... THE WIRELESS WORLD ...

The team of runners crept down the sterile corporate hallway, cautiously approaching the door at the end. Frogger watched the others from the rear, his vision cluttered with augmented reality overlays. Through his implanted commlink, he could see and hear the invisible wireless mesh network linking the team together, allowing them to communicate silently with subvocalized speech and mentally-composed text messages. He kept one eye on the stream of chatter, focusing on his active connections with the other. One window streamed real-time footage from his surveillance drone hovering in place over the facility, showing him that there was still no indication that their intrusion was detected. Another window displayed a map of the compound, with his team noted as red dots and the locations of RFID-tagged employees in the building noted as blue dots. He monitored the corp's primary wireless net in a third window, where he was logged on—thanks to a cracked password he had carefully acquired in advance—as one Alice James, assistant security director. Whoever she was, her password opened doors, and that's what the team had needed to get this far.

Katja, the team's gillette, got his attention. Time to shine, hacker boy, she subvocalized. Work your Matrix magic on this maglock.

Frogger spent a brief moment trying to open this door via his hacked account, to no avail—Ms. James didn't have authorization to enter this part of the facility. Our hall pass just expired, he messaged. I'm going to have to do this the hard way. After a few seconds of mental gymnastics, he bypassed the network's defenses, accessed the maglock, and instructed it to open—without triggering an alarm. Too easy, he noted, sounding disappointed, as the door popped open.

Frogger followed the others into the room, closing the door behind him, and frowning as several of his visuals pixelated. As the team spread out into guarded positions, several warning icons grabbed his attention—he had just lost several connections and was picking up a new local network. Fuck! He transmitted. This wing must have wireless-inhibiting materials in the wall—just lost my outside links, and there's a new security network here. Give me a sec to hack it!

Spotting a surveillance camera in the corner, Frogger knew he had to act fast. Quickly sitting against a wall, he switched into full virtual reality mode. The room and his body evaporated, replaced by his familiar radioactive toad icon and his commlink's marsh "reality." He immediately shot down the wireless link and launched an array of automated routines against the network's firewall, probing for any number of known exploitable flaws with the speed and hyper-intensity that only hot sim could provide. Within seconds, he was in—but the system security wasn't slouching, and his unauthorized presence had been identified. He scrambled to access the vidcams, editing their feed so onsite security couldn't spot them too easily.

Looking bad, kids. Red lights, klaxons, all that—we need to move! Though they could see no sign of it, the team immediately exploded into action, planting the "evidence" they had been hired to drop while watching for approaching security.

Frogger continued to race through the system's carefully-sculpted "megacity" virtual landscape, when a menacing diesel machine icon suddenly raced towards him—which he immediately recognized as an intrusion countermeasures program. Frogger smiled to himself, and readied his attack software. Now it's time to have some fun.

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