

The Trouble with Agents

The ringing in his ears faded away as Prophet stepped out of the phonebook and cast a slow, measured gaze over his surroundings. People were everywhere, luckily nobody had noticed him materialise out of nowhere.

He heard a noise. It was like nothing else in or out of the Matrix. He knew what was coming even before it happened. A hand clamped solidly down on his shoulder.

"Mr Hirst, I presume," the cold steely voice intoned. Prophet stared fearlessly into the dark glasses. He checked his neural relay.

"Agent Stephens, nice to meet you. As you'll see we are in a fairly populated area, which means you can't put a bullet through my skull."

The Agent looked around. He was correct.

"Death can be avoided, Mr Hirst. I shall escort you to the nearest safe area for ... your kind. You know you aren't allowed to be here."

Prophet flashed a grin.

"Well you know how we love to break the rules!"

Grimacing, the Agent began to frogmarch him along the sidewalk towards a black car which was conveniently parked at the side of the road. Prophet always wondered how they spawned CARS without anybody noticing.

Luckily, fate was smiling on him that day. Somebody came racing from one of the shops just as an alarm bell rang. A bluepill felon. Happily, he ran straight into the Agent.

Prophet stumbled forwards as the grip was released. He spun as he tried to regain his balance and saw the Agent struggling to release his gun. Putting his left foot forward for balance, he jumped.

The crowd below him audibly gasped as he rocketed into the air, spinning and dazzling onlookers as the tails of his coat swished around him. He grinned again. But down below, the Agent was taking aim with the deadly Desert Eagle. He fired at the rapidly disappearing speck in the sky.

The bullet ripped through Prophet's right leg as he concentrated on landing atop a building. He knew it wasn't real, but it still hurt just as much. He lost his concentration and flailed his arms as the trajectory he was on floated away in the wind.

Trying to ignore the burning, searing pain, he focused on a rooftop below as he hurtled towards it.

Prophet hit the flagstones with a mighty crunch, the impact sending him rolling head over heels. He lay on the roof for a few moments breathing heavily.

Neo had helped Zion to understand the workings of the Matrix more. By sitting and focusing hard enough, it was possible to repair and regenerate your RSI. But that took time, and he didn't have enough of it. The Agent would surely be here soon.

He got up and stumbled to the doorway on the roof. At the end of the short corridor was an elevator which carried him to the ground floor.

"Sir? Sir can I help you?" the receptionist enquired as Prophet hurried by, limping and groaning slightly. He muttered a quick denial, not wanting the harmless receptionist to undergo a rapid sex change and shoot him down, and exited the building.

Ducking into an alleyway, he sat down again. He was already starting to feel better, gods bless Neo.

There was a thud around the corner. The pavement cracked. Either Morpheus or someone as powerful as him was there, or Agent Stephens had tracked him down. The latter was correct, but Prophet was already on his feet and running hard down the alleyway when the dark suited program appeared.

"Resistance is useless, Mr Hirst!" he called angrily, beginning to run. Prophet glanced behind. He was fast. REALLY fast. This was going to call for some seriously creative moves.

He reached the wall at the end just before the Agent did. Leaping up, his feet skimmed the wall as he pirouetted upwards and planted his feet firmly on Agent Stephens' shoulders. At the same time he launched himself upwards in another Hyperjump. The momentum pushed the Agent violently forward, his head smashing through the wall. The body slumped and regained its original form, but Prophet was too long gone to care.

As he landed on another rooftop - perfectly executed this time - he was worried. Killing an Agent just meant that more would track you down.

His phone rang.

"Yeah?"

"It's me" Cel said, her voice concerned, "I'm reading some serious activity heading in your direction from the east."

"Any ideas?"

"Yeah. Get to a booth and jack out now. Whatever you did really pissed them off."

"Awww, you didn't see it? One of my greatest moves to date!"

"I'm sure it was, you can tell us all later. Just get your arse back here would you?"

The line went dead. Prophet pocketed the phone and looked around. Hiding wasn't an option. If they really wanted to find him they could easily pinpoint his pirate signal. But right now this was a good old fashioned hunt.

So he ran. Leaping off the building and into the street below, he zig-zagged through the streets and back alleys. The problem with Downtown was, aside from being off-limits, there was nowhere to hide like in the Slums.

Two bullets whistled overhead. They had him. Prophet concentrated harder on disturbing the code around him to throw off their aim.

His legs went from underneath him. Lower back shot. He pulled out his phone, hit the operator key and managed to say "Get ready" before the five agents emptied their clips into him.

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"So, anything to tell us?" Cel asked sweetly as she removed the neural jack.

"Yeah," Prophet said quietly and sheepishly, getting up painfully from the chair,

"Don't ever piss off an agent."