

Chapter 3 : What are friends for? :

He stood there in the doorway, green eyes looking at the wolf and tiger standing before himself. "It's still ironic that you are a wolf, and your name is Wolfard you know." Leaning to the side to look past the Grey wolf, he'd eye the larger tiger just behind him. "Hey there Fangmeyer I see you were dragged all the way out here to the boonies as well." He left the door open, turning and going back to his kitchen. "Come on in you two, can fill me in on how exactly you found me."

Nick had done his best to make sure he wouldn't be found, even now expecting that anyone would have given up the search for a missing Fox. But it wasn't the first time he'd been surprised by things in his life, he doubted it would be the last either with all things considered.

Seeing the wolf and tiger brought back a new fear to his mind, of Judy the bunny he adored beyond reason and what he had done to her. He had even done well enough that Judy up to that point, and Mr.Big hadn't been able to find him. The only two creatures that knew he was alive at the very least, was his mother and his dear friend Finick but both of which didn't have a location for him.

The small sheep slammed down the phone, huffing as she shuffled away from it and to the security guard nearby. "I'm finished and ready to go back to my cell". She said quite coldly, eyeing the tiger with disinterest in her eyes. Bellwether was motioned through the gate like door, followed closely by the larger Predator as he guided her back to her cell.

It was no secret that she was disliked by every predator within prison, the guards themselves were not the problem. She had made an enemy out of every predator from the moment they found out that she, a sheep had been master minding a plan that could jeopardize their very lives, or even the lives of loved ones and friends on the outside. It hadn't helped that a good portion of prey did not agree with her, or her methods of hurting predators.

The good side to what she had done, at least in her own eyes came about with sympathizers to what she'd been attempting. Having grown contacts on the outside, with the help of Doug continuing the operation more discreetly than before. The downfall to her plan, came with what she had heard from her recent call out, that good side of things came crashing down quickly.

"Get in your cell..." The guard nudging her back into the cell.

Shaken from her thoughts as she felt the nudge, she stepped forwards and past the cell door. Brushing out the orange jumpsuit, she turned to glare back as the tiger turned and went back to do his checks. Moving to sit on her bunk, her mind wandering back to the phone call she'd just had. – Bellwether... wool face! Wonderful to hear from you, seeing how you messed up the plans before, as your backers... we have found you to be less than desirable for your abilities. –

Sitting on the small cot like bed, she knew what the words meant with every bit of weight they carried. Even if the one on the other end of the phone sounded cheery saying then, she had a new dread wash over her. “Oh, Mutton chops... they’re going to come for me. I need to fix this somehow...” Left to her thoughts despite the other inmates’ banter from their own cells, she began to think and to process what she would need to do. The plan she was forming though was taking shape quickly enough, not only for revenge as she’d have to get that fox and bunny out of the picture first.

She spent much of the evening planning, working out details for what she needed to get done while stuck where she was. The next day when allowed out for access to the library, yard and other facilities, she would make way to place another phone call. The same guard from the day before, a large tiger of which she never cared to know had led her to the phone. Her call would quick, and to the point as she dialed out, her call going to muzzle-mail as expected. “Ensure that the two packages are delivered on time, I’m expecting fresh Blueberries.”

With her call completed she hung up the phone and turned back to the guard, she put on the fakest smile she could and looking at him. “I’d like to go back to the library please.” She noted the odd look on the guards’ face, but he shrugged before opening the gated door and leading her back out and towards the library as requested.

Doug came back from the lab to find he had a message, the flashing light on the simple desk phone flashing lightly. He knew the only one who would have left a message could be, after all Bellwether was the only one who had the number and even it was unlisted. Picking up the receiver and tapping in the phones number, he’d tap the pound key and another four digits to dial into the muzzle-mail.

- Ensure that the two packages are delivered on time, I’m expecting fresh Blueberries.-

It was a simple message but one that he understood, though Doug still wasn’t entirely sure why she chose to refer to the fox and bunny as blueberries, he had a goal for the time being until the time he’d receive another call. “She expects us to mess with those two again, the new serum isn’t even fully ready yet...”

He wasn’t entirely happy about the news, but would do as told for the ewe he loved and to get back at the ZPD for how things ended up. He needed to get Woolter and Jesse up to speed again, lucky enough that they could get out of jail quick enough. He would set the receiver down to only pick it up and make another few calls, one to the lab he’d managed to set up and continue his own work with the Midnicampum Holicithias. His serum refinement had continued, even after the original lab had been destroyed, that was a blessing and a curse to the whole operation though.

The next day Dawn Bellwether waiting in line for her lunch as she had any other day in prison, shuffling along as her mind continued to work on the new plan. She would bump into a bison just in front of herself, letting off a soft oof in the process. “Excuse you, keep the line moving please. Let’s maintain some sort of efficiency.”

That same bison would let out a low grunt, glancing down and behind himself at the small sheep. A dark grin crossing his muzzle, he turned more towards her. “Yer that pred hater, aint-cha... chu gone back up them words?” Reaching a large cloven hooved paw down to ruffle the wool atop her head, he’d turn from her to grab his tray chuckling as he went.

Eyeing the beast as he turned to her, Dawn noticed a scar across the bison's head. Her eyes studied him as she didn't pay any mind to his words, if anything she wondered if he'd do well as hired muscle once she was out of prison. Stepping forward when he turned away, taking her own tray as she eyed the pitiful looking meal as they called it. She'd pick up a spoon as she tested the schlop, sighing noticeably to the kitchen staff. "I doubt it would break the budget, to get some real greens here" She did remember the budgets for most of the programs that had been set up in the city, but she had little information to go on with the new Mayor that had replaced her and what he was up to.

Passing by the other inmates, she made her way through the cafeteria and to a smaller prey table. Only seeing it as that since only the smaller prey made use of it, keeping themselves separated from the larger predators. As she crossed the clean white tile floor, stopping at the mostly empty table to sit. The bull green coloring of which might have reminded some, that grass and things of the like were not in their futures. "Can't keep my health up if I don't eat I suppose." Picking up a spoonful of the brownish orange colored food, she glanced around but seemed to ignore for all purposes. She'd take a bite with a soft grimace to her face, the slightly bitter aftertaste caught her off guard even as she'd swallowed though it dawned on her "Oh mutton-" "The tingle along her throat told her all she needed to know, her body growing numb quickly."

The Zootopia News Network came on the air, the familiar news Anchors a Snow leopard and a Caribou on the air. "Breaking news, former mayor Dawn Bellwether. Mastermind behind the Night Howler attacks, was pronounced dead in prison today. Autopsy reports have yet to be released, a statement though from the prison Warden Byerson did state that no one else was harmed during the incident. We will have more tonight at 9." The ZPD was on notice due to the incident, their own investigators taking part to find out what really happened.

Back at the ZPD they had plenty on their plates to worry about already, that evening there had been an attack on two of their officers. Both of which were in the hospital and both were in a tough spot themselves, there was no telling exactly what happened but the Chief knew they had to be connected somehow. It was far too much of a coincidence that Bellwether was simply found dead in prison, but because of the connection between her as well as Hopps and Wilde the ZBI was getting deeply involved.

The Chubby cheetah sat behind the main desk, watching as equipment was brought into the ZPD. They were taking over the entire Precinct at the moment, there had to be something big going on that they already had information on. Benjamin had to guess it was due in part, to the news of Bellwether's death at the very least. But his thoughts kept drifting back to Judy and Nick, both in the hospital but he wasn't allowed to visit either of them yet. "Ohh! Maybe I'll get some more time off." He perked up at the possibility, he'd be able to at the very least try and visit Judy and Nick.

"Officer... Clawhauser is it?" A voice carrying over the desk to the cheetah officer, a very feminine voice that he'd never been familiar with called out. The one peering toward the edge of the desk as the cheetah looked back, had a stern look on her dark furred features despite her pink nose twitching a little.

The gasp from the cheetah though drew a heavy sigh from her lips, green eyes shutting a moment as she raised a paw. “Shhh.. please don’t, I don’t want to hear the C-word...” The black furred bunny seemed to relax a bit when Clawhauser calmed down quickly enough, her ears had a bit of white at the tips alone, and her tail was just a bit larger than some normal bunnies, her paws were brought up to adjust her grey suit before continuing.

“I am agent Winters, Olivia Winters... I’d like all the original case files for the Night Howler case, as well as the files on the Officers that handled the original case and anyone else involved with it. Please see that it’s delivered to our temporary office down the hall, also... I appreciate your refrain from calling me cute.”

Turning from the cheetah who stood there in slightly stunned silence, she headed past the main desk and through the precinct. Getting her fair share of looks from the other officers, even Clawhauser himself stepping around to watch her walk away.

It had been two weeks since the ZBI had set up shop at the precinct, and for the most part operations continued as normal. Clawhauser had managed to get permission to visit both Judy and Nick, he wanted to let them know about Bellwether if they hadn’t heard yet, and catch them both up on the current investigation. “Ohh I know, I should pick up some donuts for them!” just the thought of stopping by his favorite donut shop put him in a good mood, even more that he’d be able to share the delectable treats with his friends.

“Ah... Clawhauser, just the mammal I wanted to see.” That calm feminine voice called out, the more familiar bunny making her way from the ZBI’s makeshift office. Today it seemed she was wearing what could be the only outfit she had, a simple grey suit that didn’t really do much for her. “I heard you were going to see Office Hopps and Wilde today, I’d like to ask you not to tell them about the investigation. They are part of it after all, and I’d prefer no possible leaks or conflicts of interest into our work for the time being.”

She smiled at the chubby Cheetah, though her smile always threw him off a bit for a bunny. She had predator teeth, but everything about her otherwise was bunny. From her long ears tipped in snowy white, to her larger than usual but still entirely bunny tail, it had a white backside to its fur and even her paws did not have pads like any other bunnies. “Ah.. a..alright then”

Stepping up behind him just after the agent had turned and made her way back to the work room, Bogo placed a large hoven hand on Benjamins shoulder. “Ah really think she has a point, but I would also like you to keep any information about Office Hopps and Wilde from either of them. They don’t need any additional worries until they’re healed up, while I don’t mind you letting each of them know they are alright. I’d recommend Hopps first.” The chief held out a box of donuts as well, offering it to Clawhauser as a gift to take with him before turning and making his way to his office.

Clawhauser was standing there slightly stunned a moment, looking at the box of donuts that had been left in his care. His eyes going first to Agent Winters, then to Chief Bogo climbing the stairs. “But... there.. family...” Clawhauser huffed out dejectedly, making his way out of Precinct 1 to hail a cab his thoughts conflicted though.

The bumpy cab ride didn't help the cheetahs' thoughts, he wanted to let them both know everything that had been going on. Barely knowing anything himself, aside from the night of their accident and that Nick had gone savage. He had arrived at the hospital, heading inside and to the reception to find out where Judy was first.

Back at Precinct 1 the investigation was well under way, agent winters had been looking over toxicology reports from Bellwethers autopsy. "She was definitely killed by poison, fast acting and not something easily found within Zootopia." Taking out her paw-phone and dialing out to the main ZBI's office, waiting until the agent on the other line picked up. "Agent Savage... this is Agent Winters... I understand you're busy. No.. I really don't care what it was you were doing. Can we.... But... No I need you to check into a toxin for me... yes I'm serious. I'm in Zootopia, do you not pay attention to anything that goes on around the office... Just.. email me back... "

Hanging up the phone as she let out a low groan, dropping her head face down on her desk. There was a soft low thump a few times, as she'd lift her head and drop it again on the smooth surface. Her long ears laying out along the desk and almost seeming to peel up from it, each rise of her head tugging them so. "That rabbit, is so damn infuriating sometimes..." Picking up the next file, she pawed through it slowly reading about the original Night Howler incident.

Her ears dropped as she read the reports, every little detail about what had happened. That despite it all the only thing that didn't make sense, was why the hell Bellwether had been targeted while in prison, and who had the resources to pull it off. She still had to assume that Officers Hopps and Wilde were into something deep, deeper even then she originally had imagined after their attack. "There has to be another player, but why wait until Bellwether was already sentenced and in prison. And why would they go after ZPD Officers..." speaking out loud to herself, as another ZBI agent came into the room. The larger Dingo cocking his head to the side somewhat, as he'd give a loud chuckle watching agent Winters.

"Finally going mental there Winters? Been at this for too long maybe?" Agent Duluth crossed the room to where she sat, picking up one of the files she was looking over. "I'm not sure why care so much about this, it's an open an open an shut case. Easy to see the revenge hit on the two officers, and as for the inmate mustah been luck o the draw."

"It was not luck of the draw, while I'll give you the possibility of it merely being revenge on Officer Hopps and Wilde. I doubt it's merely that, did you even look at the toxicology for Officer Wilde?" Picking up a folder she slid it in front of agent Duluth, letting him open it himself as she watched him begin reading. "Unlike their original Night Howler incident, the breakdown of whatever Officer Wilde was dosed with this time is... about a hundred times more potent, and mixed with something else to help make it harder to cure. Heck I've been by the hospital, it's been weeks and he hasn't shown any sign of ever being... SANE again!"

The dingo let out a sigh, but picked up the file and read it. Dropping it after a few moments and looking at his partner on this assignment, his eyes wandering to the board behind her and the different connections she'd been making. "listen... Winters, I get it. There's a connection, I see what you're getting at. But how does it still play to us, the ZBI of all organizations. It's a local problem... I'm sure the ZPD is more than capable of handling their own mammals."

Her head hit the desk once more, harder this time with an exaggerated groan. "Please.. please.. PLEASE catch yourself up, read the files and work I've already done. I need you to trust me on this, have I ever been wrong before about these things? I just know there is someone else in the game" Rolling her head to the side, she looked at him with green eyes that were tired. She'd be 29 in a few months, but she felt like she was going to turn 60 at any second from frustration alone.

: Month 8 :

Judy had been driving around for over a week, trying to find Finnick wherever he might have been. She even stopped by Mr.Big's manor, wondering if any of his man had seen or heard from Nick or Finnick. But she was left disheartened when they couldn't tell her, offering a glimmer of hope when they offered to at least have Fru Fru contact her if they did hear anything. It had to come as pure luck though, when she came across Finnick's van parked outside of a bar." Ah HAH! Found him!"

Her Ear's held high as her amethyst eyes searched the area, she left the cruiser parked and bounded over to the van. Raising a paw to knock on the doors, she stepped back waiting for the doors to swing open and let her eyes see the gruff sounding fennec. But no answer came as she knocked a second time "Finnick! It's me Judy, are you there? I want to ask you about Nick." Her ears listening even as not a sound came from the van, what those sensitive appendages did catch was laughter. The unmistakable laughter of the small fox coming from the bar, and the same laughter that elicited a groan from the already worried bunny as she made her way over and into the bar.

Once inside the Sahara Oasis as the name shown, she let her eyes adjust to the darker interior of the establishment, as well the smokier scent that it seemed to hold with its ever present haze. Looking around after she could see again, she walked further inside as her eyes wandered. Larger grizzly bears, a couple of bison, a red fox all caught her eyes. Her heart skipping a beat seeing the red fox, but sinking when he was far darker than her fox, as well as the hazel eyes and few missing teeth and far more haggard fur. She padded in further to find Finnick, nursing a beer that looked larger just because he held it. "Finnick! I found you, thank goodness..."

His eyes focused quickly when he heard his name, focusing on the voice that had called it and the bunny it belonged to. "Well Well Well, Hopps what brings you to my neck of the woods?" a hustlers grin on his muzzle as he greeted the bunny.

"Well I need you to tell me where Nick is, you have to know where he is you're like his best friend." Climbing into the nook that Finnick had been sitting in, she eyed him carefully watching every little twitch he might make. She'd gotten used to Nick and his hustling he tried to pull from time to time, she had to admit he was good at it, but she wasn't looking to be the one hustled. "Please Finnick, I'm worried... this isn't like him, no one at the ZPD knows where he went. He's labeled as a missing mammal, but I know he's alive but where did he go?"

Watching the bunny beg him so about the whereabouts of her partner, he'd take another draw of his beer before speaking. "I dunno Hopps. Haven't heard from him in months, some friend he is for just cutting me off. But if you do see him, tell him he owes me a pint for leaving me hanging." It broke Finnick's heart to hustle the bunny, he knew she was a good mammal as well as one of the best cops. Heck one of

the only ones he'd ever consider a friend, but he'd made a promise to Nick the night he vanished and he had to honor that.

Her heart sank the moment he told her, he hadn't heard from Nick in that long either. She practically broke down right in the bar, her paws balling into fists as her eyes filled with tears. Those usually perky ears sank, and the world seemed to crash in on her all at once. "F..innick, wh..what if he's really hurt, h.." her breathing becoming broken as she cried, her tears staining her cheeks so completely as she pulled her ears down over her face. "H..he needs to kn..now it wasn't hi.. his fault, I.. I don't blame him for w...hat hap, hap, happened.."

The small fennec sat frozen, eyes wide as he watched the usually perky bunny suddenly break. Watched as her body seemed to shrink and the usual glow she had about her vanished, it was like the life had just packed up and ran. He didn't know what to do, how to comfort her even as he mentally cussed Nick out enough to make a sailor blush. He did catch some of the other animals looking their way, himself reaching a paw out to pat her on the shoulder. "Aww come on, whatever is going on can't be that bad. I'll bet he knows that whatever is going on, that you don't blame him."

Sitting in that booth, he could have sworn time slowed to a crawl. Even as Judy very slowly got a hold of her emotions once more, all while still crying but Finnick did the only other thing he could think of to help. He ordered her a beer of her own, thanking the bar keep as he set the glass before her. "Hopps.. come on have a drink, it'll help you relax. I tell ya, if I hear from Nick you're the first mammal I tell." His mind still drifting back to cursing his former Hustling partner, causing Hopps to cry when he knew how much they cared for one another.

The night played on as she broke down, drinking the beer that Finnick had got for her. It had helped even as she ended up buzzed good and well, enough so that Finnick had to use her paw-phone to contact someone to pick her up. Flicking through her contacts, he stopped and looked at Nick's name in her phone as it seemed fitting oddly enough. Dumb Fox with a little heart by his name, he made a visible face before finding Clawhauser's number.

His phone had been ringing for a minute as the cheetah raced from the shower to grab it, towel half wrapped around himself and seeing Judy's name on the screen. "Ben here.. everything alright Judy?" he asked quickly enough since it was going on nine pm, but his ears weren't greeted to her voice but one much deeper.

"Ah.. Clawhauser, the cheetah from the ZPD.. this is Hopps' friend Finnick, do you think you could... come pick her up, she'd out here at the Sahara Oasis bar in Sahara Square. I think she needs a good friend to take her back to her place, and I'm not exactly... the best escort for that mission." Finnick listened to Clawhauser as he said he'd be there within half an hour, his eyes drifting back to Judy as she had her head laying on the table and was mumbling something about tranqs and giving Nick one hell of a ear full.

: Month 10 :

ZPD Headquarters had become a dual-purpose facility in recent months, the ZBI having made more use of the crime lab on site. As well more agents were working the new leads that seemed to be popping up, there was now a heavy rumor of a new Night Howler serum. One more potent and dangerous than the original, and still even more than the one used on Officer Wilde who was still Missing. And a few

possible leads on who might have had bellwether killed, but just enough that the ZBI chose to continue their investigation so long after the original incidents.

Sitting at her own desk, typing away on reports that needed to be filed. Judy still looked broken, and without a partner she was stuck handling parking duty, and doing desk work until she either got a new partner, or hers was found. Both of which if brought up, only seemed to make the once positive bunny, look as though a funeral were happening. “Officer Wolfard, do you have any new information about the purse thief from the other day?” her eyes looking to the Wolf sitting a few desks over.

“Ahh oh, let me see... I think I have the original file here!” Rummaging through a stack of papers, crime was seemingly in a peak season lately, though all smaller crimes which kept a few of the officers busy. Wolfard though had just been working on paperwork from the recent arrests he’d made, but in the recent weeks he’d gotten to know the ZPD’s famous rabbit officer more. Being stuck at his desk so often, when she herself was always at her’s helped in that sense, and his pack instincts had him wanting to cheer her up, not that he was any good at it.

Slipping from her desk, she padded over to him to collect the file. Turning to go back to her desk once more “Thank you Wolfard, I appreciate it” was the simple and concise response she’d given him, offering a soft smile though her ears remained droopy. Her paws flipping through the file, eyes scanning the pages as she read through it. Soon enough back to typing in information once more.