

Title: Freeze-Out

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Rating: Teen

Characters: Tig, Kozik

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Spoilers: None

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Author notes: On the hottest Sunday of the year, the muse gave me this.... Thanks to Tanaqui for betaing.

Summary: While handling what they expect to be a routine gun delivery, Tig and Kozik find themselves captured and locked up. To survive, they need to work together in ways Tig has never imagined.

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"I don't like this," Tig muttered, surveying his surroundings through narrowed eyes. "Don't like this at all."

"Sure we got the right place?" Kozik, like Tig, kept his voice low.

Tig rolled his eyes. "How many meat-packing plants you think there are in Oakland?"

Kozik shrugged. "More than one."

Tig didn't deign to reply. The words painted along the top of the nearest building—*Coppinger Meat Packing*—confirmed they were where the exchange was supposed to take place. So, where was the client?

Around them, the complex was silent, deserted, everyone gone home for the weekend. Trucks with the company's logo stood parked neatly in a row, while industrial flood lights lit up the various buildings: an office, a warehouse with a loading bay, the plant itself. Where the orange glow didn't reach, the shadows were thick and deep. Tig squinted. Anything—or anyone—could be hiding in those shadows, and he and Koz would never even know.

Every sense on alert now, they moved forward step by step, heading deeper into the complex. Tig let his drawn gun sweep from left to right and back in a slow arc, the heavy duffel on his shoulder hindering him little. It clanged softly with every step, full of the weapons and ammo clips they were here to deliver.

Shoulda told Clay no, Tig thought, the hairs on the back of his neck rising. But Laroy of the Niners had vouched for this Omar Dent. Said he was one of his numerous cousins. And the Club was low on cash, so the unexpected order had been welcome.

Didn't mean Tig had to like it, though. Not one single bit.

As if to prove him right, someone stepped out from the shadow cast by the office

building. Tig's gun swiveled toward the figure, finger half on the trigger.

"Gentlemen." The figure spread his hands and walked further into the light. Expensive suit and tie, Tig noted. Hair combed back, shoes shined to a gleam. Very slick. Not the sort of man you'd expect to see at a meat packing plant in the dead of a Saturday night looking to buy a bunch of illegal weapons.

Also, the dude was white.

Tig exchanged a quick glance with Kozik. Koz raised a shoulder, a barely perceptible shrug. Tig turned back toward the guy. "You Dent?" God knows what sort of bloodlines ran in Laroy's family.

The slick dude bared his teeth. They were even, white, sharklike. "No. Omar couldn't quite make it. But he mentioned you boys'd be comin'. So I'll take delivery of what you got there." He dipped his head toward the duffel hanging from Tig's arm.

"Got the cash?" Kozik asked.

The guy barked a laugh. "Something you don't understand, it seems." He gave a shake of the head. "Dent owed me. Owed me, well, a lot. Some of it he paid in cash. Some of it—," a slight pause, "—in other ways. And that bag is the final payment."

It was Tig's turn to huff a wry laugh. "Who you think you're dealing with?" Even as he spoke, he turned slightly so his back was further toward Kozik. From the corner of his eye, he caught Koz mirroring his movement, each knowing without words how to cover the other.

Not that it did them any good. Slick no longer smiled. "Some dumb fucks the world won't miss." He gestured with a hand and the shadows surrounding Tig and Kozik came to life, armed men stepping out of them. In an instant, they were surrounded: outnumbered and outgunned.

"Shit," Kozik muttered.

For a long moment, his gun still aimed at Slick, who seemed to be the boss, Tig considered pulling the trigger anyway. If he and Koz were gonna die, might as well take that asshole with them. Then he decided not to. Shooting the dude now would mean certain death for him and Kozik. If he waited it out, they might get a better chance later to save their skins. 'Sides, it was hard to get even if you were dead. And he already planned to get very, very even with Omar Dent, and that bastard Laroy, too. "*I vouch for him*," Tig's ass.

"Hand it over," Slick ordered.

"A'ight." Tig lifted his finger from the trigger and raised his hands, letting the gun dangle between thumb and forefinger. After a few seconds, he sensed Kozik do the same. Slowly, Tig allowed the duffel to slide along his arm until he could set it down on the ground near his feet. Another impatient gesture from Slick, and some flunky took their guns, while a second snatched the duffel and carried it over to his boss.

Slick shot a quick glance downward as the underling unzipped the duffel, half revealing the contents. Another toothy smile, before he dipped his head toward Tig and Kozik.

"Put 'em away. You know where." Dismissing the Sons, he turned his back on them and walked off to where Tig assumed a car was hidden. The underling with the duffel scurried after him. The rest of Slick's men kept their weapons trained on Tig and Kozik.

"Move," someone barked. A barrel jabbed Tig in the ribs, underscoring the order and making him stumble forward a step.

Whoever these assholes were, they were good, Tig had to admit. While two of them drove him and Kozik along with the occasional prodding, the rest kept their distance, safely out of reach. No way to take them all before a hail of bullets mowed him and Koz down. He resigned himself to cooperating, at least for the time being.

Their destination turned out to be the biggest building, the actual meat plant. Inside, the air was cool and moist, and it reeked of an unpleasant combination of stale blood and raw meat. Tig crinkled his nose involuntarily, unhappily reminded of battlefields he'd been at.

He had plenty of chance to breathe in the smell as Slick's men took them down a warren of dark, empty hallways until they finally stopped in front of a large steel door. A blast of cold, dry air hit them when it was pulled open. "Get inside." This order was also accompanied by another poke in the back. Despite himself, Tig took a step forward. The air inside the room was freezing and goosebumps sprang up on his skin immediately.

"Hey, you can't—," Kozik started to protest.

Tig heard a dull *thump* and a grunt. When he looked back, he saw Koz was licking away blood from a split lip. Then their captors gave Kozik a shove as well, and he stumbled through the door after Tig. A moment later, the door slammed shut.

Instantly, they were plunged in pitch darkness. "Crap," Kozik mumbled, somewhere at Tig's left shoulder. Tig could hear his boots scuffle on the tiled floor while he dug into the pocket of his cut and fished out his lighter. As the flame glared bright, Kozik uttered another curse. "Little warning too much to ask for?"

"Shut up," Tig growled. He turned his attention to the door. It had no inside handle to unlock it and, when he pushed at it experimentally with one hand, he found it was as unyielding as a brick wall, not giving even a fraction of an inch. Holding the lighter higher, he searched along the edge of the door, looking for cracks, but it seemed like they were sealed in tight. "How the fuck do we get out of this?"

"Dunno." Kozik sounded distracted. A second later, Tig discovered why. There was a soft click and overhead fluorescents buzzed to life.

It was Tig's turn to swear at the unexpected brightness. Kozik smirked at him.

Tig let the lighter go out and put it back in his pocket, before taking a better look at the place. Rows of pale pink carcasses dangled from hooks attached to rails. Pigs, maybe. His breath misted in front of his face, confirming what his flesh had already told him: they were inside a meat freezer. Bad news if they couldn't get out.

"Wanna gimme a hand?" he asked Kozik. Together, they shoved and strained at the door, hoping against hope that perhaps those assholes had forgotten to lock it, or that sheer force might open it. But it didn't budge.

"Fuck this!" Tig kicked at the door in helpless frustration. "And fuck that bastard Laroy. If I get my hands on him—." He suddenly realized Kozik was no longer at his side but had disappeared among the carcasses. Looking for another way out, Tig hoped.

A muttered curse sounded from somewhere among the pigs. Then Kozik's voice drifted over. "Hey, Tig? Think I found Dent."

"What're you talking about?" Tig fought his way through the rows of meat slabs toward where he'd heard Koz's voice coming from. As Tig reached him, Kozik pointed toward a slumped figure huddled in on itself in a corner. It was covered in a thin layer of white frosting. Tig nudged at it with his toe and the figure fell over with a thud: frozen stiff. "Jesus."

The body was dressed in baggy jeans and sneakers, and wearing a faded sweatshirt that proclaimed N.W.A. in stylized letters. The guy was also black.

"What's that mean?" Tig jerked his head at the sweatshirt.

Kozik rolled a shoulder. "Dunno. Some hiphop thing, I think."

"Hmph." They stared down at the frozen Omar Dent for a few seconds. "C'mon," Tig broke the silence. "We gotta find a way outta here. Before we end up like igloo man here."

But all their efforts to open the door remained in vain. A tour of the rest of the freezer room showed no other means of breaking out. No other doors, no windows. And the climate control air ducts were far too small for either of them to achieve anything more than freezing to death while stuck in a narrow tube instead of locked up in the room. They were well and truly fucked.

Tig tried his phone again. As before, the display flashed *No service*. He swore. Reception had been spotty even outside the complex: the reason his call to Clay to let him know they'd arrived at the plant had been cut short. Now the freezer's steel walls and the concrete of the building surrounding it were blocking any chance of a signal going through.

Rhythmic clacking distracted Tig from trying to dial out. He glanced up. "Will you fuckin' stop that?"

"C-can't", Kozik chattered, teeth clicking together. He was hunched over, shivering, his skin pale under the cool light of the fluorescents. The tribal tattoos on his arms stood out in stark contrast.

"Why the hell didn't you put on some more clothes?" Tig demanded, already unzipping his own hoodie. Admittedly, he'd only thrown on the extra layer at the last minute, after recalling Oaktown sometimes got hit by cold fog from the ocean even when Charming was still hot as a whore's cunt.

"D-didn't expect to be s-stuffed in a f-freezer." Kozik glared back at Tig unhappily. He gratefully accepted the hoodie Tig thrust at him, shrugged out of his cut, put on the hoodie and then put the cut back on over it.

Before he'd finished, Tig had started shivering himself, the cold quickly penetrating his T-shirt, with his leather cut doing little to keep him warm. He slapped his arms around a few times, before stuffing his hands under his armpits to keep them warm.

"We gotta find some more stuff to put on," Kozik suggested. He was no longer shivering so badly.

"Like what?" Tig wanted to know. "Pig carcasses?"

He received another glare, but Kozik didn't say anything in response to his sarcasm. He simply walked off among the meat slabs again. A few minutes later, he returned, something black and limp draped over his arm. He held it out to Tig. "Here."

Tig took the object and shook it out. "Where—?" His eyes widened as his gaze landed on the letters printed on the front: *N.W.A.* "Christ."

Kozik shrugged. "Asshole back there doesn't need it."

Tig hesitated a moment longer but then: *Fuck it*, he thought. What did he care where the sweatshirt came from?

Feeling a little warmer once he'd shrugged it on, he also grew a bit more optimistic about their chances of getting out of this alive. "Clay'll send someone out," he assured Koz—or maybe himself. "We'll hold out till then."

But more and more time passed, and gradually the frigid air around them seeped through the cotton of the sweatshirts, through the denim of their jeans, even through the soles of their boots, until Tig could no longer feel his toes.

Every once in a while, one or the other would poke listlessly at the door or make another round of the room, as if expecting an escape route to have appeared magically while they weren't watching. Most of the time, there was nothing to do but sit and wait, making themselves comfortable—well, as comfortable as could be with silent, dead pigs hanging over their heads and the ground like ice under their asses—as far from Dent's corpse as possible. They exhausted Tig's lighter, using the small flame to warm their hands. Then some matches Koz discovered in his back pocket. Until the last match had fluttered out, taking its tiny granule of heat with it.

They met each others eyes, briefly. Koz looked down. "If you make it and I don't—," he began.

"Shut the fuck up," Tig broke in. "We ain't gonna die." No way was he gonna end up like one of those pigs: a frozen corpsicle ready to be cut up.

They were silent for another ten minutes—or perhaps it was an hour. Tig didn't check on his watch. "Think Bobby'll look after Missy?" he asked quietly. If the guys didn't come soon.... They had maybe a few hours left. Definitely not enough to be able to hold out until Monday morning and the start of a new work shift.

Kozik huffed a rueful laugh. "Hope not. He'd just gonna feed her donuts until she's as fat as he is."

Tig snorted in amused agreement.

"Hap'll do it," Kozik said, sounding confident. "She likes him."

Tig let out another snort. "Bitch likes everyone."

They sank into silence again, the heavy quiet broken only by the chattering of their teeth and the soft hum of whatever system was keeping the temperature below freezing. By now, Tig was shivering so violently it hurt. Christ, he'd never complain about it being hot ever again, no matter if the temperature got into triple digits for every day of the rest of his life—though that was assuming it would last beyond the next couple hours.

"Tig...?" Kozik's voice was hesitant.

"What?" Tig slowly turned his head to look at him. He was sitting against the wall next to Tig, knees drawn up to his chest, arms hugged tightly around them, his posture a mirror of Tig's own. It was the only way to keep some heat in, even if it wouldn't be enough.

Kozik cleared his throat. "I think there's one other way we can stay warm for a little longer."

Tig arched an eyebrow, at first not understanding. Then it dawned on him what Kozik was suggesting. "Fuck, no." He shot up straight. He might have a few appetites that most people would consider weird kinks. Might fuck one, two, three women at a time without batting an eye. Hell, didn't even much care if they were still breathing. But this? Fucking hell, *no*. For starters, Koz was a *guy*. And he was *Kozik*. And a sworn brother. And—.

"Tig." Kozik had also gotten to his feet, spreading his hands, pleading. "C'mon." He cocked his head. "You wanna see your girls again, don't ya?"

"Christ, dude." To Tig's horror, his voice caught. Must be the cold interfering with his vocal chords, he decided. "That's a low fucking blow."

Kozik shrugged. "Maybe. But I don't wanna die in here. Not like," he jerked his head toward the far corner, "not like dickhead over there. And neither do you."

Tig puffed out a breath that plumed white in front of his face. Kozik was right about that: he didn't want to die. He wanted to see his girls grow up. Wanted to ride his bike again. Break the speed limit on I-5 with his brothers. Maybe get to Sturgis some day. Wanted, more than anything, to have a chance to stuff Slick into a freezer of his own.

"Okay." He nodded reluctantly, before muttering under his breath, "Christ, can't believe I'm agreeing to this." He glanced up at Kozik. "How—?"

Kozik looked uncertain for a moment. He hadn't quite thought things through, it seemed. "You strip," he suggested at last. "Cut, sweater." As Tig began to comply, grumbling, Kozik sat back down, leaning against the wall, unzipping the hoodie he'd borrowed from Tig. "Then sit here."

A few minutes later, after much awkward wriggling and a lot of muttered invectives, they were spooned together: Tig rested between Kozik's drawn up legs, his bare back against Kozik's naked chest, the sweater they'd taken from the frozen corpse tucked tightly around both of them, along with his cut. Glancing down, Tig could see the upside down reaper grinning up at him, before Kozik wrapped his arms around him, tugging him even closer.

They sat like that for a long time. Tig dozed, feeling warmer than at any time since they'd been shoved into the freezer. Behind him, he felt the occasional shiver run through Kozik. Koz would have it harder, of course, with the steel wall at his back. Maybe, Tig mused sleepily, they should switch places. But not yet.

Then, just as he was about to drift off for real, something nudged at the edge of his perception, bringing him back to full alert. He pricked up his ears, wondering at first if it was his imagination, the cold addling his senses. But no, there it was again.

"Koz...!" He untangled himself from Kozik's stiff arms. Kozik blinked up at him, his expression dazed.

"Wha—?"

"Hear that?" Tig cocked his head. Yes, he'd heard right, though it was so faint he could still only half believe he could really hear it: the prattle of motorcycle engines. Harleys. And more than one, too. "Boys are here."

As the bikes came closer, the noise grew louder, loud enough that Kozik acknowledged with a nod of the head that he heard it too. Tig began to scramble back into his clothes, while Kozik got stiffly to his feet.

"We gotta make some sound." Kozik swiveled his head around, looking for some way to put his suggestion into action. "Let them know we're here." He pointed. "The hooks."

A few minutes later, they were drumming a rhythm on the steel doors, hitting it hard enough to make the entire freezer quiver with the vibrations. Three rapid hits, three slow, then three rapid again: S O S. Oldest warning system in the world.

And still effective, too. Not much more than five minutes later, the door shook as someone tugged on it from outside, until finally it sucked free from its rubber seal with an obscene smack. Backlit by the light from the hallway, familiar shadows fell in: Clay, Bobby, Chibs, the rest of the guys.

"Jesus Christ," Clay spat, looking them up and down. "What the fuck're you two doin' in there?"

Tig shook his head. "Long story. Tell you later."

"Can't wait to hear it." Clay smirked, before stepping aside, giving them room to walk out.

The air in the hallway felt positively hot compared to the inside of the freezer as Tig stumbled along after his brothers. He rubbed his hands together and flexed his toes inside his boots as he walked, until he felt like a man again and not a half-frozen slab of meat. By the time they reached the door to the outside, he was more than ready to shrug out of the borrowed sweatshirt and drop it on the floor.

More good news: their hogs still stood right where they'd left them. At least that asshole hadn't messed with them, Tig thought grimly.

Straddling the saddle next to Kozik, taking comfort in the familiar feel of the bike between his legs, Tig leaned over and whispered, "Not a word to anyone, you hear? I'll skin you alive."

The corner of Kozik's mouth twitched, but he nodded. "Not a word." Then he grinned and gestured: "Cross my heart and hope to die." Chuckling to himself, he fired up the engine. Tig glowered at him, but he couldn't keep up the glare. He was too happy they'd made it out alive.

And if, afterwards, he sometimes remembered the meat locker as he watched Kozik train in the ring, remembered the feel of Koz's chest against his back? Well, nobody had to know about that, did they?

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