

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

A/N: Brand new story! Hope people enjoy what I've cooked up here~

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It was desperation that drove him to steal, in the end. He needed money and he needed it bad. His brother's treatments weren't going to pay for themselves and every other avenue had been closed to them. So yes, Cameron had become a thief. And he'd found he was actually pretty damn good at it too.

Tonight marked his fifth heist. The first four had all gone pretty smoothly. He'd cased places that clearly belonged to the wealthy and affluent, taking in the security, looking for the holes and slipping right on through. Pawning the things he'd stolen had netted him more than enough money to keep his head above water and his comatose brother alive a little bit longer.

However, Cameron could already tell that tonight was going to be different. He was doing his due diligence and spreading out his heist locations far and wide, trying not to hit near the same place twice... but admittedly, there were only so many rich areas in New York. Most of them were concentrated in Manhattan, which was where he was now.

This in particular was a rich, posh apartment suite that had caught Cameron's eye when he'd been passing by. Specifically, it caught his eye because of its security more than anything else. The building's overall security was one thing, but nothing too special.

But he'd been going out of his way to learn everything there was to know about security measures ever since he'd taken up his new 'career' a couple months back. Research was half the battle and forewarned was forearmed. He'd always been a quick learner, even if he'd been forced to drop out before he could graduate to better take care of his brother.

Still, Cameron liked to think he'd developed an eye for this kind of thing... and for some reason, that specific apartment was much more fortified than the rest of the building. Top notch security measures that would normally be invisible to your average layman had stood out to him like a sore thumb.

Which led to tonight. Sure, most thieves might have balked at the high security and gone for something easier to steal, but Cameron was forever chasing that big score. He didn't just want to keep his brother alive; he wanted to eventually get enough to try some experimental cures he'd heard were being tested over in Europe.

... He wasn't going to make that kind of money by just playing it safe.

And so, standing on the top of the building, Cameron breathes for a long moment before making sure the harness is winched properly around his body and that he's firmly attached to the roof. Then, he carefully begins to propel down the side of the building towards his target.

It might have seemed insane, but Cameron had properly cased the target and found that the only opening was on the outside of the building, through a window that was almost unprotected compared to the rest of the apartment. Almost like it was commonly used as a point of ingress.

But that would be ridiculous, of course. Rather, it was far more likely that they just didn't bother securing it as much because they thought nobody sane would ever try to enter through it. And they were right... Cameron hadn't considered himself sane for a while now.

That doesn't make things any less nerve-racking though. He's not fucking Spider-Man, to swing from his webs across the city where one wrong move could make him go splat. Cameron doesn't have a fear of heights or anything like that, but he certainly worries that looking down too many times might give him one.

Fortunately, he makes it to the target window without incident. Equally fortunate, he's able to slide open the window with an almost contemptuous ease and slide

right into the apartment. He quickly and efficiently removes his harness and ties it off nearby for a later extraction. Then, once he's freed, he looks around carefully.

As suspected and already cataloged from what little he could see through distant observation, it's a rich place for sure. But not much more opulent and grandiose than any other residence that Cameron has burgled at this point. But then why the heavy security? Hopefully it was hiding some secret that he could exploit...

Creeping through, taking in the darkened interior, Cameron hunts for the most likely safe locations. Searching behind the paintings and other wall fixtures reveals nothing, unfortunately. The large rug in the center of the room also doesn't hide a floor safe.

Cameron is just starting to get frustrated when his careful searching finds something interesting. A bust on the coffee table in the center of the room has a seam under the chin. Carefully, he finds the latch and undoes it, lifting up the top of the bust's head and face to reveal a small button hidden inside of it.

For a second, he hesitates... what will happen when he presses that button? Something good, hopefully... but it could also be his undoing. Still, in for a penny, in for a pound. He presses down with his thumb... and then whips around when he hears a clicking sound on the other side of the room.

An empty bit of wall in between the two paintings that he'd already checked folds up into itself, revealing a hidden wall safe that Cameron doubts he ever would have found on his own.

Grinning, he takes a step in the wall safe's direction... only to freeze as another dark shape comes right through the window he'd entered through. The freeze lasts half a second to be fair, before he's darting behind cover and hiding. Only, there's no concealing his presence, not when the harness is still by the window.

"I know you're here. Best not to hide, you're only making it worse for yourself~"

The feminine, sultry voice that echoes through the quiet place, breaking the silence, makes Cameron swallow hard. Shit, this was bad... but who the fuck had caught him? In the end, did it even matter? He wasn't going to get away without a fight... and he wasn't much of a fighter to begin with.

"Don't make me hunt you. You'll just make me angrier..."

Maybe he could sneak away though. Maybe he could- just as the thought is crossing his mind and Cameron is trying to carefully reposition himself to stay out of sight... his hip bumps into a vase. He'd swear up and down that his body was nowhere near that fucking vase. Honestly, it shouldn't have been possible. It was the absolutely worst luck he'd ever experienced on a heist before.

But in the end, it doesn't matter. The vase falls and Cameron isn't fast enough to stop it from hitting the ground. It shatters into a hundred pieces and he... well, he's made at that point.

"Oh... you shouldn't have done that."

He tries to run. Of course he does, if he gets caught here, he's fucking screwed. More than that though, his brother is fucking screwed. So Cameron makes an attempt to flee, heading for the front door since going out the window at this point would be suicide.

He barely even makes it five feet before she's on top of him though. She's faster than him by far... but as Cameron finally gets his eyes on the owner of the sultry voice, he feels a bit of hope. It's not some crime fighter after all... rather, it's Black Cat.

He barely dodges her claws as she makes a grab for him, stumbling back even as he's pushed away from the front door by her attack.

"W-Wait! Please wait, we don't have to fight!"

He doesn't want to fight Black Cat, truth be told. Everyone knows she's fucking dangerous and regularly tangoes with people like Spider-Man. She might be a

thief, but she's also a fighter... maybe even a killer for all Cameron knows. Meanwhile, he can barely throw a punch.

"Oh? Don't we? You've been very naughty, you know."

"I'll leave! This place... I didn't know you were after it too! You can have everything in here... I already found the wall safe for you, even!"

Black Cat pauses at that, tilting her head to the side and studying him with bright green eyes. Finally, she hums in thought.

"You really don't know, do you?"

Cameron blinks in confusion.

"Uh... know what?"

Rather than answer him, Black Cat hums some more.

"The wall safe. You found it... but can you even get into it?"

That... Cameron considers the question for a moment, not really sure what answer she wants from him. In the end, he decides to err on the side of caution.

"Not as fast as you, I'm sure. Like I said, if I had known you'd already picked this place out, I never would have come here tonight. Just... let me leave. No harm, no foul, right?"

Black Cat just scoffs though, her eyes flicking back towards the shatter remains of the vase he'd knocked over earlier. Cameron grimaces at that... was she really upset because he broke a vase she could have stolen and sold? Was it some priceless antique or something? He didn't know vases all that well yet, they were usually too big to make off with so he tended to stick to small expensive items instead.

"You want me to let you go?"

“Yes please.”

She pauses at his immediate request, looking amused more than anything. But Cameron isn't above groveling if it gets him out of here.

“Then you're going to show me what you can do first.”

When he just stares at her blankly, she rolls her eyes and points with her thumb back towards the living room.

“The safe. I want you to break into the safe for me.”

... What? Cameron can't help but be baffled. Why would Black Cat of all people need his help breaking into a safe? She was almost certainly better equipped than he was in practically every way. Shit, from what little he knew about her, she didn't even need to steal... she'd stolen more than enough to be living it large on some beach somewhere. At this point, Black Cat just did it for the love of the game.

Was that why she was making such demands of him now? Not seeing any other way out of this, Cameron just swallows and carefully makes his way back to the common area. He half expects to feel Black Cat's claws in his flesh at any moment, but she just follows him until they're both standing before the wall safe.

It's not... well, it's nothing *too* special, he supposed. In fact, he's pretty sure he's cracked an exact safe like this before. Glancing back at Black Cat nervously, Cameron can't help clarifying.

“This is what you want, right? I crack this safe open for you... and you let me go?”

Black Cat just smirks, crossing her arms under her chest.

“We'll see.”

Well, that wasn't reassuring. But it wasn't like he had anything better. She would catch him before he made it to the front door and the only way he was surviving going out the window was if he was given enough time to put his harness back on before doing so.

Put simply... he was stuck between a rock and a hard place. Stepping forward, Cameron swallows down his nerves and gets to work. It's not easy though given his hands are shaking and blood is roaring in his ears, making it harder to hear the inner workings of the safe as he sets about cracking it.

Eventually, he has to grab hold of his arm and squeeze hard enough to feel it and know it'll be bruised by tomorrow morning. Only then is he able to really center himself, an old coping mechanism from the bad old days. Back when his brother was still awake... but they were living with their old man, a goddamn piece of shit who made the world a better, brighter place when he finally died.

After the squeeze, Cameron is able to focus. And once he's focused... the safe in front of him gives up its secrets without much more effort. It's not easy necessarily, still taking the work of about fifteen minutes... but finally, with a satisfying click-clank, he manages to pull open the door.

"There you... go?"

Cameron stares at the insides of the safe in disbelief... because it's completely empty. Blanching, he spins to look to Black Cat, holding up his hands immediately.

"I didn't know it was empty, I swear! I wasn't here long enough to take anything, just to find out it was there!"

Black Cat stares back at him intensely, silent for a long moment as she pins him with her gaze. Then, she cracks a smirk of all things.

"You're cute, kitten. Pretty damn talented too. Tell me, how long have you been doing this sort of work?"

Blinking slowly at the sudden question, Cameron furrows his brow.

“Uh... a year?”

He knows better than to admit he’s only been at it for a couple months... but lying was probably also a mistake because Black Cat immediately presents him with her claws and shakes her head.

“Don’t lie to me, darling.”

“Two months! Two and a half!”

Fuck he’s a coward... but he doesn’t really have room to be courageous or fearless or anything like that. Not when his brother is counting on him.

Black Cat slowly lowers her claws, humming again.

“Two and a half months... you’re just a baby, aren’t you?”

Bristling, Cameron grits his teeth.

“I’m nineteen!”

That... probably wasn’t the right thing to say, not if he wanted to convince her he wasn’t a baby. Indeed, Black Cat just chuckles and shakes her head.

“Like I said... a baby. After all, you’d have to be to think that breaking into MY place was the right call.”

Wait what? Cameron stares for a moment... before it finally all dawns on him and he realizes what she’s saying. This was her place. And that meant he’d tried to rob Black Cat. He’d also broken one of Black Cat’s vases. And then he’d even proven he could break into her safe!

Fuck. He was so fucking dead.

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A/N: Welcome to my newest Story Poll! This story will likely be replacing TXG going forward, so please let me know what you think. Your interest will decide this fic's future for me. If I don't get enough people liking what they see, then I'll go back to the drawing board!

Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!