



# Designated Survivor

## Chapter 40

by Jeff Somers

40.

Ten seconds after watching Hulk get gunned down, Frank Darmity smiled a little and looked at Red. “Well, they got assault rifles.”

Red was staring into the slowly widening window of shadow into the cavern. “Jesus.”

Darmity congratulated himself. He hadn’t expected Hulk to just run into the fucking space like an asshole, but now he knew what Renicks and Begley were up to, and it wasn’t even half smart. Although posing the corpses was slightly higher on the badass scale for Renicks than he would have expected. It was going to force a complete recalibration of his opinion of the man.

“All right, Red!” he shouted over the rumble of the door, fishing in his pocket. “Shades. We’ll hit ‘em with the Stun, you go in and scout it out, okay? Take your time and be careful. They’ll be blind and disoriented.”

She didn’t react right away. He watched her in his peripheral vision. Studying her body language. He could tell she was thinking about him. Questioning. She’d taken an oath, too, and she’d been vouched for, or she wouldn’t be there. But he didn’t know her. Amesley and his people had been patriots, too. Good

people, sure. Fuckups all the same. As he fished in his big flap pocket, he let one hand fall idly on the butt of his sidearm.

He could almost see her walking through it. He'd ordered Hulkaburger to go in, but he hadn't told him to run in a straight line like an asshole. Hulk had seen bodies over one of the access modules and he'd just gone for them. He could have been smarter about it. There'd been nothing wrong with the order.

Red nodded. "Okay!"

Darmity relaxed slightly. She'd decided *she* would be smarter about it. Good girl, he thought, admiring the shape he imagined under all that armor.

He pulled the grenade from his pocket. A modified issue. He stepped up to the slowly rolling blast door and glanced at her as she positioned herself just to the left of the widening entryway. Checked her weapon one last time. Pulled her goggles up over her head, strapping them over her eyes. Tiny dark ovals, like swimmer's goggles, but with black lenses. Looked forward and nodded.

He pulled the ring. Counted to three. Tossed the grenade into the cavern. Counted to three while he slipped his own goggles on.

The bang was loud enough to hear over the noise. Loud enough to feel in his legs. Light poured out of the opening like someone had lit the space on fire, some fuel in the air that burned bright white.

Darmity watched Red sprint into the space. Moving fast, at an angle to her left, turning her head as she ran to scan the area — merely brightly lit to her due to her goggles — to spot Renicks and Begley.

He watched her left leg suddenly jerk behind her as if some invisible man had grabbed onto her ankle. Watched her sail forward, arms whipping outward with unspent momentum. Saw her slap down onto the cavern floor, hard. Saw her head bounce off a rock. Hard. Saw her lying there, unmoving.

*Well*, he thought, crouching down and stepping forward, scanning the area, *they got traps, too*.

Then he paused and smiled. Saw Begley plain as day, ducked down in what had been impenetrable shadow, blindly swinging her rifle in a shallow arc.