

**(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)**

**A/N: Getting to Uppercrust.**

**-x-X-x-**

It was a tough call at the end of the day. Admittedly, Alice would be the cheat code option. There's not a doubt in Lucas' mind that if she reached out to the Uppercrust's cell in the Elite as Catalyst, they would leap at the chance to set up a meeting with her. And then Lucas could have come along and it would have been as simple as making a deal with Uppercrust from there.

Except... there were a few problems with that idea. First and foremost was the potential damage to Catalyst herself. Sure, she was the new hotness and currently enjoying her fifteen minutes of fame as everyone and their mother wanted a piece of her. However, she was still on somewhat shaky ground.

Using her in this way, while Lucas was certain Alice would agree, nevertheless could have hurt her chances with the hero organizations that he knew were currently courting her. And he didn't want to do that. He didn't want to succeed at the expense of someone he'd gone out of his way to help.

Secondly, of course, was that the Elite themselves might not be very amused by the subterfuge. Using Catalyst to get his foot in the door might very well work, but it also made it that much more likely that the Elite would just decide to crush said foot with said door.

Uppercrust was one of the 'good ones' as far as Elite Leaders were concerned, but that didn't change the fact that the Elite were a pretty dangerous, well-organized group of villains. At the end of the day, using deception to get close to one of their leaders could turn out to be a recipe for disaster.

And so ultimately, Lucas had decided to forego that option and leave Catalyst out of things. Instead, he, along with Sveta and Emily, would head over to New

York themselves and see what could be seen. But first... preparations were a must.

Rocking up to the offices for Upper crust's legitimate businesses in everyday street clothes seemed like a bad idea. Not because Lucas was afraid to give away his secret identity, but simply because you didn't want to give off a bad first impression.

Unfortunately, that brought back the whole 'I don't have enough money to set up proper operations' thing. He also didn't have enough money for a really fancy suit or for clothes for Sveta and Emily.

In the end, they take a week before doing anything else and Lucas makes a couple of smaller deals where, instead of getting anything too serious, he gets whatever money he can out of things. There are a handful of people desperate enough to go for this in his neck of the woods, because even though money can solve most problems, it can't solve all of them.

A week is more than enough time to make around ten thousand dollars doing this, more money than Lucas has ever earned in a week in his entire life. Of course, it's still not even a drop in the bucket he needs to fill if he wants to enact his bigger plans, but it's a start.

Ten thousand is enough to get him, Sveta, and Emily some really nice clothes, as well as pay for the trip to New York City. And so, once they're all ready to go, they head off and make their way to the offices of Upper crust's not-so-little security agency, the one that provides all those defense systems for the East and West Coasts.

There is a door guard of course... and while Lucas and Sveta aren't wearing masks, Emily is, a cute little domino mask to hide her identity. Just in case she wants to eventually have a proper civilian life at some point. Personally, Lucas doesn't intend to waste any time on living two lives... he's been all in since he made his deal. Though also, he's not too worried about anyone who has his face being able to hunt him down thanks to his power.

Regardless, the door guard stops them upon noticing Emily's mask, his eyes narrowed as he steps in their way.

"And who are you all supposed to be?"

Smiling, Lucas turns on the charm.

"You may call me Pact. These are my associates. I have a business proposition for Upper crust, so if you could please step aside, that would be greatly appreciated."

The door guard hesitates for a moment... but to his credit, it's obvious he's not a parahuman... and he's probably not paid nearly enough to fight unknown parahumans either. In the end, he jerks his head in a nod and steps aside.

"Alright. Don't make trouble. You really don't want that heat."

'That' heat rather than 'this' heat. Lucas' smile grows slightly as he takes the warning as sincere rather than a real threat. Inclining his head, he thanks the other man as he and the others walk past.

"Your advice is appreciated, good sir. Have a good day."

"Err... you too."

They step inside without further incident and head right for the front desk. The receptionist looks at them carefully, having clearly been forewarned somehow. Perhaps she was watching their interaction with the door guard. Either way, she's all business as she straightens up at his approach.

"Do you have an appointment?"

Lucas shakes his head.

“I do not. Let’s call this a walk-in, shall we? I have a business proposal for Uppercrust, one I hoped to present to him personally. How can we go about making that happen?”

The receptionist hesitates for a moment... before grabbing the phone.

“Please wait for a moment.”

With that, she places a call. Lucas has to admit, he’s pleasantly surprised. He keeps expecting someone on a power trip to try and shut him down. The door guard or the receptionist... both could have asked like assholes and pretended they had the authority to stonewall him.

... But then, he supposes he can imagine why they didn’t. It’s not just Emily in a domino mask, after all. There’s his obviously unnatural yellow eyes and Sveta’s equally unnatural ‘hair’ to be considered as well. It’s blatantly clear that all three of them are parahumans... so at the end of the day, nobody wants to piss them off.

This belief is tested a minute later when the elevator across the lobby suddenly dings open and a woman steps out. Her heels click against the marble flooring as she saunters over, staring at them with narrowed eyes.

“And who exactly are you supposed to be?”

This woman... was a parahuman. Lucas was certain of it, even if there was nothing obvious like his own entourage had going on. She just had this feeling to her. One of Uppercrust’s people, he imagined. Regardless, Lucas just puts on his best smile and dips his head in greeting.

“The name is Pact. And I’m here because I’ve heard Uppercrust is the best the Elite has to offer. I wish to make a deal with him.”

The woman’s eyes flash and she sweeps her gaze from him to Sveta to Emily and then back to him again.

“You’re looking to join the Elite? All three of you?”

Smiling apologetically, Lucas shakes his head.

“Ah, not quite I’m afraid. No, the proposition I have for Upper crust is more... personal in nature.”

There’s a pause at that and then disappointment flashes across the woman’s face, followed by frustration and irritation.

“Fuck off.”

Emily gasps and Sveta bristles at the disrespect, but Lucas just smiles.

“That seems rather brusque. Do you speak with Upper crust’s authority then?”

Staring down her nose at him now, the woman sniffs haughtily.

“I do indeed. His *full* authority. And you are wasting my time. I won’t let you waste his as well. Get out or I will remove all of you from the premises personally.”

Protective. Lucas doesn’t take it personally... he knew going in how this would look to anyone on the other side. Sveta though... well, she’s just as protective of him as this woman is of Upper crust. She takes a step forward and growls, causing the tension in the room to skyrocket.

Lucas holds up his hand and cuts Sveta off however, giving a slight shake of his head to make her stand down. Once she’s done so, he gives the Elite representative a slightly sharper smile.

“I see. So then he doesn’t want Parahuman Healing, is that it? I suppose the rumors that he’s dying are incorrect? But then... some of those rumors come from your very own business partners, who can’t help but complain as Upper crust’s systems begin to fail without him to maintain them.”

The woman stiffens up, her eyes widening and her nostrils flaring.

“You don’t know what you’re talking about.”

Lucas hums... before shrugging.

“Maybe I don’t. But just so we’re clear, that’s what I’m offering here. I can heal Upper crust. I can make him healthy and hearty again. Whatever is ailing him, I *can* cure it.”

He sweeps his gaze to the side, deliberately looking to the receptionist who has been watching all of this unfold in a riveted fashion. Then, he looks back to the Elite representative.

“If I’m wrong and Upper crust is doing just fine, feel free to tell me to fuck off again and I will. However, if I’m right and you really send me away... well, I guess I’d just hope for your sake that Upper crust didn’t find out about it. I don’t know about him, but if I were dying and someone close to me chased away my only chance at healing, I’d be pretty pissed, personally.”

The look towards the receptionist had been deliberate, of course. Said receptionist is now frozen in place out of the corner of Lucas’ eye, having gone from riveted bystander to unwilling participant in all of this in the blink of an eye. After all, if the other woman did chase him and his girls away, then she would be the one to blab to Upper crust about it. Or maybe the door guard, who also wasn’t doing a very good job of hiding that he was listening in.

The look on the Elite representative’s face is priceless, though Lucas holds back his amusement as much as possible. She recognizes that he’s trapped her between a rock and a hard place here.

“... You realize if you’re lying or unable to deliver, it won’t end well for you right? If this is some sort of trick or trap, even if you manage to succeed at ambushing Upper crust... the rest of the Elite will come down on you like a ton of bricks.”

Lucas just smiles a winning smile. He knows he has her at this point.

“I’m not worried. You can tell your boss personally... I’m the real deal.”

The female parahuman scowls for a moment longer before finally, reluctantly pulling out a phone.

“I’ll ask. That’s all though. It’s Uppercrust’s decision in the end.”

Lucas continues to smile, though internally he does feel a bit more nervous. After all, it was one thing to browbeat the man’s subordinates into submission... it was another entirely to convince Uppercrust himself to meet with them.

And the unfortunate thing is, Lucas can’t actually feel Uppercrust anywhere in the building with his ‘deal finding power’. There’s maybe one or two people in the entire office building willing to make deals, but he doesn’t think either of them is Uppercrust.

But then that makes sense... if Uppercrust is dying, of course he’s not going to spend much time in the office. And wherever he does live in New York, it would be impossible to find him among all of the other desperate people willing to make deals.

Maybe Lucas could have just gone to the richest part of any given city and walked along until he found a desperate rich person willing to pay out the nose for his help, but the problem with that idea is that he’d probably pick up way too many desperate maids, gardeners, and other people in the housekeeping business.

So in the end, yes, this was the best option. Go directly to Uppercrust’s offices, get a face to face meeting with the man directly. Of course... now that one of his subordinates has him on the phone, that opened up other opportunities, didn’t it?

As Lucas watches the Elite representative speak quietly into her phone, having stepped away a good distance, he reaches out and can feel the person on the other end of the phone call. It was just like with Sveta and Alice... he could

connect to people digitally as well. Combine that with his power to find people willing to make deals and Lucas didn't even have to be the one having a conversation with Upper crust. He could finally feel and pinpoint the man's location through his desperation to live.

Which... made this whole song and dance rather moot, didn't it? He could just teleport over to Upper crust's location right now, just as he did with Alice and her dorm room.

Hm... but it's probably best not to jump the gun here, Lucas imagines. Even if it is really, really tempting...

**-x-X-x-**

**A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!**