

“A broken tooth. That’s got to be it.”

I squirmed my tongue around my mouth to the source of the pain. The taste of blood hit my pallet.

“That dude got a good shot at me. No one has ever gotten that close before.”

I had taken off the rest of my outfit. The only thing left was the helmet. Damn thing never came off properly. I pulled the latch that kept the whole mechanism in place and after some awkward maneuvering I was finally able to take it off. I pulled back the ski mask I wore underneath and let the cool air hit my face, refreshed after a long and stressful night.

Tonight it was a couple being harassed by some thugs. The guy couldn’t stand his ground and left his girl defenseless. Two weeks ago it was a kid who got trapped under some rubble after playing in a construction zone. No one was watching him. No surprise he got hurt. A month before that a man was getting mugged right in front of his own home. It didn’t take too long to take the mugger down though.

Putting my helmet down, I looked at my desk that had been scattered with a number of newspaper articles which had covered my recent actions. The publishers have dubbed me “Alpha”, which was a very interesting name choice. The term refers to the highest rank an animal can earn among a pack of other animals similar to him. I had expected something a little sillier like “Bi-Claw” or “Wolf Man”, given that what I wear does resemble some form of a wolf. The black shirt I wore with the large paw print on the front a grey coat to overlap it. Plus the steel helmet which took me months to craft into the form of a canine muzzle. Besides the publishers’ coverage, there were public opinions as well. Some called me a

hero which was flattering enough. Others said I was a menace that needed to be dealt with. However, there was something that bothered me quite often. In several of these articles, there would be several opinions complaining that I wasn't doing a good enough job. They said I wasn't there when they needed me no matter how small their trifle was.

"I shouldn't be offended." I thought. "I couldn't be. Everything I was doing was for myself after all, but I can't help but feel irritated. They didn't appreciate a thing."

I moved the articles around to find the note I had been working on. I had planned to send it to the article inquiry tomorrow. They would definitely publish it knowing it was from Alpha himself. It wasn't finished yet but it would perfectly explain how I function in my line of work.

I wrote "To whomever it may concern, I am the man you call Alpha. Some of you have said that what I do isn't enough, that I must be willing to serve all that need me no matter the cost. Please be aware that I'm not super human and it's ridiculous to think that I am. My actions are my own and can't be taken advantage of by anyone. Policemen and firefighters take the same actions I make but not for free. Therefore I'm not obligated to do what I need to do for nothing. I help those I can in the moment and work for those who are willing to pay. Please understand that I try to help all who need me but I can't save everyone."

That was what I had so far. It was good but not enough to express how I really felt. I needed something more, something anyone can understand. My tooth continued to hurt. I put my thumb in my mouth and pushed against it. The pain was bad. I pulled out immediately and looked at my thumb which was wet with saliva and blood. I rolled my index finger against my thumb giving a very smooth sensation between the both of them. That's when it came to me. I looked back at the note but felt my eyes weighting down. It was late. It has been a long night. I stood up and headed towards my bed room.

I'll write what's left tomorrow morning and send it as soon as I can. I knew what to say and it struck me, as will it strike those who question what I do and why.

"You call me Alpha. High ranked, flawless. But no matter what you say, it will always come to light that I am flawed and it's a flaw we all share. I am not a wolf, but only human."