

Jacoby was seething. He sat in the hover, watching the two sides of the building he expected them to exit from, and he was pissed. He couldn't believe Tech had kicked him off the job, just because he expressed his opposition to what was going to happen after it was over. That wasn't how you ran a job.

Okay, so he'd lost his cool, but the way Alex had lied to him, was it surprising?

At least he hadn't been so angry as to sabotage the job. Stopping the lift on a deserted floor and hiding the body in a storage room had been simple enough, as was exiting through the main entrance; he still looked like a drone, and the guard didn't care who left, just who entered.

Repositioning the hover had been trickier. This part of the city was almost entirely buildings, all of different heights, but close enough to only leave narrow alleys between them. This was a family vacation hover, not a sleek corvette. He'd ended up settling on a low rooftop. This model could hover up to sixty feet before it became unstable, and the roof was seventy, so it had taken some finessing, but he'd made it.

Jacoby wished he could tap into the cameras, or had some of his own he could use to cover the other two sides of the building, just in case, but since Tech had told him to leave, they'd need a new vehicle. These two sides had exits letting them mix with the walking crowd, and reach the vehicle storage structure three blocks over. Tech had demonstrated his skill in obtaining his own hover when he'd gotten this one.

But he wasn't leaving them to fend for themselves. Once they were done here, they could go together to the shuttle for the station. It would give them time to talk, and for Jacoby to make Tech see reason. He didn't belong here. He didn't know anyone here. He belonged on Terion Two.

He looked up when a shadow passed over him. Cities didn't allow vehicles to fly low enough to cast shadows, since it meant they were also low enough to hit buildings. While he couldn't make out details, he could tell it was a shuttle—a small transport. Probably someone late to a delivery, and cutting time by flying within the city's airspace instead of going back to the travel lanes to cross it. It was their credits.

He refocused on the sides of the building when it registered the shuttle had been slowing. He looked up again, in time to see it come to a stop and settle on the roof of a building. The building he was watching.

With a curse, he started the hover. He had no idea who they were, but there was no way a shuttle landing on the same building Tech and Alex were doing the job at was a coincidence, or a good thing.

He looked around at the other buildings. He wished they were laid out so the stairs he needed his hover to climb went directly to the roof, but he didn't have that kind of luck. He was going to have to lose time doing some back and forth. He called up the city's topography and had it display the height of every building in this area.

Years ago, on a botched job, he'd discovered that a hover's top flying height wasn't the maximum he could trick one into jumping. By cranking the anti-grav as high as it could go while falling, it condensed the air to a point it registered solid, and the hover sprang up again. The trick was making sure there was a building to land on afterward, because there was no way the capacitors recharged in time to do that before crashing again, unless the hover had been rigged specifically for that.

After getting the concept to basically work in the field—once he and Reggie had walked away from what should have been a deadly crash—he found he could pull off the same trick without being in the air—like if he happened to be on a rooftop.

He set the target buildings. He was lucky vacation hovers were designed to carry extra weight, so it had extra capacitors to compensate. Having barely any weight in it, and with the number of capacitors this hover had, he could split them and safely triple the height the hover could reach with each jump. He could double that if he used them all, but then he'd have to wait for all the capacitors to recharge. He hoped this way would let the unused set recharge as he set himself up for the next jump.

“Alright, baby. Tech’s depending on us, so don’t let me down.” He set half the capacitors on the ready and flew toward the edge of the building. He jumped, waited until the apogee, and discharged the capacitors. The hover slid sideways as it went higher and almost missed the target roof, but made it on, the landing scraping the underside.

“Sorry about this.” He smiled. This was going to work. “After this I’m giving you a quiet family who’ll do nothing but take you out for vacations, I promise.”

He glanced up at the building as he turned the hover and aimed at the next roof. He could just make out the back of the shuttle. He had to hurry.

“Alright, once more. You can do this.” The capacitors weren’t recharging as fast as he wanted, but he didn’t have a choice. He had to make it up there.