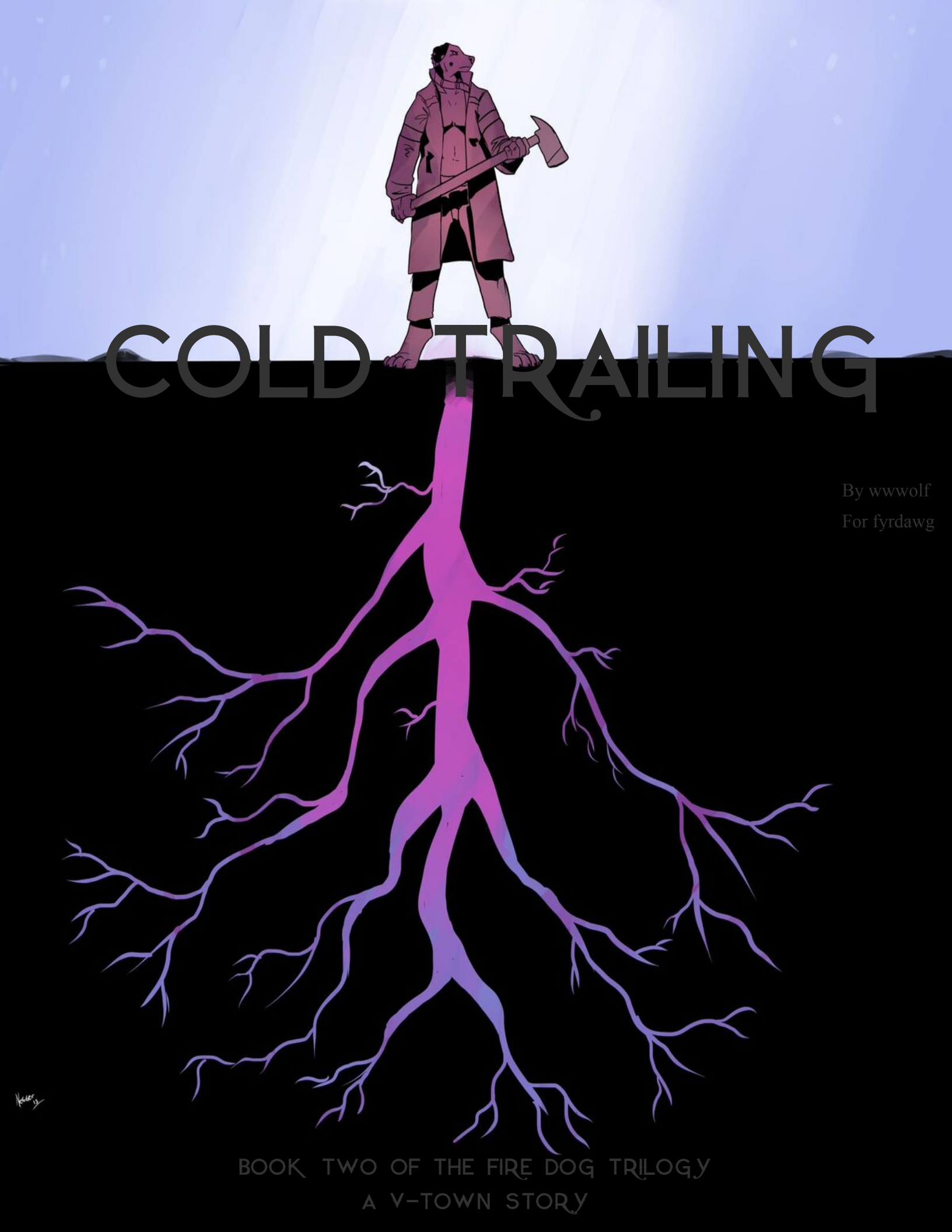




COLD TRAILING

By wwwolf
For fyrdawg

BOOK TWO OF THE FIRE DOG TRILOGY
A V-TOWN STORY

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Chapter 4: Meet The New Boss, Same As The Old Boss

The next morning came early. Will had long ago become accustomed to waking up before the sun, even in the warm summer months. The walk in to V-town was long, and he made a point of always being in well before his shift started.

Sliding carefully out of bed, he made sure not to wake his Mistress who slumbered beside him. They had arrived home late last night, being delayed by her seemingly endless line of patients. Will had been barred from her office until she was finished.

He'd wanted to know what it was she did, but when he stepped into the room there was nothing to be seen but a couple of chairs and an empty desk. And she'd yet to say a single word about it.

Slipping over to the bathroom, Will closed the door between them before turning on the water. That gave him just enough time to go through his morning exercises before steam filled the room.

A quick glance in the mirror and he smiled. The same dog as always looked back at him. A good dawg.

Stepping into the warm water of the shower, Will wasted no time in soaping himself down. This was work, not pleasure. Though he did pause for a long moment as his fingers ran across his sheath.

A tight, controlled shiver ran down his body. There had not been enough time last night for him to show his Mistress the proper appreciation. And the night before... that was better left unremembered.

Reaching down again, Will gently coaxed his penis out, soaping it down and rinsing it off while doing his best not to become lost in the soft sensations. But, despite his best efforts he couldn't keep it from rising to attention.

"No," he muttered, voice bordering on a growl. "No. The Mistress forbids it."

That had been one of the unexpected rules she had given him shortly after they'd moved out here.

You are my pet, my property. I own you now and forever. Completely. Every shudder of pleasure is mine, every drop of your seed is my property.

With shaking hands Will forced himself to return to the proper ritual of his morning shower, leaving his plump and needy erection to beg uselessly before him.

Back out of the shower, Will was dried and dressed in his proper uniform.

Proper being the correct term. Where the other station chiefs have taken to dress shirts and slacks, Will still wore what every proper jake should. His fire house sweats.

Adjusting them slightly so they lay smooth and proper on his short coat, Will smiled. He wasn't perfect, but he was close.

Taking a deep breath the dog opened the bathroom door and stepped out into the dark, quiet hallway. It was time to get to work.

Down the stairs, Will picked up his lunch pail and wallet. He was just nearing the front door when a soft voice stopped him cold.

"Where do you think you're going, my pet?"

She stood before him, leaning against the front door, all but invisible in the darkness, wearing nothing but her spotted coat.

"Mistress," he whispered, "I was just..."

He could see the flash of her perfect white fangs in the darkness.

"You were preparing to leave without my permission, William."

Will's blood went cold.

Lowering his head, the dog fell to his knees before her, not putting up even a token fight.

"I'm sorry, Mistress, I didn't realize..."

Reaching out, she hooked a finger under Will's chin, raising his head ever so slightly.

"Did you think I would forget about you, my love?" she whispered. Behind her Will could see the faintest glimmer of the sun rising over the mountains. "The city is my home, and it is dear to me, but you... you are *mine*..."

She drew Will's nose slowly closer, towards her naked body. A smile began to slip to the dog's muzzle.

"I am here to serve..."

Reaching out with his warm, soft tongue, Will began to lap at her belly, slowly working his way downwards.

As it always did, a scent pulled at him while he pleased her. Hard as reinforced steel, but elusive as fog at noon, it was inescapably feminine, but at the same time something more, much more. The scent teased him onwards, searching unconsciously for it as it was always just a hair's breadth from him.

A soft moan escaped her lips as Will found her opening, running his tongue slowly up and down

it, asking permission to enter.

Her body trembled ever so slightly, and Will knew he'd done good. Taking a deep breath, the dog touched his cold black nose to her body, pressing it gently against her opening. She shuddered at the sudden change from his warm tongue. A moment later her muscles relaxed and Will's muzzle slipped within her.

A grin to his lips, Will slid himself gently in, his tongue slipping free to explore and tenderly stroke her reaches.

Will's ears folded obligingly down when he felt her hands close around the back of his head. A soft cry escaped his Mistress' lips as she began to roll her hips slowly forward, pleasuring herself upon him.

"My perfect, obedient, dog-toy," she whispered breathlessly.

Closing his eyes, Will hilted his muzzle within her, but his tongue slipped ever deeper, searching, questing within her, exploring her soft and perfect body.

He wanted to speak, to tell her how perfect she was, but it was his place to be silent. Instead he raised his hands, a new trick in store for her this morning.

Cupping his hands around his muzzle, around her opening, Will began to slowly, carefully seek out his goal. There was no mistaking when he found it. Her entire body clenched, a cry escaping her lips.

Lungs burning, Will at long last was forced to come up for air. The fur of his muzzle was slick from her, and his tongue slipped out one last time to lick his face clean.

"Have I pleased you, Mistress?" he whispered, voice hoarse. His head rushed, her scent flooding him.

Taking his hand, she guided Will back to his feet. "You do well my pet, but there is more of you I desire."

Will cocked his head, a playful smile slipping to his lips.

That smile froze in place as her free hand slipped down to grab him tight around the balls.

"You are mine, William," she whispered. Her voice was soft, almost coy, but there was a venom bubbling beneath the surface. "I will in time make you the perfect pet. And this is your next lesson." Her grip tightened, forcing a cry from Will. "You are mine. Always. I will give you leave to do many things, but in the end you belong to me." Never releasing pressure, her thumb slipped up to run across his sheath. "And you will father children with no other..."

"Yes, Mistress," Will whimpered, "Please... I swear..."

Her eyes were hard. "I don't care what you want, my pet, what you swear to me. You shall never father a child with..."

For just a moment something crossed her face, then her grip softened.

"But for now," she whispered, leaning in close, running her tongue up Will's chest, "You have served me well. But I desire something more of you."

Hand springing free, a moment later she gave him a hard, sharp push that sent him stumbling

backward into a conveniently placed chair. The breath was knocked from Will's lungs.

Walking slowly towards him, Anne swayed her hips. The sun was just peaking over the horizon behind her, blood red and brilliant, shimmering around her.

"Someday, William..." she whispered, coming closer, "Someday you will father my pups. Today..." She extended a single finger, running it down his chest. "Today I need you within me."

Another step and they were nose to nose. Reaching forward, she closed her hands around the back of Will's head, holding him firm as they kissed. Her breasts pressed against him, soft and warm, as she moved closer, straddling him.

Will's body needed no encouragement. Ready and standing at attention his erection reached for her, wanting nothing more than to please her.

The touch of her lips against his was enough to electrify Will's body. The touch of her other lips against his swollen tip made his world go white.

A moan escaped Will's lips as she slowly, with deliberate and agonizing motions, lowered herself around him.

Smooth, and slicked from Will's previous attention, Anne slid about him, taking him in as though he belonged, as though this were the single place in the world he'd been made for. It was only seconds before she reached his already growing knot.

Pulling back for just a moment, a mischievous smile was on her lips, one Will seldom saw.

"This morning," she whispered, "The V-town Fire Chief will be late to work."

And with that her lips widened, taking Will's knot and fastening firmly behind it. This was, as far as Will could remember, the first time she'd ever tied to him.

A groan escaped his lips. "Mistress..."

Her hands on his chest, she began to slowly roll her hips, to squeeze and slide around him.

"Who's property are you?" she whispered. "Who shall own you until the day you die?"

Will grunted, distracted for just a moment by the pleasure that pulled him away. It was gone in a moment, replaced by a sharp stab of pain arching through his sensitive nose.

"I asked you a question, mutt!" Anne's barred teeth were an inch from Will's face. "You will answer me when I speak to you."

Will could only pull his ears back and whimper. But yet she continued to roll her hips, to send spasms of pleasure through him.

"Who owns you, William?"

"You, Mistress, you..." Will whimpered, fighting with all his strength to keep his mind focused.

"And what is my name, mutt?"

He blinked. "Anne..." he said, racking his brain. "Anne."

She smiled, anger melting away. "Very good, my pet." A hand came up to stroke his face, "Very good."

Settling down to sit snugly on his lap, she wrapped her arms around Will's chest. She didn't

seem to move, but yet Will could feel the beat of her heart, feel every breath she took, dragging him slowly further and further towards climax.

"Someday, my pet," she whispered, "You will father my children. But not today." She nibbled softly at one of Will's floppy ears. "Now, my big, strong pet. Come for me."

Something in her words, something in the very essence in the way she spoke touched him at a level deeper than the dog had ever felt before, awoke a deep, primal part of his brain.

"Yes, Mistress." The words slid from his lips completely unbidden. A heartbeat later Will's vision went white. The world around him ceased to be. There was only him. There was only her.

She didn't need to move a muscle. Will did as she command. A gasp tore its way from his lips as Will's obedient body came, climaxed with more force than he'd ever felt before. More than his first time, stronger than he'd ever felt before Will's entire body clenched, his strong arms closing around her. Will filled his Mistress with his seed, emptied himself into her waiting womb.

When next he could see again he looked up into Anne's deep green eyes.

"Very good, my pet," she said, tongue coming out to lap at his face. "You are an obedient puppy."

It was almost half an hour before Will could disentangle himself from Anne. Not that he was complaining. On the contrary, the dog had to hold back a tear when his knot finally slipped free.

"Now, my pet," she whispered, "You have a job to do."

No time for another shower to wash the smell of sex from his fur, Will quickly collected his things and began down the long road towards the city. Sparing a glance over his shoulder, he could see her watching him through the window, a soft smile to her lips.

It was only a matter of time before he passed where the store had been not so long ago. There still wasn't much here, but the shop keep had dug out what wares he'd been able to salvage. As far as Will knew the family had moved into the city to find what refuge they could.

Stepping up to the towering pile of debris, Will took a sniff. At least there was no scent of blood, of that he could be thankful.

Pausing for a moment, Will took a look through the trees. The faint blue skyline of V-town spread out before him. It wasn't what he remembered from before the quake, but it was becoming familiar in its own right. In some ways the dog almost preferred the new view. The large, garnish towers were long gone, and no new ones had been raised in their places. The city looked calmer now, more – he chuckled darkly – down to earth. He would never have wished the quake, or the horrors that had followed it, but there were at least a few small benefits.

Walking down the street, axe slung over his shoulder, Will kept an eye open at the crowds that milled around him. A good third of them seemed focused on the so called reconstruction.

Will grimaced.

Continuing deeper into the city, an uneasy feeling began to build in the dog's gut. He couldn't quite snag his claw on it, but *something* wasn't quite right. The city itself was fine, but those people

who got too close to him began to act ever so slightly off.

It wasn't anything Will could put his claw on, but they never looked him in the eyes, always kept a respectful distance, lowered their voices. And, the moment they passed him, returned to whatever it was they had been doing.

Will just shook his head. He must be imagining things.

Stepping into Fire Station Six, Will closed the small man door behind him. He had no need to make a big entrance today. This was just another shift, little more.

The jakes here didn't act the same as the folks out on the street had, but they still bowed their heads ever so slightly to him when he neared, whether they even realized he was there or not.

Climbing up the stairs to the second floor, Will sat his axe down in the corner of his office with a heavy thud. That was one major change he'd made once he'd taken the space over from Masterson. The bull had kept little more than paperwork in here. Will had it stuffed from wall to wall with gear and supplies. This was a working station, and even this office had to shoulder its share of the work.

It wasn't long before Davies sauntered through the door. The cat was wearing a normal pair of fire house sweat pants, but his tee shirt looked to be two sizes too small, showing off his well developed chest and abs in a way Will could say for certain was *not* within regulation.

Will just raised an eyebrow.

"Mail call," the cat said with a smile, reaching into the band of his sweat pants to pull out a handful of letters and tossing them across the desk.

Will let out a sigh as he flicked through the letters. Bill, junk mail, a new building asking for a fire inspection...

And a final letter from the Mayor's office.

Tapping the edge of the letter against his desk, Will glanced up to Davies. "What do you want to bet this is bad news?"

The cat shrugged. "When was the last time you've ever gotten *good* news from the government? And I think a wise man once said, *they're all just a bunch of mutts.*" The cat's grin widened. "Or I could quote something else that dog once said we should do to those mutts..."

Rolling his eyes, Will slipped a claw into the envelope and gave it a quick tug. Two sheets of paper fell to the desk.

Will cocked his head. They didn't *flutter* like most paper, they *fell*.

Picking up the first sheet, Will rubbed it between his fingers. "I don't think I want to know what the Mayor's paper budget is," he muttered. The paper was almost as thick as parchment, and weighed a ton.

A quick scan down the letter and, for a change, Will was smiling.

The handwriting on the sheet was obviously that of a career bureaucrat. It never used one word where five would work just as well, and the shortest word consisted of six letters. But, all said and done, it was a letter of promotion. Will was, without them ever coming down to ask him about it, now

the official new V-town Fire Chief.

The dog shook his head. It wasn't an offer, Will was the Chief if he wanted to be or not.

Continuing to scan down, Will began to cock his head.

The body of the letter had been written in black ink. Neat and precise. But someone else had gone over the page with a blue pen, leaving notes and adding corrections.

Will had to stifle a less than manly giggle as he read. Whoever the second person was, it was obvious he was no bureaucrat. Passages that Will had been able to understand just fine had margin notes of *'What the gods does this mean?'* and *'Can't you just spit it out?'*

At the end the near illegible blue scrawl said, *'At least you got it down from ten pages to one. Good enough. Just send it like it is.'*

Then, at the bottom of the page, the blue pen was back again, signing the name *Tommy J.W. Taggart*.

Rolling his eyes, Will folded the letter back up and slipped it into one of his desk drawers. He was starting to think he might just like this new mayor.

Unfolding the second sheet of paper, it was crumpled and torn, as if having been shoved in the envelope at the last moment. Will already recognised the blue ink, though he had to fight to make out the near illegible scrawl.

Hey,

You got the letter, you know the deal. Commissioner Sayer said you were the man for the job, so you got it. Hope you wanted it in the first place.

If you're going to be my Fire Chief we should meet face to face sometime. Drop by as soon as you can and we'll take it from there.

TT

Will blinked. Well, he could guess who 'TT' was. Sighing, he handed the letter over to Davies.

The cat stifled a laugh. "So you made Fire Chief?" he said. "What does that make me?"

Will glanced up at him, raising a lip in annoyance. "My work-wife."

For just a moment it looked like the cat had swallowed his own tongue. A soft cry escaped his lips before the cougar doubled over in laughter. "Oh yes, Mister Hamish, I'll be your good little wife!" He just about fell to his knees, tears streaming down his face. "I'll iron your shirts and fix your meals, I'll comb your fur and..." He paused for just a moment, glancing up at Will, smirking. "Do all the wifely duties."

Will just sighed. "You're never going to let me live that line down, are you?"

Chuckles dying away, Davies at long last managed to stand straight again. "Oh I don't know. But it's always good to have something to blackmail you with..."

Sighing, Will just rolled his eyes. "I guess I better be off. It's not good to keep the new boss

waiting.”

It was fifteen minutes later that Will realized *he didn't know where to go*.

Clad in a clean uniform, Will had set off alone towards City Hall. Where else would he go to meet the Mayor? Only once he'd gotten half way there did he realize there was no City Hall standing.

Rounding the last turn, Will could hear the hammers and labourers long before they came into sight. There had to be better than two hundred people here, all working away to clear the rubble that had come down.

Walking on, Will noticed that they'd managed to clear a passage to what looked like one of the City Hall's sub-basements. The dog made a mental note to ask if anyone had survived down there.

Sighing, Will looked around. There are few truisms in the world, but one of them is that labourers and bureaucrats are as different as night and day. It didn't take him long to track down an otter that he could guarantee was a government employee from the bottom of his blunt clawed toes to the tip of his dust stained three piece suit.

“Hey!” Will called. He tried to keep his voice softer than he would when speaking to one of his own men. These office types tend to startle a bit too easy.

As if on cue the otter leapt a good foot into the air, the papers he'd been carrying flying off in all directions.

Will groaned and took a deep breath. This was going to be a while.

No short time later the dog had at last tracked down City Hall's temporary home. Or, more to the point, *one of them*. From what Will could gather City Hall had spread out, taking up a good half dozen different locations.

This old museum was what appeared to be the main one.

Stepping through the front doors, Will came to a sudden and abrupt halt. The line to talk to the front desk just about reached out the door.

A growl pulling at his throat, Will got ready to step out of line. He was the frigging Fire Chief for the gods' sakes. He didn't have time for this.

A police dog standing by the door cleared her throat. “Sorry, Sir,” she said. “Everyone waits in line. Mayor's orders.” Will wasn't quite sure if she recognised him, but kept his place in line none the less.

Four hours later.

Four frigging, bloody, gods' forsaken hours later.

Will double checked the piece of paper in his hands. It had the room number where the Mayor's Office was *supposedly* located. This had to be the one and only room in the entire building that was empty.

When Will had opened the door all he'd been greeted with was a space the size of a broom closet, and coated with an inch of dust. He doubted a soul had stepped foot in here since the quake.

The paper met a quick but gruesome demise, eviscerated into a dozen pieces to flutter to the ground.

Will, hot, angry, and sweat stains showing under his arms, stormed down the hallway and out towards the road.

"I'm *done*," he growled under his breath. "I am frigging *done*."

The world was a red fog around him, all he could see was the door standing between him and the fresh air of the street. The door that stood between him and getting back to his fire station.

Oof.

One moment he'd been storming forward, the next Will was sitting flat on his tail in the middle of the hallway as countless sheets of paper fluttered down around him like snow.

From somewhere just out of sight he could hear a woman curse. Will blushed. She knew more than most sailors he'd met.

A human female scrambled into sight, snatching at the fluttering papers. She was fast. Most of them never touched the ground.

Getting slowly to his feet, Will did his best to keep out of her path. The way she moved, this human reminded him of Anne. He'd bet his spots she'd seen more than her fair share of hardship.

"Here, hold these," she said, never even looking at him, shoving a handful of sheets into Will's arms as she reached for the others. "For the love of... The bureaucrats will go squirely if even one of these gets lost." Stooping down, she snatched one of the sheets from under a passerby's foot. The unlucky cat nearly landed on his nose.

A quick peek at the papers in his arms and Will cocked his head. They looked to be government forms. Dozens of them. They were everything from police reports to zoning requests. Will blinked.

One of the sheets was familiar. It was a departmental status report. He'd written it yesterday.

"Are all these yours?" Will asked, trying to keep his voice light. The dog couldn't think of many people in the government who should have access to this much information.

She scowled and grabbed the sheets, trying to get them squared up before tucking them under the sleeve of her red leather jacket.

"Me?" She let out a laugh. "Hardly. I'd just as likely burn the stuff. They're for my..." She paused for just half a heartbeat. "Boyfriend. He gets to look them all over."

Will smiled. "Oh, a big high mucky-muck, is he?"

She smiled back. The human was on the young side for Will, but she was pretty enough.

"Hardly. Just a silly little wolf who found himself in the wrong place at the wrong time. I don't think even he knows what he's doing half the time. If it wasn't for me and his friends that fuzball wouldn't likely be able to make it out of bed in the morning." She smiled, taking any venom out of her words. "But," she continued, "I need to get going, I..."

A crash echoed though the building. A moment later a static washed voice came over the

ancient PA system. “There will... uh, be a slight delay for anyone exiting the building. We’ve... uh... The arch over the main door as collapsed.”

The human rolled her eyes. “Would you believe this is the *second* time that’s happened? At least it doesn’t sound like anyone was under it today.”

Will grinned. “I guess we’re stuck in here for a while. Is there a cafeteria around? Let me buy you a cup of coffee.”

She blinked, a sudden look of suspicion crossing her face. “You did hear me the first time, right? Boyfriend. Wolves don’t take it well when you two-time on them.”

“Nothing like that,” Will said, taking a half step back. “I just want to make it up to you, knocking you over. I haven’t seen many humans in the city...” She began to back away, suspicion growing. “My mother was human.”

She blinked. A moment later there was another crash as something heavy fell out on the street.

“Sure, why not?”

And, Will added to himself, I wouldn't mind getting another look at those papers.

Calling what this building had a 'cafeteria' was generous on the level of calling a kid with a toy gun a Marine. Stuffed down in the sub-sub-basement, the room set aside to a small café held little more than a service counter and a few folding tables and chairs. The entire place was choked in dust and looked to have been excavated from the land time forgot.

And, judging by the food they had to offer, Will had to wonder if it had been there just as long. Who still sells Twinkies? They had to be a hundred years old if a day. At least they looked the same as they did fresh...

Sitting down across from the woman, Will handed her a cup of coffee so weak it was almost clear. Even then the paper cup was already starting to leak.

“So,” he said, “I never caught your name. I’m Will, fire dog.”

She snorted slightly, grinning. “A dalmatian in the fire department? How original.”

Will lifted a lip, showing just the hint of a fang, but in a grin rather than a snarl. “Oh? And what about you, little red riding hood? Do you wear that jacket just to draw in your big bad wolf?”

At that she nearly spat out her mouthful of coffee.

“What? Why you... you mongrel!”

Will grinned, taking a slow sip of his own drink. “Mongrel, born and raised, ma’am. Half canine, half human. Wouldn’t be anything but.”

She stifled a laugh. “One point, team dog.” Leaning back, she took another sip, grimacing. “I’m Rebecca.”

Will racked his brain, trying to recall if he’d ever heard of her before, or this apparently highly placed wolf boyfriend.

“Can’t say I know of you,” he said.

She let out a long suffering sigh. “And that's just the way I'd like to keep it, *thanks*. Far too many folks seem to want to get to know me these days.”

Will craned his neck to try and make out some of the papers on the table, but she casually gathered them up, setting them face down.

“Good try, dog. But I've been around the block a few times.”

Will blinked. “But that wasn't...”

A moment later the PA system buzzed to life again. “The front doors are clear...” There was another crash, “For now.”

Exchanging a glance, both Will and Rebecca tossed their cups in the general direction of the trash and raced for the stairs.

The human won. She fought dirty.