

## Chapter 17: Cash Course.

### **Majestic City Arc.**

Ramon sits in the PC bed, gazing through the window. The setting sun shines down the plain white room, black square patterns etching throughout the floor. Cool breeze brushes against him from the vent, his hair tuft tilting. The fox sighs.

*This is the second time I've encountered him.* He lowers his brows. ...*And almost got killed.*

*Sounds like a big deal,* a voice in Ramon's head states.

The Zorua looks around. *Nomar?*

*Hey.*

*Didn't know you could talk to me outside of dreams.* Ramon blinks.

*Hehe, yeah. Didn't I tell you spirits are capable of using Telepathy?* Nomar snickers.

*Oh.* Ramon shrugs. *My apologies for forgetting there.*

*It's fine.* Nomar then whimpers. *What's...not fine though is your condition. Sorry that you ended up stuck here.*

*...Yeah: The whole ordeal was beyond my control. If it weren't for Clinton, Justin, and Ada, I...would've been dead.* His paws lie on the cover, staring at them. *I think helping them find their loved ones isn't enough. With those two times they saved me, I should repay them similarly!* He shifts, gripping the sheets. *Ashamed that I can't do it now, though...*

*At the very least, you're alive right?*

*Yeah. Thanks to them.*

A huff emanates. *I believe they only did it to make themselves look "good" and "innocent".*

*Nomar: Ada and Justin were trying to heal me once that guy went away. Clinton tried shooting that person as I was close to death, risking his own life for mine.* Ramon's head shakes. *I don't believe anyone who pretends to care about me will go this far to gain my trust.*

*You'll be surprised.*

The Zorua raises his brow, turning. ...*What?*

His ears twitch, eyeing the window afterwards: A bunch of police cars pass by the center with immense speed, sirens blaring. "Huh?" Many more vehicles drive by one after another, the fox standing up before grunting.

*Careful, brother*, Nomar says with concern.

Ramon simply nods before hopping down, wincing.

*Please, Ramon...*

The Zorua lowers his ears. *Sorry...* He looks at the window, having a glimpse of Justin, Ada, and Clinton being in one of the cars. *HUH!?* Without a second thought, he jolts towards the window, pummeling against it. His breath hugs the glass along with his paws, the vehicles vanishing into the distance. He winces once more.

*I SAID BE CAREFUL! OH MY GOSH!* Nomar yells in dread, Ramon lowering his ears and whimpering.

*A-Again: Sorry...* The fox moves back. *But also, I saw my friends being in those cars. I...wonder why.*

*Most likely arrested for a crime they've committed.* Groans. *Like all human trash.*

Ramon taps the ground, looking to his side. *I...think I didn't see any of those locked things cops would use to arrest someone.*

*Handcuffs?*

*Yes!*

If Nomar was alive, he would've shook his head. *Perhaps your vision could be messing with you? I mean, those cars did go by pretty fast.*

*Regardless...* Ramon casts a dark ball, shooting forward. The window shatters as he winces, glass scattering everywhere. He hops through afterwards, running on the grass. *I'm finding out why!*

. . .

Night casts upon the alley, the mayor's tower resting beside, darkness emanating. Only a couple of lights fill the void, many corridors and corners etching every spot. Roaming around are Clinton, Justin, and Ada, rushing from one spot to the next. Tagged along are four police officers, wielding their guns. One of the officers has a long, blonde hair that reaches to his elbows, adjusting his cap.

"Hey classic man," Justin says, Clinton turning around. "Why do we have police officers with us again?"

"Because they're here as backup. You know, in case this operation goes horrible," the elder answers. "Besides, Ada told them about the ID card: They'll help regardless."

"Huh. Guess I should've known that."

Ada's head tilts. "But that begs the question: Why don't we have a ton of cops tagging along?"

"They're there to surround the alley's entrances. In case anyone involved in this 'Cash Course' tries to escape," the first cop explains.

The seven roam the corridors, turning one corner to the next. Soon, they stop at some stairs ahead. The stairs lead down, all taking small steps forward. By the end, there is a gray door with a device attached to the wall beside. Everyone looks at each other.

"Cash Course is here, right?" the second cop asks.

Ada's hand caresses her chin, squinting. "I see this device here, so maybe?"

"Try using the ID," Clinton suggests. "Probably has something to do with it."

The teen takes the card out, leaning it against the device. The device lights up, turning green while scanning. Then the device bleeps, the door clicking. Ada retrieves the card, four cops leaping in front of her.

"Alright. We can take it from here," the second cop says. Ada lifts her hand, purple claw casting around. The cop's eyebrow raises, casting a blue bo staff while taking out his pistol. "Like I said: We got this."

Ada squints, her claw disappearing. She folds her arms. "Alright then."

"Fam: Why do you have a gun when you can use Magic?" Justin points out.

"I'm a cop for starters, kid."

"Aight, but you can shoot endless rounds from your hands, though." Justin scratches the back of his head, chuckling. "Makes using a gun, uh, pointless."

The second cop snickers, shifting his blonde hair. "Consider this: It looks cool on me."

Justin is about to raise his finger and talk more, but then looks beside him. "...Aight, you know what: Fair point."

The cops burst the door down, stepping forward. "FREEZE!" all of them yell, spreading out: Guns ready.

"...Oh shit," the first cop says, her expression warping.

"Yo, what is it?" Justin asks.

Many men in business suits glare at them, weapons in hands. They look as vile as the big bad wolf, scars and tattoos engraving some of them. Some have their hands in their pockets while others are at the counter to the right, simply lowering their drinks. The group throws up their guns, some even forming their Mystical Projectiles.

The second cop's eyes enlarge. "Everyone, take cover!" he shouts.

The bullets and projectiles run ablaze, rearing ahead. The first and second cop roll forward, ducking behind walls. The others get shot several times: Staggering, blood oozing. Then their heads are pierced, blowing them away. The two cops land outside.

"Holy shit!" Clinton exclaims, he and the teens hiding behind the walls: Justin and Ada on one side, Clinton on the other.

Everyone gazes at the fresh corpses, eyes rattling. The sheer dread splatters on those lifeless, bleeding bodies: The cops' mouths agape, their eyes as big as the sun.

The teens tremble, crumbling into clenching fists. The two descend to their burning home, screams echoing the many villagers as they melt. Eyes gaping, mouths stretching. They saw it all. They *heard* it all. The teens kept hearing and seeing those calamities over and over. More and more and mo—

"Hey," Clinton says, eyeing the teens.

The two remain lost in the flames and the screams and the—

"HEY!"

The two finally snap back to reality, shaking their heads before looking at him. "Are you two alright? We got a massive shootout to worry about." Clinton stares at them, concerned.

The teens remain silent and stare at the corpses, sighing before looking back. "Yeah...We're fine," Ada says. "Sorry."

Clinton thinks for a moment, tilting his head. "Well...Tell me if something's up, okay?"

"Hey, not to ruin anything back there, but—" the second cop shoots at a criminal ahead. "We'll need some help here!"

Clinton sighs. "I wonder how with all of these guns firing!"

"Easy: Mystical Shield," Justin says.

"But from wh—" Justin barges inside, casting himself and the others around with his shield. "Oh...I knew that."

"Riiight," Ada says, chuckling.

The three take cover behind the other walls: Ada and Justin hide with the first cop while Clinton is with the second, all shooting the group afterwards. The second uses his gun and Mystical Projectile at once, ducking before firing again.

"Man these criminals are stacked!" the cop says. "I've never seen SO many of them hanging around like this in my life."

"And you've been a cop for how long?" Clinton asks, reloading.

"Eeeh, for like three months or so."

"Then you're a rookie, huh?"

"You got that right, sir!" The second cop shoots rapidly, smirking.

"Someone close the door now!" one of the criminals yells, reloading. The man on the far left rushes to a device by the wall, tweaking with it before pressing a button.

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Ramon appears by the building's wall, panting before looking at the door downstairs. As the Zorua moves forward, he winces, leaning against the wall. *Ugh...I'm still in pain, it seems*, he thinks, coughing before standing up. *But I'll pull through for them!*

*Don't strain yourself*, Nomar says, distress.

Soon the door starts closing, the Zorua yelping. *I gotta hurry before it's too late!* He rushes over, grunting and wincing along the way.

Nomar whimpers. *Ugh...This is painful to watch.*

Ramon soon pushes himself forward, passing the door within a nick of time. He rolls around, bumping into a nearby sofa. *Oof! Whimpers. Jeez, that hurts!* He pants, leaning on the sofa. *Gosh, it feels like my body will explode if I don't be careful.*

*Literally what I've been telling you this whole time: Be. Care. Ful,* Nomar reiterates.

*R-Right...* The Zorua sighs before looking behind the sofa, a ton of criminals firing at the two cops and his friends. *Well Nomar: Looks like I'm not seeing those three in any handcuffs.* His head tilts. *Though, I'm curious about why they're here with the cops? Hmm...*

The second cop sighs heavily, reaching in his pocket and taking out an ammo. "Alright, I'm going in." Reloads.

"What?" Clinton says.

The officer dashes out, rolling around before jumping up. The first notices the second's action. "Hey, what the hell are you doing!?" she yells, reloading before shooting.

The second cop forms the blue staff, clenching its mystical features. "Hope you scums enjoy being blown away by my—" both hands grip the staff, twirling around while dodging the many bullets. "STAR BO!"

The cop slams his staff in the middle, a star symbol forming around him. The symbol grows drastically, glowing before blowing the many men away, crashing them against the walls. Some even fly behind the counter, a ton of drinks spilling and glasses breaking.

Ada and Justin's mouth agape, ogling the cop. "That. Was. BADASS!!!" Justin shouts. "I wished my Magic move could do that!"

"Same here!" Ada agrees as the cop stands up, chuckling.

"Thanks for being amazed by my wonderful Magic move," the second cop says, smirking.

The first sighs in relief, leaving her spot. "Glad that you're my partner, man," she says. Then some of the criminals get up, the officer aiming at them. "Brace yourselves: More of them are coming!"

Ada and Justin look at each other before nodding, Ada casting her purple claws while Justin spawns his blue blades. The two rush towards the criminals, jumping over the cop and slash them. Clinton remains in his spot, shooting the thugs. He hits one of them in the shoulder, the man groaning.

Justin evades the punches and kicks from the lawbreakers, tripping three of them afterwards. Another one aims at him and shoots. The teen's blades deflect the bullets, hitting the man's shoulders. The man backs away groaning as Justin rushes forward, jumping before kicking him.

Ada claws multiple criminals, blasting some away with her strength. "Hey!" the second cop yells, the girl turning towards him. "Duck!" The cop shoots, the girl jumping in response. She flips backwards as the bullet hits the criminal behind her, the man flying off and colliding against the wall. *I said duck, not do a backflip!* The cop shakes his head while the girl lands.

Ada looks to her right, the other cop shooting one criminal's leg. He groans, falling to the ground. She then looks to her left, Justin spinning in place and blowing away nearby thugs. She sighs, dusting herself off.

*Looks like things are getting taken care of*, she thinks. However, one guy rushes towards the blonde cop with his knife, leaping forward. Ada gasps before running. "Hey, behind you!"

The cop lifts his brow. "Hmm?" He turns around, the criminal inching close. "Oh shi—"

Ada claws the criminal's face, the man spitting saliva as blood trails, colliding against the counter. He groans, sliding down. The teen flips herself forward and lands, breathing before exhaling.

The officer lifts his thumb. "Heh, maybe you two kids got this, after all."

"You're welcome," Ada says, smiling while brushing herself off. All of the criminals are either knocked out or groaning with discomfort: Unable to move, in other words.

Clinton, Justin, and the first cop rush towards the two. "You guys are alright?" Justin asks. Everyone nods, the boy wiping his forehead. "Phew! That's good to know."

The second cop looks at Clinton, smirking. "These two are amazingly skilled," he says.

"Yeah. They can take care of themselves, for the most part," Clinton replies.

Ada quirks her brow. "Excuse me, 'for the most part'?" Her eyes roll. "Every situation we've been through, we had no trouble handling it."

"Then explain the Gothitelle situation the other day."

Ada huffs. "I wasn't completely focused, okay!" She sighs, folding her arms.

"Um, I'm pretty sure that you were, fam," Justin adds.

Ada whispers, "Justin, you're not helping!"

"Fam, I thought you like being honest about things."

"I am but...ugh." Ada sighs heavily, shaking her head. "Nevermind."

"Regardless: You two were kicking butts out there." The officer's staff fades. "The name's Isaac, by the way. A pleasure meeting you two."

"Ada's mine. And this is Clinton and Justin."

Justin waves. "Yo, what up."

"You two should join the police force when you get older." Isaac pauses, putting up his gun. "We need raw strengths and good fighting skills like yours."

Ada lays her hand against her chin. "Hmm...I'll think about it."

"Same here. Joining the force sounds cool and all, but not so much in this city, fam." Justin scratches his head, looking off to the side.

Isaac shrugs. "Yeeeah...understandable. I sometimes question why I joined when they only focus on the situation getting worse, not when it first becomes a problem."

"I know, right?" Clinton says. "Changes must be made with the law enforcement here. That way, it can be taken seriously."

The group then looks up at a sign above the counter.

*'Cash Course.'*

"Let's search around, everyone. See if we can find something else here," Isaac suggests.

After roaming around, Justin spots the stairs leading upwards. "Yo, I found some stairs," he says before forming a perplexed look. "I'm also—" Eyes widen. "OH SHIT! I'M HEARING FOOTSTEPS!"

"Let's hide behind the counter," Isaac insists.

Everyone nods and jumps over the counter, remaining hidden while taking a peep. Clinton also slaps Justin on the head for the swearing, a yelp coming from him afterwards.

Appearing on the stairs are four criminals wielding their weapons. Isaac, Ada, and Justin look at each other, all nodding in unison.

“Shit, looks like something big happened here,” one of the men says, gripping his bat.

The three Sorcerous summon their primary Magic moves, jumping. Isaac aims his gun at the criminals, firing. The bullets pierce through two of the criminal’s shoulders, leading them to collide against each other.

“What the hell!?” the same guy shouts before getting kicked in the face by Ada.

The last criminal looks at the three, Clinton and the other cop appearing from their spot. “...AAAH!” He charges towards them with his knuckle brasses. Ada and Justin smirk, the two jump and roundhouse kick the guy. He crashes against the other goons, all groaning afterwards: The four are knocked out.

Isaac’s bo staff disappears, nodding. “Alright. Let’s move,” he says. He runs up the stairs, everyone else following along. Ramon leaves the sofa and follows after them, panting heavily. He grits his teeth.

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They run.

More and more upstairs, picking up the speed after each step.

Everyone looks ahead: Nothing but the dark abyss. “Man this is some long stairs,” Justin comments, breathing at an abnormal pace.

“Yeah. Makes me wonder how those criminals hear all those noises earlier,” Isaac replies. “Also, I didn’t even see a single elevator here. It’s like these guys want their legs to be jacked or something!”

“I know, right?” Ada joins. “Maybe all of our legs will be buffed by the time we reach the top.”

“Hah. I don’t think my old ass will get fit anytime soon, even with these long stairs,” Clinton says, chuckling.

Soon, blue lights appear up ahead.

“Yo, I see something!” Justin shouts.

“Shh! Keep it down,” Ada suggests.

Everyone makes it to the top, Isaac noticing something before hiding behind a wall. “All of you, stop!” he whispers, his arm out. The four hide beside the cop, poking their heads out simultaneously.

Plenty of criminals and henchmens are relaxing on the sofas, wandering around, or playing videogames with one another. Some are even watching TV, which is attached to the wall's corner.

"Daaamn. There's so many of them chilling here," Justin whispers. He then gets slapped in the head by Clinton again, rubbing. "Ow!"

"Your mother *really* didn't teach you any manners, huh?" Clinton states.

"Does washing my hands count?"

"Keep it down, you two," Isaac says, glancing around. Staring from one spot to the next, he eventually eyes two men guarding the hallway's entrance: A round man walking towards them, carrying his cane. Isaac shakes his head, gripping the wall's edge. "Well I be damned..."

"What is it?" Clinton asks.

"Look who's by the hallway."

Everyone stares, eyes enlarging. "Mayor Nickel!?" they all say.

"What in the world is he doing here!?" Ada asks, astonished.

Nickel stops, clearing his throat. "I need you to guard my office for awhile," he says, straightening his black tie. "I'll be busy throughout the next meeting. I need no interruptions, please."

One of the guards nods. "Yes, Boss," he says, him and the other guard moving out of the way. The three walk away, two sets of guards standing in their place. Clinton stares off, gripping his fist.

"I should've known he would be the cause of these abnormal crime rates," he says, glancing. "I don't know why he'd let so many people suffer through poverty like this. Regardless: It's sickening."

"What the hell?" Isaac says, catching everyone's attention. "I'm even seeing the detectives here, too!"

"What?" Clinton and the others look, many men in gray clothing relaxing and watching TVs with the criminals. "...So that's where the detectives have been this entire time." Clinton's fist shakes. "This...this is truly dirt in human form. I cannot *believe* this shit!"