

Becoming Them

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When the frightening Green Flu infection reaches his friend, Todd, Harry is forced to do everything he can to hide him away from CEDA... but is it all for nothing?

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“What the hell do you think you’re doing?”

was a question – a dreaded question – that stopped Todd in his tracks. In a quarantined apartment room in the middle of Philadelphia, two young men stood near a window that looked out upon the once-thriving city. One of them - Todd – had wanted to (once more) jump out for an exciting time free-running (also known as parkour). The other, Harry, was completely against the idea.

“Aw, come on, Harry – I won’t get sick if I stay on the roofs...” Todd tried to reason, but to no effect on his friend.

“No, Todd.” Harry growled, “I’m not letting you risk anything just for a little ‘thrill’. If CEDA’s ordered us to stay inside the apartment until this whole thing blows over, then so be it.” Todd snorted in frustration.

“I can’t stay here, man – I’ll go stir crazy! I’m like a cat, y’know? I can’t just stay in one teeny tiny room...”

“Y’wanna catch that Flu shoot?”

“Well... no...”

“Then you stay. That’s that.”

Again, Todd snorted, but it was more out of anger this time.

“You’re not my mom, Harry – and I’m not some kid –“

“I never said you were a –“

“ – EVEN THOUGH you like to treat me like one –“

“I’m only trying to keep you sa –“

“I’m LEAVING, Harry.”

And then Harry stood there, frozen, flustered, angry. Todd didn’t get it, the taller of the duo though to himself, he didn’t realize that he wasn’t invincible. The “Green Flu”, or whatever CEDA liked to call it, was a huge problem, and Todd treated it like the common cold. Well fine, Harry continued ranting in his head, let him go, let him see how vulnerable he really is. He then turned to look at Todd – but Todd had already exited through the window. Harry immediately took back everything he thought, and bit his bottom lip with worry. He had to be sure that Todd was still safe. He had to – the guy was his only friend. Harry glanced over at a metal bat he had – it was handy for fights he got himself into. The Green Flu

was supposedly making people go nuts. Harry hesitated, then grabbed the bat, quickly opened the door to his and Todd's apartment, and ran down the stairs.

Meanwhile, Todd enjoyed himself quite a bit. He kept himself on the rooftops of the buildings, leapt from each one to land to another, vaulted over certain obstacles, and never once slowed down. He never needed Harry's permission to enjoy this... what gave Harry the right to think so? The poor guy tried too hard to pretend to be Todd's father. Maybe that's what he saw himself as. But Todd's father was dead. Killed long ago after a fatal slip from a tall building. He had practiced parkour – just as Todd did. It was his father's death that inspired Todd to follow the practice in the first place. Flu or no Flu, Todd would remember his lost parent through free-running. Nothing should ever stop that. But woe, for something did.

Out of nowhere, something shoved Todd off the roof of a building. Like his father before him, Todd found himself falling.

“frack!! frack!!” He cried, followed by a pleading “Not like this, not like this, not like this...!” Then, mid-fall, Todd spotted the latter of a fire escape. Just in time, he reached out and grasped it, stopping his fall short. His muscles practically screamed at him from the pain it caused, and Todd felt both an unforgiving pain, and a large wave of relief wash over him. But he was still so weak, and he let himself drop, softening the fall with a frontal roll. The young parkourist got up, stumbled a bit, and crashed against an ally wall, exhausted. The apartment complex was a few blocks away... if he could just.. oh god, Harry would kill him. Todd wouldn't hear the end of this from his friend. Well, at least he wasn't dead.

Suddenly, landing where he was supposed to, was an elderly man. The sudden appearance shocked Todd, but he was far more surprised by how a man of such an age – or any age for that matter – could survive a fall straight down like that. Stranger still, the man's features were... off. His skin was a blue-ish grey, and his eyes were an odd white color. He stumbled toward Todd in a drunken manner. Todd tried to ask if the man was feeling alright, but Todd's lack of energy, and great pain only allowed him to mumble the words out into a jumbled mess.

Suddenly, the older man's head snapped into Todd's direction, and he screamed – a frightening scream – and ran at his target.

Todd tried to run, but running was something he couldn't really do at the moment. The man quickly caught up, and slammed himself into Todd, pinning him against the ally wall.

“H-hey...!” Todd finally managed to croak, completely frightened by this strange turn of events, “Hey, I don't have any money – I don't have anything! P-please! Let me go!” But the strange being didn't want any money, and it didn't have any intention of letting Todd go. Another scream. Todd screamed with him, though for a very different reason. Suddenly, the man bit down hard onto Todd's neck, drawing plenty of blood. Todd ceased struggling as soon as he started. He soon blacked out.

“Todd!!!” Came a cry out from the darkness. There was a loud “clank”ing sound, and Todd dropped to the ground. The assaulted college student regained enough consciousness to see that Harry had rescued him... but Todd lost too much blood. He blacked out once more.

“No!! No... no!” Harry cried out in despair. He had to get Todd back to the apartment. He had to do everything he could – except call CEDA’s emergency number. If they found out what had happened to Todd, they could take him away. They would do things to him. They would do horrible things. Harry shook off the thought of Todd on a dissection table, and picked Todd up off the ground. Harry placed Todd’s limp body over his shoulder, and picked up his metal bat from the ground. Then, he headed back to the apartment complex. Along the way, Todd left a trail of his own blood.