

Superhero Tails
by Christian O'Kane

Sometimes life can be so unfair. Three months in basic and advanced training, jump school, surviving ranger training. Six tours in Iraq, Afghanistan and Kuwait. Tours in Kenya, Germany, Panama. Missions into Iran, Somalia, Ethiopia, Columbia and Ecuador. Wounded twelve times decorated and promotion to staff sergeant. And with all that what did he have to show for it in the press? A one line mention in his home town newspaper. "Private Misha Brightleaf graduates from Basic training."

Some idiot dresses up in freaky colored spandex tights and leather boots and they get the front page of the papers and make the five o'clock news. Never mind the four days he spent on that damn hill in Afghanistan. That never even made the news. What did? One woman wearing lime green armor (LIME GREEN) and a hula skirt fought some shaggy, vaguely manshaped thing called The Furball. The commentator treated the whole fight like a football game. To the soldier it looked more like a really strange professional wrestling match.

Misha found himself slowly wandering the streets of Paragon city thinking about such things. He had come back from Afghanistan missing his left leg. It had taken months for the doctors to regrow his leg and heal all his other wounds.

Misha was used to seeing all sorts of strange sights but even he was surprised when he turned a corner and came upon a werewolf mugging a bus. At least it looked like that at first glance. Intrigued he stepped closer.

The figure was huge at least seven feet tall. He body was covered with thick fur and he had the head and tail of a wolf. His legs had the odd bend of digitigrade and ended in large paws instead of feet. Misha had seen werewolves before. A small population of them had been in Paragon city since it had been founded. He had even made friends with one in the rangers. Sergeant Hollfelder was a good friend and a werewolf. On a mission in Somalia he had shifted to his wereform in the middle of an ambush and the Somali's had fled in a panic.

But this werewolf was not like any he had seen before. His fur had a metallic sheen to it and beneath that was metal not skin! From his back sprouted a pair of metal and plastic wings that seemed more appropriate for a jet fighter then a living creature.

The creature was in front of a bus that was lying on its side partially crushing a small car. Without any real difficult the werewolf picked up one side of the bus and righted it gently. Then he started to pull the bus apart to get to the people trapped inside.

Misha deftly leapt through a large rent in the bus the werewolf had made. He saw people of all ages and both genders scattered about. He knelt next to an older woman whose leg was covered in blood. "Relax you're in good hands now."

"So you've done this before?" the woman asked through gritted teeth.

Misha nodded as he checked her leg. "Oh yes but usually people are shooting at me. This is a nice, quiet change of pace!"

The woman gave a faint smile and laughed. "Glad you are enjoying this."

"I'm not enjoying this," he answered without looking up from her wounds. "This is one of my jobs and I'm good at it."

"I thought soldiers like you only knew how to kill people," the woman said.

"We do a lot of things." Misha reached around and opened the small haversack that he always wore. From it he produced some bandages a large metal tube like a tube of toothpaste and a small squirt bottle filled with water. He squirted the water on the wound cleaning away the dirt and dried blood.

"You have a really good cut there but nothing serious but the leg is broken in at least two places."

A fire rescue truck and two police cars arrived and Fire and police emergency people swarmed over both wrecks. A pair of fireman came flying out and ran over to where Misha and the woman were. "Her leg is broken in two places between the knee and ankle. She has a bad laceration on her leg but the breaks are the worst injury."

"You are?" one of the fireman asked as the other knelt by the woman.

"Staff sergeant Misha Brightleaf," he answered. "And I am EMT qualified."

The fireman smiled. "Good. Are you hurt?" he asked.

"No," Misha answered and shook his head. "The blood is all hers."

Nearby stood the werewolf. He was carefully watching the soldier as he worked. In his head voices spoke. he was not insane as these voices were real. *"Accessing data on Brightleaf, Misha. Rank: E5, Staff sergeant. Assignment: B company, 3rd battalion, 75th ranger regiment. Presently on medical leave."*

"Impressive military record! He's been all over the world! A very impressive list of skills."

"Recommendation?"

"Use him! If he does not want the changes we need to download his skills and knowledge for use other times."

"Agreed. I'll make the initial contact," Rawr said.

Misha was carefully placing the remainder of his medical supplies back into his haversack when a large shadow fell over him.

"Good afternoon!" a deep, guttural voice growled.

He turned around and found himself looking into a wall of dark, gray fur. He looked up, way up and found the werewolf looking down at him.

"Hello! Sir." he said trying to remain calm.

"Call me Rawr," the werewolf said.

"Rawr?"

"It's my nickname," the lycanthrope answered.

"Wow, you're a big one," Misha commented. And he was big. This creature had to stand at least seven feet tall and weight over one thousand pounds. It seemed to be a human/wolf mix. It stood on two legs and had two arms like a man but that was where the resemblance ended. It's legs had the usual extra joint of a wolf called digitigrade and ended in large paws. He had a wolf's head and a long bushy tail. The entire massive body was covered in a wolf's thick gray fur. Misha had already seen that much of Rawr before. Being this close to a werewolf was unusual but Misha had been this close to a werewolf before but that time the lycanthrope had been a friend and fellow soldier. He looked more closely at this werewolf and noticed some things really odd. The fur looked normal but it had a definite metallic sheen to it. And the muzzle was filled with teeth that were gray, the color of metal. And the wolf's eyes had a red, red, laser like glow that made the soldier shiver. And there were those wings. They really were his and growing from his body.

"Thank you. I think," the odd werewolf answered in a voice that was too calm and cultured for something so feral looking. "You like my new body?"

"You're not a normal werewolf," Misha stated flatly.

The werewolf gave a yip of laughter. "No I'm not. It has been vastly improved," Rawr explained.

"Magic?" the soldier asked. "Somehow I do not think you used magic."

"Nanite technology."

"Nanites?" the sergeant asked. "The little machines? The microscopic machines?"

The massive werewolf nodded slowly. "Yes but they are infinitely more complex and advanced than simple machines." he paused for a moment. "Misha. Have you ever considered being a superhero?" Rawr asked.

"Me? A superhero? You mean run around in tights and wearing silly costumes?"

"Am I wearing tights or a silly costume?" the werewolf asked.

Rawr had a point. Except for a loincloth of some metallic cloth the werewolf was covered only with his natural, thick fur. It was an impressive sight. "These nanites.," Misha said slowly. "They are safe?"

"Completely. I was the first but there have been a few others that the nanites have improved," Rawr answered. "I would not have offered it to anyone if it was dangerous."

"How would they improve me?" Misha asked.

"Improved internal organs, bones that do not break as easily. Under skin armor as well as skin a lot harder to penetrate. Exactly what happens depends on your choices."

Misha did not speak but pondered the idea. "I could get anything? That sounds exciting but I don't like the idea of those little things inside me."

Rawr reached down to the belt holding his loincloth and produced a small, silver colored bottle. "I will not force you to do anything," Rawr said calmly. "If you chose to not take advantage of my little friends all I ask is that you return them to me."

Misha nodded his head. "Fair enough. One question how do I use them if I do decide to use them."

"Simply open the container and swallow the contents. They'll make contact with you and take it from there."

"Then what?" the soldier asked.

"That's for you and them to decide," the werewolf answered.

Misha sat at the table in the kitchen of his hotel room. In front of him on the table was the bottle the werewolf had given him. There was so much power and potential contained in that little bottle. So many dreams could come true but also so many nightmares. What if they made

mistakes, what if they changed him to what they wanted? And what did they want? why were they helping people like this? All those 'evil machines taking over the world' stories he had seen and heard came to mind and laughed. They were all too absurd too really be taken seriously but for a moment the doubt and fear were there. he dismissed them.

Misha had spent the last two days researching that unusual werewolf. His official name was Rawr 2.0 and odd name to be sure but his service record spoke for itself. He had helped defeated several Rikkti incursions and he had a long chain of successes against the mob, several gangs and more then a few villains. There was one item that caught his eye. A battle between a super team and some villains had brought down a building. Rawr had ignored the battle and started rescuing people from the wreckage. One of the villains, a woman in a blue latex suit had attacked him throwing razor sharp shards of ice at the werewolf. Rawr had walking through the ice storm and calmly disemboweled the woman. Then he turned and went back to his rescue work. Even the super team members called him a hero after that.

Misha had no fear that the nanites were following some evil agenda. Rawr's actions had shown him that much. So why was he hesitating? He picked up the bottle and held it up and looked at it. Did he really want to change? Radically alter himself into something else? And if he did change himself what would he change and what would he keep? Well for one he could make himself bulletproof. No more taking an AK round through the arm or chest.

Misha removed the top from the bottle and looked inside. All he saw was a sliver liquid that smelled faintly of chocolate chip cookies. He took a deep breath and quickly swallowed down the entire contents.

"Insertion successful!"

"FINALLY! That bottle was boring!"

"Oh! This one is in fine shape! No extraneous fat, even his cholesterol levels are good."

"Thank you," Misha answered the voices speaking in his mind. "I do exercise regularly."

"It does seem a little battered. There are thirteen different wounds that were inflicted by violence."

"Twelve," Misha corrected. "I fell out of a tree when I was ten. Broke my arm."

"We know that. We have access to all your memories."

"You have led an exciting life!"

"Thank you," he said unsure of what else to say. "I think."

"Your military skills are impressive, no need to improve them."

"Improve them? You can change my skills?" Misha asked. Both excited and afraid the concept being used on him.

"Oh yes! We have safely filed all the skills and information we gained from all we come in contact with."

"Then you could give me a skill in a weapon I've never held before?" he asked.

"Yes, of course it would require a good amount of practice to really become proficient with it. Data transfer does have its limits and the new skills must be adapted to the new user."

"That makes sense," he commented. "Practice makes perfect."

"What skills do you want?"

"What improvements do you want? You do not want to keep that boring form?"

"What's wrong with this body?" Misha asked. "I've had it my whole life."

"An animal/human hybrid would be the best. Mixing the best of two or more species."

"What species to use? Something new and bold! Perhaps we could use a leopard base?"

"The felines excellent hearing and smell would interact well with his skills as a ranger. Besides spots are so bold and innovative. They are a statement - Watch out world!"

"We have been watching those fashion shows again."

"And what is wrong with that? would you rather we use Bugs Bunny for inspiration?"

"Calm down. It's my body. I get to choose. How many species do you have?" the soldier asks. "I know you already have the wolf. Or at least werewolf."

"We have the complete DNA of 32,347 separate species and the partial DNA of 12,172 others."

"Partial DNA?"

"Unfortunately we have been unable to reconstruct the complete DNA of many extinct species."

"At least not yet."

"A sabertooth cat would be interesting!" Misha commented.

"Smiledon fatalis? Now that is a bold choice."

"True but it doesn't feel like my style," Misha answered.

"You already have an idea in mind."

"Yes, yes I do. You mentioned a cartoon character earlier?"

"That was merely a comparison used to confirm my argument!"

Misha laughed. "I know that. But It did give me an idea! You ever watch a Disney movie?"

"ALL of them. Our personal favorite is Ice Age."

"Ice Age was not produced by Disney," Misha countered.

Understood. But we liked the anyway. They are done in the same style that Disney pioneered."

"Mine is Robinhood!"

"You mean the animated film?"

"Of course! Can you see me as Errol Flynn?"

"Vulpes Vulpes, an excellent choice. Sensitive hearing and olfactory senses couples with the reflexes. We will of course include our own improvement replacing muscles with a polymer strands interacting with cellular sized motors. Nervous system will be replaced with a Optican crystal strands increasing reflexes 158%. Calcium based bones will be enhanced with bioplastic increasing their strength 256%. Replacement of skin with a biodurrallloy/polymer alloy that improves defense 347% but retains same flexibility and sense of touch. Built in targeting optics along with long range communications both thought controlled."

"How about flight? I want to be able to fly," Misha asked.

"Insertion of a gravitic module is possible. that will allow suspension off the ground but it will be too small to allow proper forward movement."

"How about wings? It's worked for the birds for several million years."

"What about spinning his tails to provide forward thrust?"

"Spinning my tail like a propeller?" Misha asked. "That sounds awful."

"Why? It uses an already present appendage that is otherwise not of any use. Besides it's worked for Tails in Sonic."

"You mean tails in the Sonic the Hedgehog game?" Misha asked appalled.

"Your inspiration is cartoon movie and you're complaining about OUR idea?"

"Good point but the idea of spinning my tail seems rather silly and kind of obscene."

"All right, we'll go with wings," the voice sounded disappointed.

"Good. But you do have a point about the tail not doing anything. I have a good idea for the tail," Misha said and explained his idea.

"OH! now that is a neat idea. And very tricky. We will add that to the standard upgrades."

"I want to go with archery," Misha explained. "I'm already good with a bow but I'll need to be better."

"Not a problem. We have compared your present skills with those on file and we will improve yours 65%. But intensive practice is recommended."

The sergeant nodded. "Very good. I'm used to lots of practice. About the ammunition I'll use."

"Of course! What good is a super archer with ordinary arrows? Comparisons made of the known super archers has given us a list of twelve possible designs. These heads will all be modular and all heads will fit onto a single design of shaft. First is the ordinary arrow with a plain target head. Second is an armor piercing head which can be fitted to specially reinforced shafts. Third is one with an incendiary head that will burst into flame upon contact. Fourth is an explosive warhead with both time delay and contact detonating. Fifth is a smoke warhead with a range of colors possible. In addition a variety of chemicals can be used including sleep gas and the irritant CS gas. Sixth is a stun arrow with a thick, soft head intended to knock a target down. Seventh is a taser arrow which gives off a burst of electricity. Battery size limits the charge possible. Also available is a glue arrow whose adhesive could clog up machinery and stop or slow down a living target. Also available is a flash warhead giving the equivalent of a military flash grenade. A more deadly alternative head is one containing a small amount of acid. Also we are adapting the charge of a sonic grenade making possible a warhead on an arrow that gives of

a very intense sonic attack. Also in development is a guided arrow that can lock onto a target automatically and steer itself to the most vulnerable point but that is not available just yet."

"You just developed all that?" Misha asked.

"No we have been studying the issue and acquired much of the needed information from available sources."

"Acquired. You mean stole don't you?"

"Stole is such a harsh term. If they had wanted to keep such information secret they should have used far better security."

He laughed. "Great. I'm going to be sued."

"Never we left no traces but it is best to avoid the Super heroine Strella for a few months just to be safe."

"That brings to mind an important question. Is all that information stored with you inside me?" he asked.

"No. We have a safe data storage location."

"Several actually. All of which are secret and are very well defended."

"If you ever need help defending it just call."

"Thank you. I am sure eventually we will have to take you up on that."

"That's what a soldiers job is; defending those who cannot defend themselves."

"That's profound. Are you ready?"

Misha took a deep breath and tried to relax. "Yes!"

"Commence transformation sequence. Now!"

It was a quiet night in Paragon city. Or at least a quiet as it ever gets in a large city. Still crime was down a little and the Rikkti had not raided in several weeks. But this was Paragon City and SOMETHING unusual was always happening. It was just a matter of it not being noticed by anyone yet.

Port Independence was busy, even at this late hour. Ships were always leaving, arriving loading and unloading. And where there is commerce there is crime. The various crime families were always pushing for their cut while trying to keep out everyone else.

Tonight a group of people were clustered around a container. The doors had been opened and boxes of various sizes were being removed and loaded onto a truck. but these men were not regular dock workers. Most were too well dressed to do any manual labor and all of them were heavily armed. Assault rifles, shotguns, submachine guns and all manner of automatic pistols were being wielded about.

The information the nanites had given him was correct. Members of the mob were taking a shipment of smuggled weapons. These weapons could not find their way onto the streets. The police had enough problems without criminals and gang members shooting at them with assault rifles and light machineguns. Misha had to act now.

The first arrow came flying out of the darkness and hit the side of the container. There was a loud explosion and men, tools, weapons and boxes and countless pieces of shrapnel flew in all directions.

"Where did that come from?" a voice roared. The container door was now gone as was a good portion of the container itself. Just twisted, burning wreckage and debris was all that remained. Scattered around the wrecked end of the container was a half dozen bodies.

"WHAT HAPPENED!" A voice roared. Echoed by several others.

Hidden in the deep shadows of a building over one hundred yards away stood a figure. His outline was vaguely human but little else was clear. In his hands was a bow two meters long. "What happened? You should never bunch up in combat," Misha thought to himself. "And now you know why! I learned that the first day in basic training. All those expensive weapons and no combat training or common sense."

He spotted a group of men clustered around an expensive looking SUV. They had assault rifles in hand and were looking all about. He raised his bow and nocked an arrow. Slowly he drew the bow back, the weapons five hundred pound pull weight not bothering him at all. He waited for the right moment and released it. The arrow quietly and almost invisible arced through the air and down into the side of the vehicle, right over the gas tank. There was an explosion and the back of the vehicle went up in flames. Burning gas spread out from the SUV in an ever increasing pool. The flames reached a truck and soon that was ablaze too.

Bullets suddenly ricocheted off the wall around him. Misha muttered a curse and ducked behind the corner of the building as bullets chased after him.

"There he is!" someone shouted.

"Did you get him?" another asked.

Misha leapt into the air as his wings spread out. Beating slowly he gained altitude and flew down the street. He banked sharply around a corner and raced along the street. He turned again and then again. He stopped suddenly hovering some thirty feet off the ground. Half hidden by the corner of the building. Now he was looking at the scene of the fight from a different direction.

Both the truck and SUV were fully alight now and burning brightly in spite of several men with fire extinguishers. Other people were rooting through the wreckage of the container. still others were wildly shooting into the darkness. None of the rounds came close to Misha.

Misha took careful aim at one of the men standing at the edge of the pier. The man looked around at the destruction all around him. Then he slowly backed away. After a moment he turned and ran at full speed away from the fight.

"Smart man," Misha thought to himself. He watched for a few seconds to be sure the man was actually leaving. Then he turned back to the battle and picked another target. This man was not running away but was brandishing about a large shotgun. and shouting orders to all the rest. "This is the leader," he told himself.

Misha reached back over his shoulders to the quiver that was tucked between his wings. His fingers searched among the arrows till he found the right one. No explosive arrow this time. Instead at its tip was a large multi-bladed head of razor sharp metal. He nocked the bow and slowly drew it taught. He saw the man clearly in spite of the darkness. The infrared and low light optics in his eyes made seeing even in total darkness easy. He saw light green numbers dancing across his vision giving him the temperature, wind direction and speed, distance to the target and four other potential targets.

"We have been monitoring police communications. Someone has heard the shooting and explosions and reported it to the police. Already two squad cars are being dispatched to the scene. ETA twelve minutes."

"Faster than I expected."

"The Paragon City police are more efficient then the media gives them credit."

"Do not get me started on the failings of the press. But please hush for a moment. I need to concentrate." Misha carefully aimed making minute adjustments for the wind and temperature. finally at just the right moment he loosed the bow string. He watched the fast moving projectile arc through the air and slowly descend. the man was still shouting orders when the arrow slammed into his head. the mobster tumbled backward, dead before his body hit the pavement.

This had the desired effect. The half dozen remaining mobsters scattered in all directions. any thought of fighting gone. After a few moments he landed in the parking lot and looked around. the only people around him were the dead. Everyone else had fled. Even the wounded were gone. He was the only person left standing. "Cool."

He walked over to the damaged container and looked inside. One end was badly damaged and all he saw unusable wreckage. But the opposite end looked untouched and he was sure the boxes and weapons there had survived. From a pouch he removed a bundle that was wrapped in plastic. Removing the wrapper he revealed the five pounds of C4 explosive in a hard plastic box. He slapped the box against the undamaged end of the container and it remained there after he removed his hand courtesy of the magnets in the container. A few moments work on the fuze set the timer. He spun around and leapt into the air, his wings beating the air and propelling him away from the container. He was safely behind another container when the explosive went off with a roar. Misha was very satisfied to see that the entire container had been destroyed.

Misha flew over the wreckage and debris to another shipping container that rested near to the first one. A few hits with a hammer and the lock shattered. He pulled open one of the doors and looked inside. The soldier pulled down one of the boxes at random and ripped it open. Inside he saw a familiar shape, one he had faced countless times in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. He picked up one of the AK47 assault rifles and examined it even pulling the bolt back to see how well the action worked. He was not impressed. "It's a cheaply made Chinese copy and very poor quality. Bad steel and poor machining, even the stock looks to be the cheapest plastic available," he thought.

"Still in the wrong hands it could see a lot of people killed or wounded," came the answer.
"The entire shipment must be destroyed."

It was his new, enhanced senses that saved him. His vulpine ears picked up the faint whisper of something mechanical behind him. With lightening fast reflexes he ducked low and flung himself out of the container.

ROAR!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

A fusillade of bullets ripped through the container missing the fox by the thinnest of margins.

Misha hit the pavement hard and turned over fast. His bow came up and he snapped off two arrows in the direction the bullets had come from. One of the arrows struck the pavement and exploded throwing asphalt and concrete in all directions.

"You'll have to do better than that!" a voice called out.

Misha didn't bother wasting time standing up. Instead he sprinted across the pavement on all four limbs as bullets flew all around him. He reached the relative safety of a brick wall. Misha listened to the sounds of bullets ricocheting off the bricks and was thankful for his insistence on giving himself the ability to run on all fours.

The archer looked in the direction the voice was coming but didn't see anything. His opponent it seemed was good at throwing his voice and confusing his location. Misha scanned all around him using all his senses both biological and electronic. Finally he located his target. A faint heat source behind an overturned pile of garbage bins. "You talk too much," Misha shouted. "And

you're wasting ammunition." He nocked an arrow and loosed it as fast as possible. Afraid that if he waited he would lose his attacker.

The man dodged sideways as an arrow skittered across the pavement sending sparks in all directions.

Misha caught sight of his attacker then. It was a tall, thin man wearing a pair of jeans, a t-shirt and a cloak. All of black.

"You go out in public in that silly costume?" Misha called out to the figure as he loosed another arrow.

"You're dressed like a Disney character and you call ME silly?" came the reply.

A score of bullets hammered the wall Misha was hiding behind showering him with chips and dust. He kept low to the ground and crawled fast along the wall as the bullets kept hammering the wall behind him. He popped up suddenly and loosed off two arrows and dropped back down behind the wall. Misha quickly hustled away crawling as fast as possible.

BOOM!

The explosion behind him sent the fox flying through the air and he hit the ground hard tumbling over and over till he slammed into something hard.

"MASSIVE DAMAGE!"

"7 ribs, right arm, both legs broken. Right foot badly mangled. Internal injuries. Contusions, punctures, abrasions, bruises. Blood loss. "

Misha felt searing pain lance through his body and he tried to suppress a moan. He tried to get up but his strength fled him and he dropped back to the ground. Without hesitating he grabbed a can shaped grenade from his belt. He pulled the pin and tossed it over his shoulder. It flew a few feet and came to a stop close to him. There was a soft pop and clouds of black smoke bellowed upward from the grenade enveloping him.

Emergency repairs initiated. ETA 2:25 Pain suppression activated. Blood loss stopped. Stabilizing vital signs."

The pain subsided and he managed to turn over and sit up. "Where is he?" he asked.

"45 meters distant on a bearing of 270 degrees. He seems to be unsure of what happened. Most likely he lost sight of you. That smoke grenade is obscuring all vision."

"That's the idea," Misha said slowly. He could feel his innards shifting about and he realized the nanites were fixing him. The fox looked at his right arm which was bent in the wrong place. As he watched the arm straightened out and the cuts on the skin quickly vanished.

"Emergency repairs finished. Please do not let that happen again."

"I do not like being shot," Misha snarled. "But it's one of the parts of being a soldier."

"And a superhero."

"Target is moving towards your location. suggest you move and shoot at him."

"I'm tired of all this dodging and racing around. This ends now," Misha said and stood up in plain view.

His opponent was about twenty feet away with a small gatling gun cradled in his hands. There was a look of surprise on his face.

Misha reached for an arrow but his hand felt only an empty quiver. He looked up to see the three ends of a mini gatling gun starting to rotate... but nothing happened.

"Oh you've got to be kidding. This is like a scene in a bad movie." Misha muttered and reached for a knife.

The human looked at his spent mini gun for a moment and cursed under his breath. Then he threw it at the fox.

Misha dodged the awkward projectile easily and rushed straight at his opponent. He sprinted across the open ground between them at surprising speed. He jabbed hard at the man aiming for his stomach.

The man lashed out with his hands and knocked the blade from Misha's hand. The fox leapt backward barely avoiding a roundhouse kick to the face.

"Stupid fox, why don't put on your tights and go run around Sherwood!"

"Idiot! The fox Robin Hood didn't even wear pants!" Misha growled.

"I'm glad you do," the man shouted. "Do not want to see your naughty bits hanging out."

"You pervert!" Misha snarled. He lashed out remembering all the training he'd had over the years in hand to hand combat. His legs and arms moved with lightening speed.

The man jumped over the flying legs and blocked both of the fox's arms with ease. Then he lunged forward to deliver the killing stoke. Misha leaped up into the air and spun around. The human caught sight of Misha's tail swinging towards him.

WHAM! the vulpine's tail hit him on the side of the face with all the power of freight train. There was a bright flash and a surge of electricity surged through his body. The man's body flew

backed and slammed into a brick wall. He fell to the ground as bricks and debris rained down on him.

The man slowly stood up, shaking off the debris and dust that covered him.

"Why aren't you dead?" Misha growled.

The man stuck out his tongue at the fox and made an obscene gesture. "It takes more than a few arrows to kill me Pops."

Misha took a deep breath and prepared to rush his enemy and finish this fight once and for all. He saw his enemy tense and ball his hands into a fist.

"WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU TWO IDIOTS DOING?" a voice boomed.

Both figures turned at the same time in the direction of the voice. Standing next to a police car was a pair of police officers. One was crouched down behind the hood with his pistol aimed at the two fighters. The second was standing in plain sight with his hands on his hips and an irate look on his face.

The fight came to a sudden halt as the two combatants looked at the police officer.

"All right you two. Stop all this idiotic fighting. You're messing up my neighborhood," the irate officer ordered. "Produce your Superhero registration ID card."

Misha reached into a pouch attached to his belt and produced a small, plastic card. He looked at his opponent and saw that he had also produced a similar card. The two looked at each other for a moment.

"Oh shit," the both said at the same time.

PCPD 17th precinct

"Mom was right. I should have been a fireman," Sergeant Lincoln mumbled to himself. Being a sergeant in the police department was never an easy thing. The full moon always brought out the worst and weirdest. In a city filled with bizarre gangs and Super Heroes and super villains things could get VERY weird. Tonight was no different unfortunately. First in was ten gang members, their clothing was ripped and tattered and all had some injury. Another nine had been transported straight to the hospital. Those were not his worry, at least not at this moment. He did have to dispatch officers to guard all those people as even badly hurt they were still dangerous.

But those mundane criminals were the least of his worries tonight. No sooner had those gangsters been processed then two figures came in escorted by a pair of officers. The first one

was a man wearing a t-shirt, jeans and a cape all colored black, even his sneakers. The other figure was even stranger. He had the head of a fox and was dressed to tail in camouflaged clothing. In his hands was a bow that was as tall as he was. These two strange arrivals were arguing loudly.

"THIS IS YOUR FAULT!" the fox snarled revealing a muzzle filled with sharp, metal teeth.

"MY FAULT? You were the one stealing from a cargo container," the man answered.

"Stealing? I was destroying an arms shipment!"

"Bah! Covering your tracks!"

"It was a shipment of assault rifles and light machine guns.," Misha argued. "I had to destroy them to keep those mobsters from selling them."

"Is that so? You had to stop the mob? You're not a cop!" the man said calmly..

"Neither are you," Misha countered.

"But I am," Sergeant Lincoln said calmly interrupting them both.

Misha turned to the policeman and stiffened. "Sir. I am a fully registered superhero and was attacked by that criminal." He pointed to the black dressed man.

The man opened his mouth to speak but the policeman next to him interrupted him.

"They are both registered supers," the cop said and handed two ID cards to the sergeant.

Lincoln looked at the two ID's for a moment.

"Sir . . ." Misha started.

"Hush," Lincoln ordered.

"He . . ." the black drabbed man said pointing to the fox.

"Shut up!" Lincoln snapped.

"Misha," the policeman said.

"That's me sir!" the fox answered. "Misha Brightleaf."

Lincoln looked to the black clothed man. "So that makes you Stealth."

"Yes!" the man announced proudly.

"Which one of you trashed the containers?" the sergeant asked.

"Me!" Misha answered. "They were filled with assault rifles and light machineguns. They had to be destroyed before they go to the streets."

"I see," Lincoln commented in a dry tone. He made some notes on the computer next to him. "So who sank the boat?"

"ME!" stealth answered.

"Boat? Boat? Where was that?"

"Where do you usually find a boat?" Stealth answered sarcastically. "In the water."

"So you admit that sank it?" Lincoln asked.

Stealth nodded. "With my little gatling gun."

"I didn't hear you shooting at the boat. I didn't hear any gatling gun until you started shooting at me."

"Well if you hadn't been flying around imitating Errol Flynn with that silly bow you might have seen me sink it."

"Where did you get that gatling gun?" Misha asked.

"I... confiscated it," Stealth answered hesitantly.

"You mean you stole it. Do you have a license for it?"

"No but the guy I 'confiscated' it from didn't either."

Misha nodded his head. "So they guy you stole it from stole it from someone else. Probably the military."

"Not any local military and not any time recently."

"Enough of your bickering," the officer ordered. "Explain to me what you were both doing there? What were you after?"

"The arms shipment," both stealth and Misha answered at the same time.

"I've served in Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. I knew what those weapons can do. the havoc and chaos they can cause. When I got a tip on the shipment I immediately acted on it."

Lincoln nodded his head. "I see. You really should have gone with backup." He did not ask the fox where he got the tip. Such information was best kept secret. After all the contact gave the fox one good tip perhaps he would get more. "And when exactly when were you going to call the police or did you intend to take all nineteen into custody by yourself?"

"Ah . . ." Misha stuttered. "Well. I wanted to be sure the area was secure first."

"I see," the sergeant commented in a monotone. "This your first night as a super?"

"Sir!" Misha said in an indignant tone. "I've been in combat before."

"I know. But this is your first night as a super," Lincoln countered interrupting the fox. "Don't bother denying it. This card says you registered as a Super this morning!"

"Oh, yes sir," Misha answered in a whisper.

Sergeant Lincoln pointed to Stealth. "And what's YOUR story. Your card says you registered last month."

"I've been tracking down that arms shipment for a month. Working leads and taking out all sorts of smuggled stuff. TV's, car tires, even sneakers. Last night I stopped a shipment of heroin."

Misha ears perked up and his tail wagged. "You're the one who stopped that heroin shipment?"

Stealth nodded in answer.

The vulpine patted stealth on the back. "Nicely done!"

The human stuttered for a moment, "Uh, thank you!"

"So you will both get credit for destroying that arms shipment. So how are you going to divide the reward?"

Both supers turned to the sergeant and spoke at the same time. "Reward?"

The two Supers stood outside the police station. Dawn had arrived and the sun was just starting to poke over the tops of the buildings. "Well it's nice to have some money for a change. Superheroes don't get paid well," Stealth commented.

"Neither do soldiers, but it was never about the money," Misha countered.

Stealth shook his head. "No, no it wasn't."

"What's your favorite animal?" Misha asked suddenly.

"Ah," Stealth answered slowly. "A cheetah. Why?"

"How would you like to be one? Well at least partially."

End?