[b][u][center]Vice and Virtue
Chapter 4
By Draconicon[/center][/u][/b]

Victor couldn't fall asleep until he'd added another lock to the door, and even after that, he felt like he was still at risk. The last thing that he wanted to do was fall asleep after someone had snuck into his room, but if he didn't, then he'd be worthless the next day.

Thankfully, nothing seemed to come after him in the night. He woke up the next day and everything was where it was supposed to be, and both locks were in the right position. There was nothing to worry about...he hoped.

The black bear got out of bed, pulling his headset over and plugging it into his phone. A few more taps on the screen, and it started ringing.

Buzz, buzz.

Buzz, buzz.

Buzz, buzz.

Click.

"[i]Hello?[/i]"

"James. You're not in the game?"

"[i]No. I just woke up.[/i]"

"Good. Don't go back in."

"[i]Nnngh. Gonna tell me why? Never thought you were that much of a prude, man…[/i]"

"Something happened last night."

"[i]Things happen all the time, man.[/i]"

"Someone tried to sneak into my apartment while I was playing the game. And there was something happening in the game, too."

"[i]Ugh...you sure?[/i]"

"Would I be calling you if I wasn't?"

"[i]Probably not. Do you want me to meet you at your place, or?[/i]"

"Meet me at the library. I want to check something while we're there."

"[i]'kay. See you in a half hour.[/i]"

Click. He pulled the headset off, sighing as he leaned his head down and grumbled to himself. The last thing that he wanted was to spend any more time waiting than he had to, but he knew better than to think that James could get there any faster than that. The tiger was the epitome of the lazy cat stereotype unless he was excited about something, and now that they weren't in the game, he doubted that he could motivate James any more than he had.

But at least that meant he could shower. His cock had been...active overnight, and while he hadn't made a mess, he smelled.

#

The library at the university was definitely better than the old one had been. Judging from the pictures that he had seen, they used to use physical books, limiting the data that could be

rented from the library at any given time. They had not stocked it with many copies of the different books, forcing students to be rather...selective about the sort of work that they did.

These days, every student had a study pad, and each pad had a program that would allow for data to be rented from the library, then detonated at a specific date to prevent the pad from overcrowding itself. He'd brought his to not stand out at the library, but he had no expectations of using it. He had it tucked under his arm as he wandered around the core shelves of the library, waiting for James to show up.

The tiger was late by a good ten minutes, and he didn't like that. After seeing what had happened to Peter in the game, seeing the meerkat screaming about his ass getting fucked despite the game having released him, he was more than a little concerned. That, plus the fact that someone had started breaking into his home when he was in danger of getting fucked, bound, restrained…

[i]Was someone fucking him in real life?[/i]

It wasn't impossible. Sure, it'd take some know-how to actually track where someone was while playing, but people had been backtracking IP addresses and more for decades. The idea of someone hiding where they were in this day and age was pretty far-fetched, particularly on a student budget.

And if they had found Peter, if someone had been tormenting him, then it wasn't impossible that they might do that to someone else. Some other player that was stuck in the game for a protracted period of time. Someone that happened to be playing on the 18+ mode.

He shook his head. He was letting his fears get away with him. It was good to be cautious, but he was getting downright paranoid.

Victor started another lap around the shelves dedicated to history - he thought, might have been something else - when James suddenly rounded the corner. The tiger, dressed in a bright pink t-shirt and tight jeans, grabbed him by the arm.

"You didn't tell me Peter disappeared!" James hissed.

"What? What are you -"

"Why didn't you tell me Peter disappeared?"

"What are you talking about?"

"You didn't - come on!"

Dragged along by the tiger, the black bear nearly stumbled to the floor more than once before he was able to get his footing and follow along. Other students were chatting, and louder than they normally would in the library, for that matter. He heard them talking about 'that meerkat' and 'that slut', but they weren't saying anything that he could pick out.

James pulled him around to the front of the library, by the bulletin board that showed the big notices that the school had for the next couple of weeks. Instead of the usual lists of different club meetings or gaming events or study parties, the bulletin board was filled with the most risque set of features imaginable.

The various video screens must have been hijacked, because each one was playing a repeating string of pornographic video images, like a GIF preview of a show on a website. He recognized a few guys by their faces, but right in the middle, shown off like the star of the show, was Peter.

Victor stared, wide-eyed, at the meerkat. The screen was split, showing him tied down in the game [i]and[/i] in real life. Seeing the meerkat helpless like that really drove home what he'd been seeing in the game.

And then, the screen split. It showed the plant tentacles in the game wrapping around him, squeezing his cock, thrusting into his ass, but on the other side of the screen, it showed Peter with his legs up in the air, his cock plunged into a fleshlight, and a well-endowed male - the species unknown, kept in shadow - pounding his ass like no tomorrow. It was a surprisingly artistic comparison, the game and the real life stuff matching surprisingly well.

The problem was, there was no denying that it was Peter. All the different 'models' that were getting fucked in and out of game were completely unmasked, only the Gamer Glasses on in most cases. If anyone knew the guy in question - or girl, he was shocked to see - they'd be recognized instantly.

[i]Holy…[/i]

Victor's eyes went from display to display. There were two dozen of them, each one marked as a student of the university, and even going so far as to display their names on the bottom of the screen at the end of each repeat. It was like whoever had done this wanted to make sure that everyone knew [i]exactly[/i] who had 'starred' in the production. No explanation of who had done it, no statement as to why, just names and all the porn that one could ask for.

The black bear shivered as he remembered the unlocked apartment door. Had he almost stumbled into the same thing? Had someone been ready to try and take him for something like this?

Yet, for all the shock going through the crowd, there were more than a few that were laughing at the whole thing. Some pointed at people that he didn't know, while others pointed at Peter.

"Look at that fuck-boi. The guy's hard as hell."

"Betcha that he signed up for this. Gotta be faked."

"Yeah, probably some friends that just wanted to get attention."

"Who knew that the little freak was into the extreme stuff."

"Hey, think he'd blow me if I got him on his knees?"

It didn't take long for that kind of talk to start spreading through the crowd, and Victor growled deep in his throat, his hands clenching into fists. James wasn't much better, the tiger looking around with his teeth clenched.

They managed to keep hold of that anger, though. Right up to the point where a horse on Victor's left pointed at Peter and said:

"What do you think? Loose enough to take me?"

They didn't even plan it, but tiger and black bear alike punched the horse hard enough to knock him off his feet. Then, and only then, did security start showing up.

#

Released from campus security with a warning – not a suspension, just a warning – Victor waited in the hallway for James to be given the same treatment. Despite the fact that the horse had started it, he hadn't seen the stallion anywhere.

He crossed his arms over his chest, leaning his head forward as he tried to think this through. An emotional reaction would not help him now. He needed to be smart about this, because whoever these guys were, they were being smart about how they were exploiting people.

[i]These guys…[/i]

There was no way that this was staged. He remembered the panic in Peter's voice in the game, remembered how it had gone off the rails for the poor meerkat. That hadn't been staged.

He [i]knew[/i] staged. He [i]knew[/i] bad porn acting. Mostly because James dragged him through so much of it with all the stuff that the tiger found online. That hadn't been it.

More to the point, Peter was a very gentle sort of guy. He didn't know him [i]that[/i] well, admittedly, but the meerkat was in a class or two. Science, mostly, and he knew that the meerkat was as methodical and slow-paced in his way of thinking and deliberating as Victor tried to be. There was no way that he'd screw his future over by publicly delivering porn to the entire student body.

He looked up at the screen in the hallway, one of many different screens that delivered updates to students throughout the day. It had been hacked, too, and it was flicking from one pornographic set of previews to another. Still nothing regarding who had done it or where it came from, but…

[i]…Huh. I wonder.[/i]

Pulling out his phone, the black bear brought up its onboard search engine. He typed in 'Meerkat Anal Bondage Game', just out of curiosity, and waited.

Two seconds later, it pulled up a series of search results, and the second one showed a still image from Peter's display earlier in the day. He opened it, half-hoping that it would be nothing more than a bit that someone had managed to film with their phone.

Nope. Instead, it was a full-length video, timestamped at two hours long. Two hours of torment and fucking…

Victor didn't let it play. Making a mental note of the website and storing it for later, he tucked his phone back in his pocket, taking a few deep breaths as he tried to make sense of the new information.

Someone had managed to film a massive amount of porn with someone that was playing the game. They had managed to kidnap him from wherever he was playing, and they had managed to put it up without anyone noticing.

More to the point, they had the talent to hack a school database and put it all up for everyone to see. This was something way past a simple bit of student on student pranking, or even revenge. This was something [i]far[/i] more extreme, requiring [i]far[/i] more resources than anyone attending the school actually had.

The black bear hadn't taken his train of thought past that when the door finally opened. James stepped out, flipping the bird to the school staff in the other room, and he shook his head as he walked up to the bear.

"Well, that took forever. Same sort of bullshit."

"Warning?"

"Yeah, for standing up for someone. So much for doing the right thing, eh?"

"They're covering themselves."

"For someone else being cruel."

"Not as cruel as whoever hacked the school boards…"

"Yeah…fucking hell…"

James shook his head, and Victor couldn't blame him. Even if the different students were released by whoever was filming them, they'd be so publicly humiliated that they'd probably never dare to show their faces again at university. The fact that they had been pushed so far in their little show…

He shook his head. Whoever did that would have to pay, and pay dearly for something like this.

They left the security offices, walking down the hallway. Here and there, they spotted a janitor – or a well-minded student – climbing a ladder to one of the display boards, unhooking it from the power source until the hacked display could be turned back to normal. Unfortunately, most of them were left running, either displaying some guy that was getting ass-fucked to hell and back, some girl that was getting fucked in her mouth and pussy, or something even more inventive.

It made his concerns feel all the more real.

"James?"

"Yeah?"

"What do you know about that 18+ version of the game?"

"A lot."

"Is it official?"

"Pretty darn, though outsourced to a different studio," the tiger admitted. "They contracted someone to develop it for them instead of doing it themselves."

Which meant that whoever was doing this was probably not involved with the parent company for the game itself. Not the most helpful, but somewhere to start.

"Do you have a name for the company?"

"Probably. I'd have to dig it out, though. Why?"

"Someone kidnapped a bunch of people and you're asking why I want to look into this?"

"Well, yeah. You're not one of the police. At least, I don't think you are."

"…No."

"And you're not studying criminal justice or law, either."

"Didn't find it that interesting," Victor admitted. "Thought the science side of things were more fun."

"Then why do you –"

"Because that could have been me…And I bet you that this won't be the first time that they do this."

Someone that went through the trouble of kidnapping so many people to fuck them and film them and humiliate them this publicly wouldn't be satisfied at doing it just once. He would almost guarantee that they would see this happen again in no more than a few days. The way that the students had reacted, the way that they'd denied that this was any sort of criminal activity and how it had to be a bunch of perverts doing things together…

The cops probably wouldn't investigate, either, not unless the students themselves started pressing them to. And if the students had been kidnapped while wearing Gamer Glasses, then they wouldn't have been able to notice what was happening in the real world. They wouldn't even know that they had been moved until they started feeling IRL stimulation that contradicted the game world stimulation.

Hell, if he hadn't interrupted Peter's thing, where the meerkat had been getting fucked in-time to the whole thing that happened in the game, then the college student probably wouldn't have realized that something wrong was going on.

It was a horrifying thought, thinking that they were that vulnerable to this. It could have been him. If he'd lost to the dryad, if he'd been bound up the way that Peter had been, as she'd tried to do to him, then he might not have been able to log out of the game until they were done. They might have been able to get one more student on the wall.

He shook his head, pulling himself back from that fear. It hadn't happened, and if he had his way, it wouldn't. Taking a deep breath, he grabbed James by the shoulder.

"I'm going to go home. I have a lot of research to do if I'm going to figure this out. You'll send me the company name?"

"Yeah, sure…"

"…You're not logging back in, are you?"

"No, no. Not for a while, anyway," the tiger said. "But I thought I'd try getting in contact with some of the guys that were on the board."

"Make sure they're okay?"

"And that they know what happened."

"Good luck."

"You too," James muttered.

#

The hours gradually rolled by, and at the end of the day, he didn't have much to show for it. Some, but not nearly enough.

[i]Vice and Virtue[/i] had been developed by a large company, one of the mega-publishers that had taken over the gaming industry. Trypticon Games, it was called, and it had a good half-dozen other MMOs under its belt that it kept updating and servicing, though it seemed that [i]Vice and Virtue[/i] was its current cash cow. It competed with itself, making sure that it kept developing more of the same game, better each time, so that none of the other gaming giants could compete with it.

That said, it was also more than keen to contract out to other companies, from the looks of things. The corporate giant had gotten every single DLC to its games done by someone else, and some of those had been [i]huge[/i] flops.

He still remembered the Demons' Run DLC to the previous game they'd put out. Not that he'd played it, but he had heard of it. There'd been a huge fiasco about the game having a bug to it where the in-game 'corruption' by a demon started to screw with a person's brain in real life. Something about the Gamer Glasses shorting out different neurons or something, making it hard for a person to function properly.

Trypticon Games hadn't done the coding for that DLC, but they had okayed it. The only reason they'd survived that was because they'd had no direct connection to the developers that had made it, and because they'd shut it down as soon as they saw it getting out of hand.

[i]But they already had Vice and Virtue off the ground at that point. They had another game that was bringing in money,[/i] he thought. [i]Wonder if they'd do the same thing these days if they found out what this group was doing…[/i]

James had sent him the name of the company that had done the 18+ mode. Some group called HedonAlt Enterprises. A quick look at their records showed that they'd mostly worked on porn games before their involvement with this particular project, and their games were, for the most part, the trashiest and nastiest that you could find on the internet.

Not very buggy, though. That had been very clear. They made their games very well, and ensured that they ran properly. Probably the only reason that they'd been considered for making an expansion for the big cash cow Trypticon had running.

Other than a games list, though, HedonAlt didn't have much about them published online. It was like they were a ghost of a company, one that barely existed in the real world and existed even less in cyberspace. It was strange.

Ring ring. Ring ring.

He picked up the phone, shaking his head.

“James?”

“[i]Yeah. Bad news.[/i]”

“Nobody picking up?”

“[i]Worse. Peter picked up, but he refuses to talk about anything. Says that it didn’t happen, and he doesn’t want anyone to talk about it.[/i]”

“Great. Any luck with anyone else?” he asked, rubbing his forehead.

“[i]Nope. Sasha said that she doesn’t want anything to do with any investigation, that nothing happened, and John said that he’ll punch anyone that says that he actually did something like that.[/i]”

“Well, at least they’re mad. Looks like [i]Vice and Virtue[/i] lost a few players.”

“[i]Guess again. They’re already back online.[/i]”

“What? But – why? They just…”

“[i]Hell if I know. All I know is that they were angriest when they said they were going back in the game. Almost like they didn’t want to. But if they didn’t want to –[/i]”

“Why would they be going back in?” Victor shook his head. “Maybe they didn’t have a choice. Maybe they had to.”

“[i]That’d be, like, blackmail or mind control, though.[/i]”

“Wouldn’t be the first time…”

“[i]We should hand this over to the police.[/i]”

“Remember Demons’ Run?”

“[i]...Okay, so they fucked that one up, but that doesn’t mean the cops won’t do something this time. This is a lot more obvious.[/i]”

“You can call them if you want. I think this is going to need more than that.”

“[i]I will.[/i]”

“Okay. Talk to you tomorrow, then.”

He hung up. If he knew James, the tiger would be on the phone with the cops in the next few minutes. If he knew the cops, they’d listen, but then they’d start saying that a crime couldn’t really be reported on behalf of someone else. It would require the victim themselves calling in, otherwise the police wouldn’t be able to do anything.

It was one of those laws that had been instituted by the mega-corps not too long after they started taking over everything. Something about making it clear that they wouldn’t be bullied by citizen groups with an axe to grind, something about making sure that only those that were genuinely hurt would be able to push for justice.

And, of course, it was abused from day one. Few people actually complained without a giant group being offended. Victor wondered if that was the reason why only two dozen people had been kidnapped this time. Two dozen would be a small enough number to keep them from uniting under outside pressure and, at the same time, large enough to know whether whatever the fuck this was could be feasible.

No, the cops would be useless for this. They needed to start checking things out from the inside...and that meant going back into the game.

The black bear hated the idea, but he knew that there was only so much that one could do to fight these things from the outside. Demons’ Run had only been taken down when enough mentally-compromised people banded together and showed what had happened to them. The

game had only been recognized as a threat when those hurt by it started trashing the system from the inside and the outside at the same time.

They couldn't afford to wait for a high enough victim pool. If someone on the other side was kidnapping people, they needed to fix it [i]now.[/i]

After triple-checking that the four new locks on his door - and the two new ones on his window - were completely secure, Victor tied himself to his gaming chair and pulled on his glasses. He still had another day before the weekend was done, so he might as well use it productively.

[b][u][center]The End[/center][/u][/b]