

: Chapter 4: Broken heart's struggle

Hearing the wolf and tiger enter the house behind him, the door clicking shut just a moment later. Nick entered the kitchen, going about his usual morning routine for coffee and the like. "Could I offer you guys some coffee, it is still pretty early."

Turning to look back at the two, having taken note that they were not in uniform. Simple jeans and t-shirts that read – Team Howl and Growl! – on the different colored items, he was about to grab them a pair of cups when that was cut short. "What the Hell..."

The grey wolf's balled up fist landed with a hard smack, catching Nick across the eye and muzzle with the hit. Wolfard watched as the fox stumbled back, falling to the ground in a limp pile. "Ow... son of a bun, forgot how much that hurts... let's get him and go!"

Waking up with a groan and wincing, the pain in his face throbbed from the hit. Having turned to the two of them when Wolfard struck him out of left field, sitting up slowly the ice pack they'd placed on his face fell to the seat he was in. "Geeze, do you train with rhinos Wolfard?"

The car they were in cruising smoothly along, they may have been in it for an hour from the look of things to the still slightly disoriented fox. "Where... are, we going, and did you at least lock my house?"

"Headed back to Zootopia, you do realize how much shit you're in right?" the tiger turned a bit in the passenger seat, looking at Nick when his features seemed to droop a bit.

There was little consolation for many of the ZPD officers, seeing one of their own in a state of dishevelment that worried all of them. She had gotten progressively worse as the months had passed, her fur a bit more unkempt as the time passed, but they all knew when she began to go downhill.

Just barely over three months had passed, Nick had vanished and the investigation was crawling on slowly for the ZBI as well. They had little information to go on, but the missing mammal status for him still stuck.

Even Judy had finally managed to get more information, but only about Nick and his disappearance to say the least. She'd been allowed to review security footage from the hospital, seeing him sneaking out so long back, but that was all she had been able to get.

Stretching some in her desk chair, yawning widely as her attention finally pulled away from the paperwork in front of herself. Judy took in the dark surroundings of ZBD office, eyes glancing at the clock on the computer screen as it read out 3:52 am.

"Oh no, I stayed to late again." Groaning somewhat as she brought her paws to her face, rubbing her eyes as another yawn stole itself from her lips. Pushing her chair back from the desk, she slid out of it taking her jacket from the back of it and slipping it on.

Turning from her desk and making her way out, through the main lobby of precinct 1 she'd smile sleepily to George, a boar and fellow officer who tended to work the night shift at the front desk." Goodnight George! I'll see ya later."

Looking up from his paper, he'd give a grunt and a nod that was soon followed by a shake of his head. "Goodnight Officer Hopps!" His thoughts drifted a moment, the poor girl was running herself ragged staying so late so often.

Pushing through the ZBD's doors, she stepped out to the colder air that was overtaking the city. Winter was settling in, and while not as cold as Tundratown the chill on the air was more than enough cause to bundle up.

Later that morning Wolfard showed up at the precinct per usual, bright eyed and all at 5:30am walking through the front doors. "Hey George! Slow night?" stopping off at the front desk to chat a moment.

Setting his paper down the greyish colored board looked at Wolfard, his demeanor taking on a serious look. "Your new pack friend was here late again, four full weeks in a row she hasn't left till after 3 am. An ah'll bet she'll come paddin back in here within the hour. She needs some help, ah may not know bunnies, but ah do know mammals and she's in bad shape."

His tail drooping somewhat as his ears lay back as well, a heavy sigh passing his muzzle with a groan all of his own. "I know George, I don't know what to do though. Ever since Wilde went MIA along with the ZBI still lingering, it's like she's mentally someplace else."

Another knowing nod from the older boar, folding his paper up as he looked to Wolfard once more. Taking note of Clawhauser entering the precinct, turning to gather up his own coat. "Well... my replacement is here, but if's you'd like my advice. I would bet on finding Wilde, bout the only thing that'll cheer that bunny up."

Turning to glance at the doors, a smile creeping across the wolfs muzzle. "Morning Clawhauser!"

"Oh! Wolfard! You're in here early, what's the occasion?" The larger cheetah munched a donut from the bag he carried, moving around the desk, and getting settled in for the day.

"Well I was hoping to do a little digging, poke that ZBI agents mind and see if I could get some information, I just don't think she's here yet." His eyes turning from Clawhauser towards the office the ZBI had claimed, looking back to his friend with a smile.

"OH you mean Agent Winters, she's an interesting one for sure. But I don't know if you'll get much out of her, she seems like a tough case herself". Munching on another donut before taking a sip of the coffee he brought in with himself.

The wolves face seemed to hold a look of confusion for a moment, Clawhauser seemed like he'd already been getting to know her. "Well I'm sure I can find something to sweet talk her with, you wouldn't... happen to know if maybe... she has anything she likes? You know to use as a kind of peace offering."

The cheetah seemed to get a look of deep thought to his features, his long tail twitching back and forth behind himself before shrugging a bit. "Got me... might try a buga-burga or sushi though, something tells me she might enjoy that."

A new look of confusion came to Wolfard, one ear seeming to flick just to the side as he tilted his head slightly. "But... she's a Bunny, a bigger one than normal, but why would a bunny even try one..." He'd take note of Clawhauser's shrug with his questioning, a strange look of innocence on his features.

It was barely 6:00am and the wolf already felt a bit exasperated, Clawhauser had his own secrets he knew but this one was odder than usual. Giving a wave to the cheetah, he turned to head off to the records department for some research of his own.

Buzzing sound filled her tiny room as light hadn't even broken through the shades, groaning as she pulled herself into a tighter ball snuggling into her blankets. "Ughh too early." Judy groaned as the world was trying to wake her up, soon enough even her carrot-phone was buzzing an alarm as well.

Reaching a grey furred paw from under the blankets, she pulled them back slowly to expose herself to the cooler air. A shiver crawling through her body, she would slip from the bed one foot at a time.

Tapping the alarms off on the clock and her phone, the time reading out 6:00am on both devices. She went about her morning, bags under her eyes and a twitch of her nose. Inhaling with a groan as her nose was stuffy, her whole head felt congested. "This is not gonna be a good day"

Dressing in warmer clothes as well as her coat, she grabbed her apartment keys and slipped off for the day. Shuffling along with the apartment door closing behind herself, leaving the apartment building and to the snow-covered sidewalks.

Her ears covered in her hat and her coat snugged up to her nose, the usually pink inner flesh of her ears and that same matching nose was paler than usual. A definite sign that she was coming down with something, but not enough time to stop and get any medicine to help.

An hour a day walking back and forth from the precinct to her apartment and back, all while it was snowing and cold out. As 6:30am rolled around, she was entering the precinct though and shaking off some of the snow. "Good morning Ben!"

Her cheery voice coming out just a bit raspy, followed by a little cough that she covered with a paw. A Soft smile returning to her face as she crossed the lobby and heading back to the back offices, and her desk where she could get back to work.

Flicking the lights on in the office, she made way to her desk and chair quickly enough. Slipping out of her coat and hanging it on her chair, she'd brush out her simple button up police issue shirt and slacks. Climbing into the very same chair she'd settle in pulling out the case files from just hours ago, and glancing over them. "Surely something will turn up soon."

Finally emerging from the records department, Wolfard stretched as he made his way back to the ZPD's lobby. Bringing a paw to rub through the thicker fur on his neck, he smiled a bit and headed towards the cafeteria.

His thoughts were trying to connect dots, and the best he had so far was from the night Wilde went missing. He'd reviewed the hospital security footage probably a thousand times, but it finally clicked on what they had been missing when well he'd gone missing. "I'll get in touch with the cab company today, honestly can't believe we hadn't noticed sooner."

SMACK

The world seemed to go horizontal to the distracted wolf, finding himself falling towards the ground with something warm under himself. His muzzle having hit the hard, cool floor before he panicked feeling something or someone in this case move.

Sitting up quickly with ears perked as his nose twitched, sniffing as his eyes fell on what he too had fallen on. Instantly his ears flicking back on his skull a bit, his tail curled nearer himself. "Ah Sorry about that, Agent...Winters, isn't it?"

The black and white furred bunny simply lay there on the floor a moment, not bothering to get up quickly even though Wolfard had. Her green eyes staring towards the ceiling in the ZPD lobby, she twitched though and sat up as he asked her name.

Rolling over from her back, and slowly pushing herself back onto her feet, and giving herself a quick brush down before her eyes met his. "Indeed, so Officer Wolfard, might I ask what has you so distracted? It isn't often I'm run over like that, let alone by someone just a bit larger than myself."

His blue eyes watching as she lay there a moment still, when she finally did get up he too stood and watched her. "ah oh just working on a case, might have found a possible lead is all. "His tail swaying as his nose went to work again, her scent was odd and not because of something covering it.

He had to nod though when she mentioned not normally being ran over, himself really taking note of how tall she was for a rabbit. If he really had to guess she was almost as tall, if not equally so to Wilde himself but he was thrown for a loop when she smiled at him

"Officer Wolfard... are you all right there?" Waving a paw in front of his face, she'd note a bit of blood from the side of his muzzle. "It looks as though you are the one left injured from our run in, you should see to that. Would hate for you to lose a tooth, since your tongue's already been taken."

She smiled as she could tell he seemed slightly awestruck, though she wasn't entirely sure the reason. "Might also get your head checked, you seem dazed." She looked away from him for a moment, readjusting her shirt and vest.

"Oh Right! Yes, I should, but would it be alright if I asked you a personal question?" Blue eyes moving as he looked her over from ear tips to toes, falling back on her green eyes after he'd spoken.

"Hrmm I suppose so." A curious look befalling her, one eyebrow arching slightly as her own curiosity took. The grin that had just been on her white underfurred muzzle vanishing, and her over all demeanor taking a more serious stance.

“Carrots, Hey Carrots wake up... are you gonna sleep all day?”

A subtle groan left the grey furred bunnies form, a smile spreading on her muzzle as her eyes drifted open. Greeted to a familiar russet furred fox, as she stretched out slowly before sitting up. “Nick is that really you?”

“There’s those gorgeous eyes, thought I might never see them again” reaching a paw out to run along her cheek, and smiling when she nuzzled into his grasp.

“Where have you been? You just... you just left me, how could you do.....” Tears starting to well in her eyes, and wetting her cheeks. She went to grab him, to pull him into a hug but he was just gone again as the world seemed to melt away.

A shake jolted her, her eyes drifting open as lights seemed to be passing by her. Trying to move she found she was unable to, another jolt shaking her body as her eyes opened further. She tried looking around still, only to find the lights weren’t moving but she herself was.

The gurney she was on being wheeled down the hall of Zootopia hospital, an oxygen mask on her face which was promptly removed upon seeing her away. “Where am I? what’s going on? Why am I not at my desk?”

A larger hoven paw appeared, causing the bed to stop moving. “Officer Hopps, you’re awake now. We were quite worried, you passed out at the precinct. Agent Winters found you laying on the floor, short of breath and unresponsive.” The Chief explained to her quickly enough, but he motioned the nurses to get her to her room.

“It seems as though you have been over working yourself, as well they believe you may have a severe cold.” Walking along with them all until they reached her room, he’d ask the Dr. to give him a moment with her.

“I am putting you on leave, until your back at 100% Hopps. No Buts! I won’t hear it, two weeks you’re to rest up, that’s an order. I’ve notified your mother, she’s going to come by to see you well once more.”

She focused on the Chief as he spoke, she didn’t remember passing out at all. But she still felt too tired to complain, and her thoughts were suddenly overtaken with heartache. The dream she was having wasn’t real after all, Nick wasn’t back, he wasn’t there with her once again.

A soft nod as she looked to the Chief, not enthusiastic about her mother being contacted about a bad cold. But at that point there was little she could do “Please tell Agent Winters thank you for me.” The only words she’d speak for the moment.

A nod before he would turn to leave the room. “I’m sure she’ll be by here herself at some point, she does want to make sure you are all right herself.” He would nod to the Dr. speaking to him a moment, leaving a short time later though as he vanished from the doorway.

Dr. Pango’ling returned to her room, smiling as he approached the side of her bed. “Hello Ms. Hopps, I hope you are feeling better. Do you mind if we run a few tests? just need to check your heart and head.”

“Mm give me a moment, why don’t you go ahead and put on the paper gown and I’ll be right back.” Smiling as he stepped away, slipping out of her room as he pulled the door closed behind himself.

Slipping from the bed, she took one of the paper gown like smocks. Pulling the curtain around her bed and slipping out of her clothes, and into the airy cover, paws tying it off behind herself. Still feeling a fair bit exposed, the cooler air of the hospital against her backside added to the chill up her spine. “All Changed in here...”

1:00 pm Tuesday

The soft tick of a clock filled the air, the pair of weasels sitting in a chair twice larger than they needed. Their brown fur was a stark contrast to the white furred seat that sat in, a seat they really didn’t care to know where it came from.

Their matching brown eyes seemed to dart around the large luxury suite, a place they realistically may never have been in, if not for their employer at current.

“Hey... Jake, think the boss’ll be ere this time?” the very slightly larger of the two weasels tried whispering to his brother, his features twitchy and showing how nervous he was.

“Shhh quite Sam, doesn’t matter if the boss is or not.” The older but smaller of the two, shushed his sibling quickly. Hearing the door to the suite open, only to latch closed a moment later with the sound of feet approaching.

A jaguar crossed the room to where the two weasels sat, passing by their chair to stand on the other side of the large desk before them. Dressed in very businesslike attire, his suit fit him perfectly. Keeping the pair of spectacles on, he didn’t say anything but waited watching the two.

When the single phone on the desk rang, the same jaguar reached out and pressed a button to accept the incoming call. “The two of them are here Ma’am”

The two weasels seemed to tense up with the jaguar towering over the two of them, though they looked to the phone when it had been answered. Curious but aware of their situation, they’d both jump instinctively when a voice broke across the speakerphone.

“Thank you for that Parker, I appreciate your assistance. Now Jake, Sam, you two have a job to do for me since plans were halted originally, but we are back in business so to speak. Parker there will give you packets to read over shortly, simply put though the pay is ten million each. Yes or No right now, if yes fantastic! If not, then get the hell out of the hotel now”

The phone clicking off, a busy signal escaping the speaker before Parker pressed another button on it. The room falling silent, the feminine voice from before gone as the brothers looked at one another.

“T...en million... for one job?” Both speaking almost in perfect unison as they only received a nod from Parker, seeming to think on the things they could do with that amount of money. It not even occurring to them yet, that they didn’t know what they were being asked to do.

Parker for his part of things, set out a pair of packets on the desk before the two of them. Nothing on the yellow envelopes, and both sealed with a wax ring, very old school and elegant in a way.

Both of their eyes fell on the packets, nodding a second each more to one another. “Yes, yes, we’ll do it!” both of them scrambling for a packet, they would open them to see what was inside. Each packet containing a list of animals, as well as a list of materials they were to acquire.

Upon breaking the seal on these missives, you are accepting the terms within. You both are being asked to capture and detain the following mammals.

- Twelve Foxes
- Eight Wolves
- Sixteen swine
- Two armadillos
- Eighteen Rabbits

As well there are ten red barrels, all stored within warehouse 69985 by the docks near the canals. How you go about getting this done, is entirely up to you as well the age and gender of each mammal does not matter Just the number. Time frame for completion is two weeks, you two have been requested for this due to previous work.

Memorize these instructions, they will not be allowed to leave this room.

10:15 am Thursday

“Now Ms. Hopps while you are being cleared to leave, remember to take things easy. Your body has been under a great deal of stress, and you’re still fighting a nasty cold. I’ve prescribed some medication to help you rest, and fight the infection, take this slip by the pharmacy on your way out.”

Dr. Pango’ling handed her the small paper, taking a moment with Bonnie Hopps to go over a few things with her. Leaving the room to talk while Judy changed.

“Do take care to ensure she gets plenty of rest, she’s showing some signs that we often see with Widowed Doe’s. But she has assured us she has no mate, and has never had one yet so it very well may be the cold.”

Bonnie nodded listening to the Dr. taking his paw in her own, she’d shake it gently. “Thank you very much Dr. I’ll see to it she gets all the rest she needs.” Taking her leave of him, she went back into the room with Judy.

“Well I’m glad to know that it’s nothing too serious bun bun, it’s quite nice getting to spend some time with just you after all, I can only imagine your father in this situation.” Bonnie smiled warmly at her daughter, adjusting her own coat a moment.

“Thanks for coming out mom, you really didn’t have to. But I’m happy to spend some time together, I’m also sure dad would have freaked out.” Slipping on her paw coverings, she took her mother by the arm.

“Let’s get out of this stuffy place, I don’t much like spending time in hospitals.” Herself and her mother leaving the room, going to check out of the hospital.

An hour later they were free of the hospital, bundled up as snow fell lightly across the city. The Chief having heard she would be checking out, sent over a patrol car to give Officer Hopps and her mother a ride.

The car that showed up, and the driver that had been sent was none other than Wolfard. A smile crossing her nuzzle as Judy smiled seeing him, it was nice to know he wasn’t entirely stranded behind his own desk still.

“Well well well, Wolfard, seems you do get out occasionally. Are you back on patrols again, or is this just a special trip?” Watching him walk around the car and open the door for the two rabbits, she saw his tail wagging though.

For his part the grey wolf was more than happy to be out of the precinct, away from his desk and all the files he was working through.

“Hey Flatfoot! Good to see you’re doing better, and who is this young Doe beside you? One of your sisters?” he may have been laying it on thick, but the older bunny seemed to enjoy the flattery.

“Well thank you Officer, but while I appreciate your flattery. I’m a married Doe, happily so as well as being mother to Judy here.” Accepting the open door, Bonnie climbed into the patrol car just ahead of Judy.

“Special Trip! Chief has been busy today, and most of the other officers are out on the beat.” Waiting for Judy to get into the cruiser, he would shut the door behind them. Moving back around to climb into the vehicle himself, adjusting a bit once inside. “To your place then Judy?”

Glancing in the rearview mirror, he took her nod for his answer before buckling up. Putting the car in gear, it tugged forwards through the snow.

The ride itself wouldn’t take long, but was too short for real conversation. “Oh, yeah Fangmeyer will be back off swat next week, so I’ll really be out from the desk. Try not to get to lonely when you get back Hopps”

Pulling up to Judy’s apartment building, he climbed out of the vehicle again. Quickly making his way around to open the door for them, Judy’s eyes following the wolf in the snow. With the door opened, she’d slide out of the car. “Thank you Wolfard, we appreciate the ride. As for work when I get back, just don’t forget to say hi every so often”

It came as a bigger surprise when the small rabbit stepped in close, hugging his waist warmly a moment and not helping his tail stay still in the least. “I’ll make sure to bring an extra donut by just for you in the mornings, get to feeling better Hopps.” Watching her slip away, her mother stopping to look at him.

“Officer Wolfard wasn’t it? Thank you for being a good friend to my daughter, she seems to be taking things rough still.” Reaching out to take the wolfs hand, she shook it warmly before turning to follow her daughter inside the building.

2:00 am Sunday

Tossing in her bed, she groaned sleepily as she tried to get comfortable. Dreams that should have been so pleasant, were turned to nightmares as she slept.

“Nick please talk to me, why won’t you tell me what I did wrong?” Her grey soft furred paws, tugging at that goofy green shirt he loved. Trying to stop him from walking away, but it was as if her own two feet were made of lead. He seemed to pull away so easily, that wonderfully fluffy tail of his brushing against her hand as he moved.

She’d panic though as fear tugged against her mind, and even more at her heart and soul now. Trying more desperately to run to him, to Nick, to her friend, to her...

And then it happened again, as it had every night lately she watched. From somewhere in the darkness, he was shot and his body fell limp. Trying to scream and cry out, trying to reach him as she couldn’t seem to move forwards. She watched as his body fell to the ground in front of her, his shirt staining with blood quickly.

“No! Nick!” Sitting up in bed with a bolt, a paw on her chest as she panted. Kicking her blankets off herself, she began to cry softly. Falling to her side, she pulled a small fox stuffed mammal to herself. Her tears came again, staining her cheeks and her stuffed fox.

“Why... why does it hurt so much.” Her words barely muffled by nuzzling into the bed, but still loud enough they drew her mother’s ears. She felt her mom come near, shushing softly as her warm paws pressed against her back.

“Shhh it’s alright bun bun, it’s alright it’s just a bad dream again.” Rubbing her daughters back, she would hum a soft old tune. One she had learned from her mother, she’d cover her daughter back up. “Shhh everything will be ok, it’s just a bad dream”

Rolling over and taking the little fox with her, she would hug her mom quickly. Burying her face to her neck as she cried, the shake of her body against the warmth of her mother. She would stay like a kit, clung for the comfort. “Momma... why’s it hurt so much to miss him.”

Her words shaky as she pleaded for an answer, even if she knew her mother didn’t have one she always asked.

Hugging her she rocked lightly holding her daughter, feeling her body’s tense twitches as she cried. “I wish I knew bun bun, I wish I knew, but it’ll be alright... cry, cry as much as you need.”