

He found the crack the first time he arrived at the finished site of his company's newest building. He could tell from his long years in construction that it would break under too much pressure. But, it was in the corner of the ballroom on the second floor, in a position that would probably never be used. Even if it was, there was no fool who would stomp with enough force to expand the small hairline split. Honestly, he didn't care about the building. It was just another one of his cookie-cutter concrete blocks. The building also stood on the shady side of the city, all the way on 59th and Tank Street.

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Jeremy had not grown up with much. He was not at the complete bottom but he grew up in the very lower middle class. His mother and father split apart when he was three. He was raised by his dad, who didn't speak about Jeremy's mother very often but when he did it was never positive. There was never an explanation for their breaking up, all his dad would say was, "She had big plans and I didn't."

Jeremy had started construction fresh out of college, right after his father passed away young. He loved his dad but pitied him for his lack of ambition. Jeremy had dreams of becoming "something" because his dad settled with nonunionized construction.

He started with a dream, mixed with a bit of luck, and he made a thriving business.

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Douglas's parents also were split up when he was young. According to Doug's mother, his father had left after she wouldn't give Douglas up. But he was very happy living with his single mother. Doug worked as a weather analyst.

His partner, James, drove to work in the city, but Doug was able to work at home, only having to catch a ride every few weeks. He liked it that way. He never told anyone but he also didn't like the city; he liked the peace of silence.

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“Have a nice night, Mr. Langweilig!”

“Bye,” Jeremy replied dryly, not even trying to remember the unpaid intern behind the desk's name, “tell your mother I say hi.”

The intern's mother had died two months ago and Jeremy hadn't responded to the invitation to the funeral.

Jeremy strode from the office door, down the hall, to the elevator. Then down all nine stories to the lobby, and around the corner into the alley next to his building toward the parking garage. As he passed a pile of trash cans he encountered his biggest fear, a fan. He popped out seemingly from nowhere and Jeremy hated every inch of him. The man was huge.

“OMG! Are you actually *the* Jeremy Langweilig!”, the man giggled at this and Jeremy could only think about how much more loud and annoying it made him seem, “I looove your work! Especially the matrix buildings on 59th!”

“Thank you. Now just let me get to my car.” Jeremy tried to walk around him but the man shifted his weight, making it impossible.

“Hold on, one more question please,” The next thing Jeremy knew he was being gagged and the man's stupid high voice was now extremely low-pitched and menacing.

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It was one of those days that Douglas wasn't looking forward to. He had to go into the city to supervise a talk on CO₂ emissions at a community college, his alma mater.

James dropped him off with a quick, “Bye...”

As he walked through the campus, he was stopped by a campus officer.

“Hello sir,” the officer was very large in both height and weight. “Do you have your ID?”

“No,” Douglas replied in slight surprise. He had never been stopped for this before, “I'm a guest speaker.”

“Sir, you need ID.”

“I'm sorry I don't have one.”

“Sir, please don't be in trouble, just show me your student ID.”

“I'm just a guest.”

“Ok sir, can you come with me for a minute.”

He was marched around a corner into a small alley with metal trash cans scattered across its walk.

They walked about halfway down the alley before the cop suddenly turned.

“Hold on, what's your name?”

Doug stated his name, thinking the officer would let him go. But instead, the man flung a black cloth bag over Doug's head.

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Jeremy was woken by a bucket of water crashing over his face.

He was lying on the ground of a vast room. He recognized the place instantly as one of his own buildings on 59th and tank.

He didnt have much time to think. There was a door on the other end of the room and it hinged open. To Jeremy's horror, the same man who had been in the alley was now walking towards him. But when the man spoke there was no high-pitched superfan or scary low-pitched voice. Instead, a happy but cold voice echoed across the room.

“Welcome to my building!” When Jeremy said nothing the man continued, “I’m sorry, I didn’t introduce myself on 2nd St. You can call me Brick. You like what I did with the place?” Again Jeremy didn’t answer so the man kept talking, “We moved in officially last week but we know that there is a flaw. We don’t know what and where it is, so that’s where you come in. You will tell us what is wrong with this building so we can fix it.”

“Why would I do that?”

“Well, why not? You really have no choice.”

“What is there to gain for me?” Jeremy questioned, “If I give you your information you won’t give me anything in return.”

“I’m sorry we made you feel that way,” Brick stated, but there was an obvious hint of humor in his voice. There was a brief silence followed by the boss commanding, “Bring me the brother!”

Two men in dark clothes dragged in a tall man, probably a little under six feet. He had ropes binding his arms and legs.

“Do you recognize our guest?” Brick laughed.

As Jeremy stared at the helpless man, he neither recognized him nor cared who he was until he looked up. Jeremy recognized the nose, along with the dark eyes that shined like a shooting star in the light. But still, Jeremy didn't know the man.

“Who is he?” Jeremy couldn't help himself. He was curious now.

Brick's face went from laughter to confusion to a look of babyish pity. “Well can't you recognize him? I thought you might recognize your own brother.”

Jeremy was confused and then laughed. His parents split when he was 3. He never had a brother and never cared to want one. So this random man did not matter to him.

“I have no brother. Why is this man here?”

“I'll let you two talk.” Following this Brick and all of the guards left the room. Leaving Jeremy with the now panting untied man in the middle of the room. Jeremy noted how the doors locked behind them.

“Who are you?” Jeremy demanded.

“I am your brother, like he told you. My name is Douglas but people call me Doug.”

“But I don't have a brother.”

“Well you do. Our parents split up after arguing over my birth. Our dad left and brought you with him.”

Jeremy was beyond shocked. He didn't like the man's appearance at first but now as he looked into his eyes he saw himself, just a little younger.

“Listen, my mom was terrible to me and my father and he left for good reason,” Jeremy declared, “So I don't care if you're my brother or not but if you want to get out of here I know how.”

“How do you not care? You just met your brother that you didn't even know existed and you 'don't care?’”

Deep down this affected Jeremy. He stepped back as he thought for a second. After his father's death, he had no real family. He streamlined work not caring for anyone around him. He realized now, whether he liked it or not, family was going to help him. Simply because he was his brother, Jeremy had the strangest need to protect him. He started caring about someone more than himself because he was family.

Jeremy lowered his voice, “There is a crack in the corner of this room,” he whispered, “We can break it if we stomp hard enough. We'll fall through, right into the lobby, and from there we run. I know cuz I built this place.”

Before he knew it, both he and his new-found brother were charging toward the corner of the room. They expanded the crack a whole two feet before guards were charging through the doors, guns aimed.

“Freeze! Stop!” the two were surrounded.

“See you downstairs” Jeremy called as he jumped slamming as much mass as he could down onto the expanding part of the floor. With that, the ceiling of the first floor fell in. The two brothers crashed down with it. Jeremy realized that day that no matter who you are in the most desperate of situations, family will always prevail.

The team of men with machine guns patrolled the site overnight and into the next day but no bodies were found. The brothers had escaped, together each earning something much more than just freedom: family.