

Gamer

by

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Chapter 3

Roof Escape

Their feet pound after me as I duck down a narrow side street. I know this city zone like the back of my hand and I take a short-cut onto Main Street. I dodge sleek, shiny MPVs as I shoot across the road into the alley on the other side. But I can't shake Shark's gang off.

They're closing on me fast. I can hear Shark cursing me.

I have to make a roof escape.

As I run round a corner, I spot what I need. I leap onto a dumpbin and launch myself into the

air. My hands catch hold of the bottom rung of a fire-escape ladder and I pull myself up. I climb and climb, until I reach the roof, 12 floors up. Far below me is the grid of the city, laid out in lights. A vast metal forest of Street Screens, TV dishes and mobile masts sprout from the roofs in every direction.

Down below, the gang have split up. Shark and several others follow me. The rest scurry like rats along the maze of alleys. They crane their necks to see me gap-jump to the next roof.

I land and roll. Without stopping, I speed-jump an air shaft and sprint across to the next building. This time the jump is much bigger. I do it anyway. Fear and booster bread give me strength. But the drop knocks the breath out of me. I hit the roof hard, and slam into the legs of a Street Screen.

As I look up, the words VINCE POWER – CAN HE SAVE OUR CITY? are beamed onto the screen. A clean-cut, tanned man in a crisp blue suit appears. His silver-grey hair only adds to his charm. I don't need to read his name to know who he is. He's one of the richest and most powerful men in the world. He invented VK.

I sit up and see Juice take the leap I have just made.

But he doesn't make it.

As he slams into the roof edge, Juice's face is a mask of horror. He tries to cling on and I think about saving him, but Shark's already across. He ignores Juice and tears after me.

I drop down to a lower roof and flee.

Shark stays high and we race side by side on different buildings.

He's fast and I have to use all my skill to stay ahead.

Far below in the alleys, I catch snatches of his gang watching me in the hope I fall. Then I lose sight of Shark and I think *he's* fallen.

But then I see the leather jacket and the spiked hair appear in front of me. My way's blocked. I back off. Stick lands behind me with a thud.

My only escape now is the building to my right. But the roof's a long way down.

Shark grins from ear to ear as he pulls out his Blazer.

“Time to blaze and burn!” he says.

I’ve got no choice. I *have* to make the leap.

I dash to the edge of the roof and throw myself into the void. For a few seconds the air seems to take my weight as I plummet down. Then I crash on to the tar roof of the other building. I grunt in pain as my foot twists under me.

Stick stares across the huge gap in shock. He won’t be following me.

Then a shadow flies through the air and Shark lands next to me. He crashes head first into a TV dish. The boy’s crazier than I am – and I had no choice!

Pain shoots up my leg as I limp away. I see on a Street Screen that the interview with Vince Power has begun.

“Many people think you’re a hero,” the presenter lady simpers. She’s all fake eyelashes and plastic surgery. “Your VK program has cut violent crime, and your company Power Inc. pays for the City Orphans’ Home,” she goes on. “What drives a man like you?”

Vince Power smiles. “I believe in the greatest good for the greatest number. I offer a way out for these kids. Hope in a hopeless world.”

I turn away from the Screen. Shark’s back on his feet. He strides over to me.

I’m trapped against the mobile mast. I’m hurt – and I have no way to escape.

There’s a sharp *buzz* as Shark’s pulse blade lights up.

“No hope for you now, pretty boy,” he snarls, and points the Blazer at my face.

At that moment, the tinkly tune of an ice-cream van drifts up from below.

Shark freezes. We both know what that means.

“I’ll blaze you later,” he says and snaps off the laser.