, but not anymore. Today was different, it was big jump day, and he was up against the Lovers champ Bomber, it should be a simple thing for him to win, he was better than Bomber. He should win with ease and enjoy the free fall in the process, but it wasn't that simple anymore. A great deal was at stake on the result of today's jump and he would have to make his mind up which side he was on.

Sneaking through tower blocks had been banned from free falling years ago, as jumpers were now shot on site if they were spotted and identified in a tower block without the correct level access codes programmed to their class bracelets. Travelling up through the levels and passed the three class barriers in 16k City was done outside now via hitching. It was less risky when wearing a camouflage jump suit and more entertaining for the fans that followed the sport. For today's jump this was not the case.

Kid J had hitched through the class barrier separating the Lovers and the Lowermids several minutes behind Bomber and entered the Global-K tower block undetected with a dozen heavily armed tower security staff on shift change. Once out of ear shot he sprinted to a fire exit at the far end of the blocks main corridor and passed unnoticed into a service stairwell just before his suit powered down out of camouflage mode. Today's jump had been set up so that he and Bomber would have to sneak through the Lowermid's, 1000 floors up and through the second class barrier into the Uppermid's. He knew it wouldn't be easy.

Under his own steam Kid J quickly climbed up through floor after floor in the service stairwell, everything was quiet except for the click of his armoured boots on the steel steps. The entire stairwell was empty for now, his controller JBF had hacked into the Cities mainframe computer and locked all access points, temporarily keeping everyone else out until he had time to reach his entry level. Twenty floors up the stairwell ended in a small landing and a doorway that led through to the hustle and bustle of the office areas, thousands of workers and tower security would be milling around, and he would have to find a way through. Before he passed through the door, he stood still and held his right arm out in front of him at waist height. With his palm facing up a 3d image of the

tower block sprang from his hand. The hologram showed the building outline in green, the heat signature of the towers inhabitants in red and his path though in a bright blue line.

“JBF” said kid J into his two way.

“Yes sir” replied JBF

“Interesting route choice”

“Optimum path sir”

“Odds of success?”

“64.3% sir”

“Watch my back” replied kid J as he opened the door and started on the sneak.

A short time later he was well on his way, picking up pace and confidence with every floor. The normal workers were like pre programmed drones, the tower guards were slow and predictable. He moved through the busiest of office spaces with ease , up internal stairs wells , high speed escalators and turbo lifts that took him hundreds of floors in a matter of seconds , through restaurants and mini shopping malls , all undetected and without the need for the camouflage mode on his jump suit . He was as good as invisible. When he was occasionally overconfident and about to expose himself, JBF was one step ahead and warned him, or hacked into the tower blocks computer again, blocking doors and creating distractions. The higher Kid j went , the more floors he travelled up, it seemed easier to move undetected , not just because he was getting better and adapting or that JBF had his back , because for each level he rose up , the offices had changed , the spaces had changed, the people had changed .Down at the early levels of the Lowermid’s offices were more densely populated, people seemed friendlier and stopped to talk to one another in the corridors ,the lower levels were more social , making sneaking undetected more difficult. As he moved up the levels the office layouts changed subtly bit by bit, there were less people per floor, office work areas were orientated in a careful and deliberate manner so that workers were more isolated, unable to lean over talk casually to their colleagues. The higher Kid J went the more this was evident, the less pictures and personal items people had on their desks, workers did not stop and chat to each other in the corridor, and they simply nodded at one another with a false politeness and kept about their business. All the colour and the warmth of the lower offices had gone by the time Kid J was approaching the end of his sneak; the people there looked more clean and crisp but lacked personality. At the top of the Lowermid’s everyone was out for themselves, it was survival of the fittest, morals were left in the lowers and the people there looked as though they would do anything to earn a place in the ten percent of the population that lived in the two upper levels of 16k city. Kid J was now starting to appreciate the true nature of the society he lived in ; he watched the unmistakable truth unravel floor by floor like a slide show. He was experiencing a unique view of the city that in times past only the original jumpers in the UFF were privy too. It was rumoured that the original Jumpers had started the underground; he now believed that to be true. The first Jumpers had seen the city for its true nature, sneaking had opened there eye’s.

Kid J checked his altimeter; he was 8k up and had powered his way through the 1000 levels that made up the Lowermid’s. He approached a service elevator in an abandoned office on the final floor,

JBF had tricked the towers computer that the room was still currently occupied and that a high level executive was using the lift to pass the class field into the Uppermid's. As he entered the lift, JBF uploaded his exit route back outside including hitch data for the rest of his journey via his heads up display. He digested the info in one quick glance and then returned to his thoughts as the elevator moved upwards. His journey through the tower block had been the final push he needed to dismiss his deluded view of 16k city, his future now seemed more dangerous and uncertain than ever, butterflies flickered in his stomach as visions of his new career path filled his mind, he smiled and thought of Jean.

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Jean lay on the floor of the away team control room with her ear pressed hard against the dirty blue carpet tiles. She was trying to eavesdrop on the conversation in the main control room below. All she could hear was muffled voices and the odd word, but she was missing the bulk of the conversation. She pushed herself up to her knees feeling frustrated and annoyed. Max had Sent her out of the room and she was less than happy about the situation given the fact that St James Bar was hers , she had a right to know what was going on , or at least that's was she thought. She remained on her knees for a while with her face screwed up and her hands fiddling with a blonde pig tail either side her head.

"Think, think, and think" she said out load to her self.

She was standing now, pacing the small room staring vacantly at the wall mounted display monitors and a cache of mixed high-Tec/ low-tech equipment that made up the away jump teams base control room, she was deep in thought. She stopped pacing the room when she noticed one of the monitors was switched on. It can't be, she thought to herself, it was the display feed to the control room downstairs, she had a rear view of Max and could see Highsower a few paces in front of Max waving his ornately carved walking stick in Max's direction, obviously in tune with what ever he was saying. She wondered had Max been so careless to leave the feed going accidentally or was he secretly recording the conversation without Highsower knowing. Either way she was going to find out what was going on. She tried turning the volume up gently on the monitor, the audio was perfect, she could not believe her luck, she pulled up a chair and lit up a cigarette. She listened intently hoping she hadn't missed anything to juicy.

A ten pack of cigarettes later, it was over and Highsower had gone. She turned off the monitor and waited for the sound of footsteps on the stairwell. She knew Max would be up to tell her all about his little arrangement , about what a glorious day for the underground it would be , or at least what he thought she should know. It didn't matter as she knew everything now anyway; she had caught the bulk of the conversation and anything she had missed when she had her ear to the floor she had pieced together with her own intuition.

She felt torn, naturally she was against Highsower, he was a big shot from the Uppers who had money and power and more than just a little say in the running of the 16k city. Highsower's family tree tied in hand and hand with how the cities class barriers were evolved and introduced. UFF on

the other hand was the brain child of Max, one of the undergrounds founders and leaders and former UFF champ before the underground had even been formed. UFF was a slap in the face to the Upper's aristocracy who ran the city, proof that the class barriers couldn't stop the people from Lower's passing up and down at will. The people of the Lower's loved the UFF, fans and followers watched the free falling via the jumpers suit cams and other feeds hacked from the city's own cams, all the action was then pumped out via an underground pirate broadcast, this in turn made the underground stronger and undermined the aristocracy in the lofty heights of the city Upper's. St James Bar, her bar that secreted housed the UFF control rooms and landing pad, was a popular spot for people to watch the UFF pirate broadcasts. Highsower knew the real power behind the UFF and sought to destroy it from the inside out. In recent times he had started his own UFF jump team, his jumper Kid J had beaten most of the underground's best jumpers and UFF was now starting to get its own set of underground followers from the Upper's. More jump teams were threatening to emerge from the ranks of the aristocracy and the brain child of Max was rapidly losing its power to stir up the lower classes against the Upper's, more so with each of Kid J's wins.

The meeting she had just eaves dropped on was an agreement of terms between Max and Highsower, for the big jump next week between Bomber the lower's champion and Kid J, Highsower's boy wonder. Both men had upped the stakes and put something of value on the table. Highsower had offered the underground ten full access 16k class bracelets, allowing the owners full legal access to any level of the city. Max had offered Highsower further viewing rights to the UFF for the growing horde of followers in the Upper's. Both men had put a lot on the table and the outcome of next Saturday's jump would change the underground one way or the other for good. Her sense of imbalance with her loyalties came from the fact she was Bomber's controller, but she also liked Kid J. She had spent quite a bit of time with Kid J in recent weeks, she had even wondered if Kid J would join the underground and sway the balance in their favour, but she was unsure about it all. She chewed on a grubby nail while pondering the situation further, in the background she could hear footsteps moving up the stairs towards her. Max entered the control room, she swivelled her chair round to meet him with a false grin, whatever happened next weekend it was going to be interesting she thought to herself.

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Beneath his feet Kid J could feel the rumble of the transport's engines slowly start to fade; he had hitch through the Upper's and was nearly at the final class barrier, beyond that lay his final climb through the Uppers. Above him the sun was visible now for the first time since his journey from the ground level. The city was now brighter and less crowded; the orange glow of the city's false lighting gave way to the natural clear light of the sun. The air was fresher, the city was quieter, but to Kid J it was also lonelier, what he needed was no longer there, it was back on the ground. The transport slowed again and held a steady speed, a loud cracking sound signalled a window had been opened in the class barrier and moments later he and the transport were through.

After quick systems check he engaged the thrusters in his jet pack, below him the transport shrunk quickly to a small dot in the distance. His jet pack like Bomber's was filled with sufficient fuel to travel 1000 stories up, exactly one class level, those were the rules and he like Bomber always saved it for the final leg. The compact powerful jets quickly accelerated him to speeds in excess of 750kph, his jump suit absorbed just enough of the G forces on his body to prevent him from passing out, but

the brunt of the punishing accelerative forces were bore by himself, this is what he had lived for, a further source of adrenaline and amusement, but today the ride only served to sober him from a cocktail of far more potent emotions. At max speed the view around him was nothing more than a blur of colour, his heads up display counted down the remaining stories to go.

The fall point was an overhang on the south elevation of the Global-K towers roof top gardens, a perfect spot for any jump. On landing he had expected to see Bomber there waiting for him, bomber had been ahead of him all day, so where was he, where was Bomber.

Kid j stood now at the edge of the roof top garden, only a few seconds had passed since he landed, he leant against a parapet wall and looked out onto the endless view of man made high rise landscape that made up 16k city. Perplexed, his eyes focused on nothing in particular, something was wrong, something was very wrong with the city, something was very wrong with today's jump and for some reason he'd ended up in the middle of a more subtle phase to the class wars. He tried reaching JBF on his two way radio and found no surprise when the line was dead and there was still no sign of bomber.

Turning his back to the fall point, he flicked a switch at the back of his helmet and began scanning the roof top in enhanced mode. His first scan revealed nothing, no heat signature, no movement, and still his no signal on his two way. For a split second he considered jumping, forgetting about the big picture again and just doing what he did best, jumping, freefalling and winning, but something much bigger was happening today, something more than just his decision to change sides, he had to find Bomber and speak to him before they jumped. He continued to scan the roof top hoping for a sign of Bomber when he saw movement, 2 heat signatures moving out from behind cover on the other end of the roof. He was about to shout over when he heard a loud crack and felt a heavy thump on his chest that nearly knocked him over, he was been shot at. Alarm bells started ringing in his suit, several shots had hit their target, his armour had absorbed most of the damage but it would not take much more. When the first shots were fired he had hit the boosters on his jet back and what little fuel was left had quickly moved him up and out of the way to avoid what would have been a killing volley of further shots. He landed hard and disorientated but hit the ground running in a direction he hoped was away from the fire. Sprinting now, his focus returning, he scanned ahead for cover, he could feel shot after shot hitting him in the back. He dived in behind what looked like a transformer. Safe for a moment he scanned for an exit as shots ricocheted off the steel cover of the transformer, he soon realised he was near the centre of the roof and knew he'd never make it to the edge and jump before whoever was shooting finished him off. For the first time in his life real panic set in and he froze not able to think or move.

His panic was short lived, there was a deafening sound, a flash of light and he was in the air again, his arms and legs flapping about with what little strength he had left, he could see the roof top rushing to meet him again, this time he knew he could do nothing to slow down in time before the hard impact. When he hit the ground he blacked out and everything seemed peaceful. Voices brought him back round again, he tried to look around him but his vision was blurred, he could not tell if he was laid face down or face up, it felt like he was floating and wondered if it was the end. He tried to open his mouth to speak, to shout to make some sort of sound to give him an anchor back to reality, then his vision cleared for a moment and he thought he saw bomber walking towards him carrying a gun and then his eyes closed again and darkness engulfed him.

###

Jean pulled off her head set, tearing out a chunk of hair by accident in the process. She swore under her breath as she pushed away from her desk with her feet, sending herself and the roller chair she was sat on hurtling towards Sid on the other side of the control room. Their chairs collided, Sid jumped looking alarmed and then feigned hard work and seriousness immediately on seeing her angry face. She flicked him on the nose and pulled down his head set, the loud teeny bopper music blaring out of his ear piece told Jean immediately what she already knew, that Sid as per usual was in a little world of his own and not listening to a word she said.

“Sorry” he said, realising his act hadn’t worked.

“What did I” said Jean

“To find” said Sid.

“And”

“No sign yet Jean”

“Keep looking Sid”

Behind Jean and Sid stood Max, she looked at him and was about to shout in his direction for some help when she stopped and studied him for a moment. Something just didn’t add up, Bomber had reached the fall point first with Kid J five minutes behind him. As bomber had landed everything in the control room had gone dead. The UFF pirate broadcast was down , the 2 way radios were down as were the signals for both Bomber’s and Kid J’s JPS locators. It was a total system failure, approaching fifteen minutes since they had lost contact. Under normal circumstances Max would have been hysterical, Max would have wanted to know what was going on, especially today when a record number of viewers would be tuning into the UFF pirate broadcast, with St James bar packed and so much at stake. The Max she was staring at now was the exact opposite, she felt vexed , and Max seemingly oblivious to what was going on continued to stare vacantly at a wall ,as though deep in thought.

“Call coming through on secure line”

She and Max both turned to Sid.

“Who?” said Jean.

“Think Highsower”

“I’ll take it” said Max who had suddenly come back to life and pointed towards the screen in front of him

The call came through, Jean stood to one side, just far enough away to be out of Highsower's view into the control room, but close enough to see Highsower's face fill the centre of the screen. The back drop behind him was filled with the massive exotic expanse of his penthouse in the uppers, well dressed women and men milled about in the background, aristocrats at Highsower's UFF party, watching their new found sport. In one corner of the screen she could even see the sun, the purple sky and the pools of sunlight that spilled into his heavily fenestrated palace, the type of view never seen in the Lower's thought Jean. To her side, Sid had joined her. She listened as Highsower spoke first.

"Problems Max"

"Nothing major" said max

"I hope not Max, we were all enjoying the show"

"Picture will be coming back on line any second now"

"Foul play" said Highsower accusingly.

"You tell me" retorted Max.

There was a brief silence between the two as they tried to stare each other down. Max then motioned to speak but was broke off before he could get a word out by loud cheers coming from the crowds of people at Highsower's apartment. As the cheers got louder the control room started showing signs of life, the UFF pirate broadcast was back on line. Jean turned to fire orders in Sid's direction but he was already sat down, head set on, logging the jump control systems back on again. She quickly followed suit, leaving Max and Highsower slugging it out on the view screen, her hands were shaking.

"They've both jumped Jean"

"System status?"

"were back on line, I've got a data link to Bombers heads up but still no coms link to his 2 way."

"Send Window coordinates to bombers heads up and switch View to city cam's."

Jean's display changed from a split screen view of the jumpers head cams to various city cam views that constantly moved and tracked the jumpers from a perfect view point as they fell through the city avoiding smaller structures and oncoming sky traffic, a perfect viewing perspective for the UFF followers. Jean studied the picture, Bomber was free falling well, avoiding traffic and buildings in a controlled practice manner, the wings on his back pack opening and retracting, helping him glide across from side to side when needed. Kid j however seemed to be out of control, he was simply falling.

"3 seconds to the first class barrier" said Sid

"get me a coms line now Sid"

"Its still dead"

Jean watched the screen in horror, she was desperate to reach Bomber, or even Kid J on the two way ,at the last second she closed her eyes and let her head drop. The angry sounds of a crowd booing and wild profane rantings made her open her eyes and turn around. The source of the booing was the view screen that still held an open line between MAX and Highsower , the crowds of UFF fans in Highsowers penthouse obviously displeased at what they just seen. She had a sick feeling in her stomach, she looked over at Sid who was just sat there, jaw dropped in disbelief, staring straight ahead at his screen. She turned reluctantly to view own her screen, an auto replay was already been shown of kid J been obliterated as he hit the class barrier out of control. The kid was dead and Bomber looked to be through.

“Get me some sort of com’s link with Bomber Sid and do it now” said Jean trembling with shock as she lit up a cigarette and approached Max who was still in a heated conversation with Highsower.

She managed to catch a glimpse of Highsower and also his parting words.

“Looks like we both loose Max” said Highsower as the screen went blank.

Max turned to meet her gaze square in the eye’s.

“not now“ he said.

“And what the hell is he taking about, were winning aren’t we”

Alarm bells and flashing red lights in the control room brought Jean back to her senses.

“Situation report Sid” said Jean rushing back to her control chair “and where’s my com’s line to Bomber”

“Authorities are on to Bomber, a gun boats on its way to intercept him” said Sid

“OH” said Max

###

Dressed in Bombers suit, kid J dove at break neck speed through a window in the first class barrier, passing unharmed in the wake of a city transport. The assassin dressed in his own jump suit was not so lucky, the invisible force field that made up the class barrier had obliterated the man on impact. The man was dead already, Bomber had seen to that on the roof top, but the sickening bang that followed the collision still sent shivers down his spine.

The events on the roof top were fresh in his mind , his aching body was a constant reminder, things had happened hard and fast, choices had been limited, decisions had been final, heightened adrenaline a key influence, but the pact he and bomber had made felt strong. He tried to push thoughts of the roof top out of his mind and concentrate on the free fall , he did his best to adapt to Bombers suit and press on hard , but fresh memories kept distracting him , pulling his focus away , the harder he tried to clear his mind the more the recent events flooded his thoughts.

When he had regained consciousness on the roof top, he had been surprised to find bomber helping him up with one arm, whilst wielding a larger powerful looking rifle in the other. To one side laid two dead assassins that Bomber had identified as employees of Max, members of a more extreme faction of the underground, they were the ones taking pot shots at him when he had landed. At the other end of the roof Bomber had lead him to the bodies of two further dead assassins who Kid J recognised as Highsower's personal guard, they had attacked Bomber in a similar fashion when he had landed minutes before. Both he and bomber had been doubled crossed. Lucky for kid J the rumours about Bomber been a veteran from the Class wars were obviously true. Bombers jump suit was also fitted with several offensive weapons modifications that made bomber force to be reckoned with. The four dead bodies were more than adequate proof of this. Kid J had never seen death so up close before, he no longer felt immortal. His once dreamy existence had been replaced by a much harsher reality.

A close brush with a city transport followed by a near miss with a pedestrian sky bridge brought his thoughts crashing back to the present, he knew had to concentrate on the here and now or he would never make it though 16k city in rush hour, that was for sure. He mainlined a strength enhancer he had removed from his own jump suit and then opened a series of small vents in Bombers suit allowing a flow of fresh air to move over the hard muscular contours of his body from head to toe. The strength enhancer was a fast acting blend of precise high grade athletic enhancement supplements manufactured in an elite uppers laboratory, not the back street lowers rampage cocktail used by the undergrounds soldiers that bomber had offered him on the roof top. His dented confidence began to return with each passing second and the aches in his body faded as his muscles swelled with a surge of chemical power. Soon his mind began to return from thoughts of the roof top, to a clear focus on the view below and around him, on his journey down. The blur of buildings, structures and fast moving sky transports became clear lines and edges, his path through now obvious and instinctive.

With his arms tight back to his side and the wings in his back pack tucked in, he let gravity do its work and accelerated down, his suits camouflage mode was busted but he did not care, by time a sky cab or a cop car had seen him and realised who he was, he was already several stories below them and pulling away hard. He plummeted downwards dodging sky traffic, buildings and structures alike with a calculated ease now that he knew the UFF flowers found hypnotic to watch. The UFF and the underground would not come to an end today he would make sure of that.

Kid J was nearing the second class barrier, he knew once he was through the gun ships would be on him. In the upper levels of 16k city he was safe, he knew they would not risk chasing him and injuring someone of importance in the process, that was not how 16k city worked. They would come at him in the Lowermid's and keep on him, regardless of the carnage in the process.

Data streamed through to his heads up display, he now had the location and time of a window in the second class barrier. JBF had retained radio silence with him since he had made the jump from the fall point on Global-k towers, no one except Jean and a few high ranking members of the underground could know the truth about what happed on the roof top, not yet anyway. As far as the world was concerned Kid J was dead and everyone watching the pirate broadcast would think he was Bomber.

A proximity alarm sounded in his helmet, he was now seconds away for the class barrier approaching max speed. He hoped and prayed that bomber would get to Highsower on time and complete his part of the mission, or his own chances of making it to the ground alive would be slim.

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Through the second class barrier, kid J emerged in the lowermid's at plus 350km/h to find the sky's empty. He had envisioned the sky's filled with military class vehicles hovering below his exit point, that he was ready for , but the empty space was unnaturally, pre organised, it freaked him out, never had he seen the sky's this empty in any part of the city. The whole area had been cleared of traffic, the gun boats had pulled off, but where thought Kid J. He continued to accelerate downwards , rotating his body 360 degrees looking for something , anything on its way to intercept him , but could see nothing . He tried raising JBF on his two way radio, but could get no answer, something was jamming the signal, something very close was jamming the signal.

Kid J accelerated to 450km/h; Maximum speed for any good free faller , his heads up display counted down into the last 550 stories of the Lowermid's of 16k city, and still nothing. Had he missed something , was he dreaming , all these thoughts and more passed through his mind quicker than his decent. He wanted to shout out a defiant challenge and have his enemies take him on face to face , but he knew this time he would not see them coming , and with all choices spent the only way he could continue to go was straight down , straight into what ever was waiting. The city would once again reveal its true nature, so he waited for the low blow, the cheap shot, the knife in his back from a faceless enemy and held his course.

When the blow hit, it came hard and fast, knocking him way off trajectory from his window in the final class barrier, sending him tumbling out of control. He was winded and barley conscious, the strength enhancer that had now taking full effect was the only thing that kept him from blacking out. The hit had come from an armoured jet suite cop that had run a collision course with him. The smug cop had let his suits camouflage mode drop in the split second before the crude mid are shoulder barge, the cop wanted kid J to know who had hit him, and that he was helpless.

Kid J continued to fall out of control, the cop had disappeared again, no doubt following him in case he tried anything or showed any signs of life. Highsower had planned this, no doubt the old man would filming his imminent demise , it would all look like an accident and his death would be all over mainstream TV as a warning to all those involved in UFF . The underground would be weakened and Highsower would have one up again. Kid J thought about pulling his silk shoot and trying for a building but figured if he did the cop following him in stealth somewhere would blow him out of the sky. He continued to fall hopelessly, the weapons in Bombers suit were either out of ammunition or malfunctioning, playing dead or unconscious at least was the only card he had left now. His decent speed slowed to terminal velocity, his heads up display read 400 stories to go before the class barrier, he closed his eyes and counted down from twenty. If Bomber didn't come through that was all the time he had left.

###

Jean was on the street outside James's bar, it was flooded with crowds of people that had spilled out of her bar and the others on St James strip. All eyes were on the big news screens mounted high in the street showing a live feed of Bomber tumbling to his death, or at least what everyone thought was Bomber, she and Sid knew different thanks to JBF. Highsower had high jacked every channel, he wanted Bombers demise to be public and every man woman and child in the lowers had stopped to watch, in hope, in disgust. Jean lit a cigarette and wondered if the scene was the same on the other levels, had the whole city ground to halt, she liked to think so, she like to think there was others outside the lowers that wanted an end to class barriers, but who knew, it was impossible to glimpse much more than fifty stories above from any point in the lowers, it was just too crowded.

A squeaky voice in the distance making a repeated apology signalled Sid making his way to her through the crowd, Jean hoped he would have some news or word from Kid J or Bomber, any info was better than nothing.

"His vitals are still up" said Sid "and the jet cop's heat signature shows him following close by"

"He's playing dead" said Jean

"There must be" said Sid

"There's nothing" said Jean "even JBF can't hack the class field, its down to Bomber now"

Jean and Sid watched on, she felt helpless, useless, her heart was beating faster, her breath started to shorten. She began to question her own actions and thoughts, was she really an underground member, a UFF base controller, or was she the scared daughter of a bar owner from the lowers with a crush on an iconic free faller, was she out of her depth. A self doubting she had never experienced before started to take hold, she felt her place in the world slipping from a loosened grip. The crowd was now beginning to go wild as if hearing her thoughts, the big screens now displayed a count down of the seconds to go before Kid J hit the class field, twenty seconds and counting. The crowd turned nasty, bottles and other projectiles were hurled at the screens, a police patrol was set about, Jean turned to grab Sid and pull him away from the more active part of the crowd, all the while her eyes remained fixated on the screen, on Kid J.

As Jean and Sid watched on she felt a vibrating in her trouser pocket, it was her ear piece communicator. She quickly pulled it out of her pocket quickly anxious for some more news, as she slipped the device in her ear she could hear JBF's distinctive electronic voice shouting her,

"JBF" she said in answer.

"Get to cover quick Jean, get off the street" said JBF with no explanation to why.

Before JBF had even finished getting his message across she was being pulled with force by Sid back towards the bar. She looked up as she was being dragged, a lowers city transport was falling towards them; they reached the bar just in time before it hit the street in a crumpled heap. The fallen transport had taken part of the bar entrance out and blocked passage in and out. Jean quickly gave a speech to the startled patrons and told them the next drink was on the house to clam things down.

She grabbed a bottle of sprits from behind the bar herself and then pushed her way through the crowd inside the bar towards a window looking out onto the street, a mass of people were already swarming there watching the unbelievable sights outside. There were fallen transports all over the street and some had fallen onto and into other buildings , the scene was one of total chaos, the crowds watching Bomber on the screens where still dashing for cover , running this way and that as transports continued to drop from the sky.

“What the hell is going on“ said Jean out load to no one in particular.

“Look“ said Sid, pointing towards one of the screens in the bar still pumping out the illegal UFF broadcast.

“The class fields down its bloody well down“ said Jean “and he’s through“

The crowd in the bar first startled by the commotion outside now fixed there attention back on the screens in the bar again, cheers and shouts of encouragement came from every corner . Jean barged her way through the crowded tavern again with Sid close behind, she reached the bar and straddled it with ease. She ran in to the back room, through the secret door that led to the UFF control rooms and sprinted up the stairs, heading for the landing pads on the roof, she needed to get there before Kid J landed.

On the stairwell she passed Max on his way down, he squeezed past her in silence with his head down looking shameful. She felt sorry for him in a way. Max had been with the underground movement from the start, But he was finished now, exiled by his own kind, destined to be on the run from both sides from now on. He’d dug his own grave thought Jean as she continued to run up the stairs.

On the roof top the electromagnets on the drop zone where firing up, Sid had turned them on full power, Kid J was coming in fast and she only hoped the electromagnets on his suit were functional. She looked up, it was getting dark, the orange blur of incandescents made the edges of structures blend together and wobble in the evening heat. Jean heard kid J before she could see him , Sid was with her now also craning his neck upwards ,the familiar crackle of the electromagnets intensified as Kid J raced toward them , the opposing forces of the magnets on his boots trying to push him away. Jean watch kid J slow as if sliding magically into an invisible glove, and then a few feet before the ground the magnets cut out and kid J was down.

###

4000 stories up, on the very last level of the uppers section of 16K city, Bomber stood in the most luxurious private bathroom he had ever seen. The view alone was to die for, with clear purple skies and the warmth of the sun. He opened a window and let in the air, it was fresh and clean , the cities atmospheric processors that made life habitable at high altitude even added a subtle flowery perfume to the air , not like the stale air on the ground level. The city below and bustling lower levels looked different now, almost magical and too far away from him to worry about. He had seen

the city from high up many times before but only before a jump , only in the moments before heading back down , back to his life , but today was different ,the day's would be different from now on.

At Bombers feet was the unconscious body of a well dress old man, it was Highsower, the luxurious private bathroom was his. Bomber looked in one of the bathrooms many mirrors and straightened his bow tie, Highsower had grabbed for it before collapsing to the floor in a heap , his last words been something about the class barrier been linked to the anti gravity generator in that section of the city. Bomber had no idea what the old man had meant , he finished straightening his tie and then tucked his hand gun into the back of his trousers in readiness to re-join the party.

Back in the party at Highsower's penthouse house suite, things seemed to be getting on well without its host, it would be while before anyone realised Highsower was gone and went looking for him. All eyes where currently watching the news on the screens in Highsowers apartment, the lowers class field was down and by the looks of it so was the antigravity field in that sector of the city as well. That's what Highsower had meant thought bomber. City transports had simply dropped out of the sky, it was carnage on the ground in the lowers but Kid J was through unharmed and local news reporters were having a field day. Bomber smiled feeling relived and satisfied, it was a good day for the UFF, and when the authorities found certain dead bodies on the roof of Global-K towers along with some special video evidence put together by JBF, it would be a bad day for Highsower.

A waiter walked passed Bomber with a tray of champagne and offered him a glass; he politely took one slipped it slowly as he scanned the room. No one had noticed him, he was blending in completely, they all assumed he was one of them. This notion amused Bomber no end, he was going to get used to this he thought as a pretty young woman waved at him, he returned the wave by raising his glass to her and smiling.

"Time to go Bomber "said JBF into bombers micro ear piece communicator.

"Already"

"Yes already sir , Highsowers body guards are on the way back from the wild goose chase I sent them on"

"Ok, I'm assuming you have got a transport waiting for me"

"yes sir , my master has ordered me to assist you in any way i can , clothes , living quarters , money , transport , any thing you need sir"

Bomber took one last look round the room, he scanned over the entrance to Highsowers private bathroom, there was no one in sight. He smiled again remembering the look on Highsower's face when he appeared out of nowhere . The old man had thought he was there to kill him and wet himself when Bomber had held a gun to his head and ordered him drop the class barrier and to call off the authorities pursuit of the remaining Jumper that everyone still assumed was him. Uppers aristocracy, they had no guts thought Bomber.

Bomber entered the elevators leading down and out of Highsower's penthouse, as the elevator doors began shutting he nodded to the young lady who had waved at him earlier, she blew him a kiss in return.

“JBF “said Bomber

“Yes sir“

“Find me another party “