

“Never thought I’d hear the house so quiet,” Jamal said, waiting for the coffee pitcher to finish brewing. “Just need to get up at the crack of dawn every morning before he turns on the TV.”

Jamal poured himself a cup and after taking a sip he sighed contently. He walked over to the couch and sat down to enjoy the peace before the chaos emerged. Not half an hour later did a gray rabbit walk down stairs rubbing his eyes.

“Morning Fauve,” Jamal said raising his cup as a way to greet him without looking over the couch.

“Morning muttface,” Fauve yawned. “What’s for breakfast?”

“Well there’s cereal, some biscuits, rice, take your pick.”

“What?” Fauve whined. “That stuff’s been in the fridge for days. How come we can’t go out to eat?”

“Because you cause to much trouble anywhere,” Jamal replied.

Fauve frowned. “Yeah right! That’s everyone else. I use to be a demon. A full flegde one too with powers and all that stuff. So I should get more respect, especially from you. A fresh meal a day should be something even you could manage.”

Jamal growled a little but took a deep breathe and sat his cup down on the table. “Right, like you’re such a big help around the house. When you can carry your own weight and actually help out around here, then we can talk about changes.”

“Oh please, I do stuff.”

“Like what?” Jamal turned his head to the side to look at Fauve.

“I keep myself groomed and cleaned, I put clothes up, and I make sure the couch is in peek condition.”

Jamal Scoffs. “You use up all the hot water in the shower, take your clothes out of the clean basket and fold them up instead of both of ours, and you sit on one spot of the couch for hours.”

“What’s your point?” Fauve questioned.

Jamal sighed exaggeratedly and facepawed with both hands, dragging them down his muzzle. Fauve shrugged and went into the kitchen. “Let’s go out to eat or something!” He yelled from the kitchen.

“We are not going out and besides, we’re still on a budget from master Zen.”

“Then go get a job and get more money,” Fauve cried. He tossed things out of the refrigerator to the floor. After scanning over the shelves full of milk, juices, quart containers of different liquids and food, along with zip locked bags of left over meals over the week, Fauve closed the fridge. He jumped on the counter top and reached for a cereal box. “At least you’ll be fresh.” He took down a box and opened it up, seeing nothing but handful of cereal left. “Oh, come on!”

Jamal snickered in the front room until he started hearing things hit the floor from the kitchen. The German Shepard jumped up and ran to the kitchen, gasping as Fauve tossed out near empty boxes of cereal on the floor.

“Fauve!” He shouted.

Fauve stopped and looked over his shoulder. The refrigerator door was left open, the floor littered with bags of food slightly opened or spilled out like rice and diced vegetables, a quart container of grits poured out, and now three boxes of cereal on the floor.

“You’re cleaning all this up!” Jamal growled.

“No way! Not my fault all this stuff is gross and empty. Besides, it was all gonna go bad anyways so just take it out to the trash.”

“That’s not the point,” Jamal folded his arms. “Get down from there, get a broom, and clean this stuff up, now.”

“I’m not doing anything until I get some food first.”

“Clean this mess up and I’ll make something then,” Jamal replied, squeezing the space between his eyes as he tried to control his tone.

“Oh yeah?” Fauve sat down on the counter and eyed him suspiciously, putting a hand on his knee. “What’re you gonna make?”

“I don’t know... Maybe... pancakes... eggs...” He said.

Fauve shook his head. “Forget it, I wanna go out to eat. Call up Zen and have him transfer some money to us.”

“It doesn’t work like that, now clean this mess up now!” Jamal barked.

“Why don’t you make me?” Fauve challenged with a smirk.

Jamal lost his patience and ran at the rabbit. He stepped on one of zip lock bags and slid forward. Fauve jumped up when Jamal hit the counter top and the rabbit slammed down feet first on the back of the canine’s head. The black rabbit laughed and curled his toes up tight, causing the dog to yelp. Due to the magic cast on them by their master, Jamal’s head flattened against the cold surface of the counter and the back of his head bulged out between Fauve’s toes like putty. Fauve jumped to the floor and ran out.

“Call that nine tailed flea bag and get him over here!” Fauve yelled.

Jamal peeled his face off the counter top and shook his head. His flattened face shifted back to normal and he growled loudly. He turned to the side and ran after the black rabbit. Fauve ran upstairs and waited until he heard Jamal storming up the steps to get him. Fauve revealed himself and jumped down from the top of the steps. Jamal looked up after hearing the rabbit squeaked and saw two paws in sight.

“Call him!” Fauve shouted.

Jamal barked as Fauve’s gray soles smothered his face and he flew back downstairs. The two rolled along the floor and crashed into the wall, Fauve smacked face first into it. The clock hanging above them fell and broke after hitting Jamal’s head. The German Shepard fumed with a red face as a comical bump grew on his forehead.

“Why... you...” He pushed the rabbit off and jumped on him. Anything that wasn’t nailed down jumped in the air when Jamal hit the floor and the two formed a dust cloud, throwing kicks and punches at each other. The dust cloud circled around the room, knocking over the table, chairs, and pushing the couch around. It finally cleared with Fauve sitting on Jamal’s back, squeezing the sides of his face with his feet.

“I said call him! I’m not spending another second in this house!”

Fauve grabbed Jamal’s arms under his armpits and pulled, making the Shepard yelp.

“Get off me you stupi- grmgrmph!” Fauve toes pulled at Jamal’s face, stretching his cheeks and his head slightly then slammed it back, making his lips bulge out into a kissy face. Fauve laughed and did it repeatedly.

“What’s wrong mutt face? I can’t hear ya, speak up,” Fauve teased.

Jamal lifted his legs up behind Fauve’s back and managed to wrap one foot around his throat and pull him down. Fauve squeaked and let go of Jamal’s arms. The two rumbled again and Jamal managed to slam Fauve down into a circlemat. The rabbit’s ears stuck out of his disk form, showing only his stretched out face while his other limbs were stuck to his body.

Jamal grinned and took up the disk then roughly squeezed the rabbit into submission in his hands.

“I’m gonna enjoy this!”

“Gmmrmph! Mofpprh!” Fauve cried.

Fauve’s body felt like cookie dough in the Shepard’s hands. Each squeeze made the rabbit bulge between his fingers, each stretch made the rabbit squeak and wiggle in a vain attempt to escape, and each beat applied pressure to the rabbit instead of pain, making several oomph, oof, and squeak sounds.

Jamal sighed contently and walked to the couch after using Fauve as a stress sponge and plopped down. “You’re not gonna let this go are you?” He asked.

Due to Fauve’s face being contorted somewhere inside the putty form, Fauve gave a muffled response and wiggled hard enough to almost yank Jamal’s arms around despite his strong grip over him.

“Fine, so long as it’ll shut you up and make you behave.” Jamal rubbed his face, getting the rabbit paw marks off and started tapping the orange collar around his neck. After tapping it a few times to make it glow, a small speck of fire leaped from the collar and landed on the carpet, starting to grow.

The flames didn’t burn the carpet and grew towards the ceiling, but stopped after reaching approximately 5’5 feet off the ground. The flame took the form of a silhouette anthropomorphic fox with one tail. Jamal watched in amusement as Fauve managed to bring his face to the surface of his ball shaped form to watch. Jamal held the sides of his head firmly but the two said nothing until their master appeared.

An orange fox with yellow chest fur, wearing a blue v-neck shirt and black jeans appeared and stretched.

“Not that often I get a call from either of you,” he said “How are you both?”

“Master Zen,” Jamal said. “Nice to see you too.”

“Yeah, great, how you doing? Good? Good... Now, give me some money so I can go to the mall,” Fauve stated.

Jamal squeezed him hard, making his eyes bulge out comically. “Do you have any restraint at all!” Growled the dog.

“Mmmgrrrrrf!” Fauve squeaked.

Zen laughed and shook his head. “I’m glad to see the house isn’t completely torn apart.”

“It’s been a relatively easy morning...” Jamal grumbled. He threw Fauve to the other end of the couch. Fauve hit the armrest and his body popped back to normal. He sprawled out for a moment before sitting up straight.

“Come on, cough it up,” Fauve persisted. “I know you have more money than you can count, quit hording it.”

Jamal shook his head and Zen grinned at Fauve. Fauve’s body shivered from his bushy tail up to the back of his neck and his large floppy ears dropped, making him smile nervously and break out into a cold sweat.

Zen looked towards Jamal. “Has he behaved himself enough to be let out?”

Jamal scoffed. “Of course no-”

Fauve quickly pounced Jamal before he finished and slammed down on his face. The Shepard’s body immediately transformed into a couch cushion to fit the situation and he wiggled madly under the rabbit’s pants.

“Why you always gotta ask him for everything? What? You can’t make decisions on your own?”

“Because you have a very small tendency to fib when I asked you if you’ve done anything,” Zen snickered, folding his arms. “For example, did you make that dent in the wall where the clock use to hang? And has this table always been flipped over to the side when I come to visit you?”

Fauve looked over at the mess he made and scratched the back of his head. “Well uh...”

“And another thing,” Zen said as he sniffed “What’s that smell?”

The fox walked towards the kitchen and Fauve gulped. “Wait, wait, don’t go in there!” He reached out to grab Zen’s tail but was tossed off by Jamal. The rabbit hit his face when he landed on the carpet and Jamal popped back to normal, stretching out. Zen walked into the kitchen, seeing discarded food, pots, pans, and other things scattered across the floor and counter top. He also saw a strange imprint on the counter of Jamal’s bloated lips when Fauve jumped on the back of his head.

“Would someone care to explain why the house I’m paying for is a mess?” Zen asked sharply.

Jamal’s fur shivered and he whimpered. He jumped and hid behind the couch. Fauve shivered as well and crawled to Jamal but Jamal pushed his foot against the rabbit’s face back into the open. Zen came back into the living room, seeing Fauve.

“Boys! Get out here!”

At the command of their master, Fauve and Jamal’s orange collars glowed brightly for a moment. Both of their wills obeyed and they stood up like soldiers. Jamal sweated a little while Fauve gulped. Fauve tried to tug on his collar but the enchanted item stuck to him like glue.

“First, both of you, clean up the kitchen. Next, patch the wall up and fix the living room like it should be.”

“But it’s not my fault!” Jamal barked. “It was Fau-”

“I don’t care,” Zen interrupted “Who’s fault it is. Both of you live together, both of you do not work and live under my finances, and both are you will share the blame for whatever happens.”

“How’s that fair?” Fauve frowned, folding his arms. “Not my fault he’s a terrible cook. If he’d just learn how to make something instead of giving me these two day dead old dinners for a meal this wouldn’t have happened.”

“Are you serious?!” Jamal growled at the rabbit. “If you weren’t so picky, self centered, and pretentious, not to mention lazy, irresponsible, spoiled-”

Fauve made a mouth gesture with his hand to make fun of Jamal as he talked. “All I wanted was a fresh meal,” he said. “I can’t cook and you told me not to go near the stove anymore so what was I suppose to do?”

“That’s because last time I let you near the stove you tried to bury us in popcorn then tried to turn our house into a popcorn store!”

“Hey, you keep going on and on about a budget. We need money to do extra stuff so-”

“ENOUGH!” Zen shouted. A zipper appeared on both their maws and shut the two from arguing. “Now, here’s what’s going to happen so pay attention.”

An orange aura enveloped the rabbit and Shepard. Their collars glowed again by the command of their master and they puffed up their chests, flicked their ears, and listened. Each with a zipped up lip and both their orange eyes fixated on the fox.

“You two are going to clean up the mess you made, period. It is nine am right now. If you two can manage to clean up everything, get your beds straight, and clean yourselves up, cause I still smell morning breathe and coffee on you, then maybe I’ll lend you both some extra money and you can go to the mall.”

Fauve’s eyes lit up at the sound of that. Jamal nodded in understanding. Zen looked at them, seeing Jamal eager to move while Fauve started daydreaming and licking his lips to some fantasy going on in his head.

“Alright, get to work,” Zen said.

The two were finally able to move and Jamal grabbed the black rabbit by the throat.

“Hoock,” Fauve said. Jamal roughly twisted the rabbit’s body and molded him into a broom. Jamal grinned, grabbed Fauve’s ankles, and pushed Fauve’s head on the ground to start sweeping up the mess. Jamal smiled as he used his friend’s long rabbit ears to sweep up more areas. Fauve wiggled madly but his body was twisted and his arms were wrapped around him so tightly that he couldn’t break free. He wiggled his toes and jerked them around every time Jama used his head to sweep up more bags.

“You’re so dead when I get free,” Fauve grumbled, his white hair getting lint, dirt, bags, and other things mixed into it while being used as a cleaning utensil.

“You’d better straighten up and cooperate, otherwise you’re not going to the mall and even if you do, you won’t be getting a lot of money. We only have an hour to make this work so shut up and clean.”

Fauve grumbled and continued to wiggle until Jamal finished cleaning the floors with him, aside from the scattered pots and pans. When the garbage bags were tied, Jamal dusted off Fauve’s head, twisted him, and let the rabbit spin until he turned back to normal. Fauve grunted and rubbed his head, getting the excess dirt out and stood up frowning at the dog.

“You take out the trash and I’ll put the pots and pans up then get to work on the wall while you straighten up the living room, again.” Jamal handed Fauve the garbage bag. Fauve took it.

“Alright chum, I’ll get this and you get to work on your part,” Fauve said with a forced smile.

Jamal smiled and turned his back. Fauve yanked the garbage bag and swung it over his shoulder, hitting Jamal in the back during the process. The German Shepard flew and landed in one of the cabinets, crashing into a few more pots already stacked inside. Fauve snickered under his breath and whistled as he walked out the door to take the trash out.

Jamal crawled out, growling to himself with a visibly big knot on his head. He touched it and yelped. "If we weren't half toonish..." He bared his teeth a bit. After taking a deep breath he stood up and started picking the pots and pans scattered around the kitchen.

"Lousy fox with his stupid collar," Fauve mumbled to himself. He opened the lid to the trash can and threw the bag in. "Why do I gotta do manual labor anyways? If I had this stupid thing off, I could be long gone by now. I would have a whole town in the palm of my hands... One day, I'll get them both."

"Sounds like you're in a pickle my friend," said a voice.

"Who's talking?!" Fauve looked around and saw a black cat leaning on the fence. The large feline smirked with blue eyes, a used, beat up top hat, and a ripped leather jacket despite the warm sunny weather outside.

"No need for alarm, I come in peace," he snickered. "In fact, I think I may have a solution to your problem."

Fauve eyed him suspiciously and folded his arms. "Yeah, like I'm gonna take help from a half dressed bum." He looked over the fence, seeing a shopping cart behind the cat. The cat leaned to the side a little to block it from his view, smiling. "And his shopping cart. Get loss peasant, I ain't got no money."

"Well from the rant you just gave that I may or may not have overheard... Yeah it sure does," the feline snickered.

Fauve scoffed and grinned. "Least I got a better set up than your sorry hide."

"Ya think so? I can go wherever I want, do whatever I want, and I don't need restrictions, babysitters, or" he snickered, eyeing the collar around Fauve's neck, "a master."

Fauve grunted a little. "He is not my master! Got it, punk?"

The cat raised his paws up in surrender. "Whoa there, take it easy friend. I didn't come here to argue. You got a nice set up the way it is, nothing wrong with that I'm sure. I just wanted to see if I could make things go... a little towards your way."

The black rabbit raised an ear up for a moment, looked at the house, then back towards the bum. "I'm listening."

"You said if that collar was off you'd be long gone huh?"

"Ya got that right, but I can't get this stupid thing off!"

The cat rubbed his chin and examined the collar thoroughly. After seeing the smooth design, the supposed four expensive gems embedded in it, and how clean it looked, his tail wagged happily. "Yeah, I know a guy who can get that thing off ya. I could show you too him, no charge."

"Really..." Fauve started to smile a little then frowned. "Ugh! I can't. We're going to the mall later and that stupid mutt will be keeping an eye on me."

"Yeah, that's gonna be a challenge... hold up, lemme see what I got."

The cat turned around and dug through his cart. Fauve looked over the fence to watch. Aside from boxes, rugs, blankets, and food, he had candles, a money jar with a few coins inside, some folders, and a big duffle bag with the handle broken. From the duffle he pulled out a small vial and held it up. "Yeah, this is it."

"What's that stuff?" Fauve questioned.

The cat span around and slowly handed it to him. "The solution to your problem. Just give old sniffer in a good long wiff of this. He'll be out for hours."

Fauve grinned and took it but the cat yanked it back. "This is my last piece man. You wanna get free of that collar, I'll help, but you'd better keep your end of the bargain and sneak out."

"Yeah, yeah, I got it, I got it, alright? Just hand it over. I'll give it to him when we get to the mall at some point."

"Naw man, I don't have insurance you'll hit me up afterwards."

Fauve grumbled. "So what do you want then?"

"You said you're going to the mall downtown right?"

Fauve nodded.

"Meet me outside the mall closest to the garbage cans in the back by noon. You do that and I'll take you to that man who can get your collar off and you'll be free as a bird."

"That's it? Just be there by noon?"

"Yep, no cost, this one's on the house."

"Deal!" Fauve said eagerly. The cat chuckled and handed him the vial. Fauve snatched it and put it in his pocket.

"Pleasure doing business with you my friend."

"Yeah you too pal," Fauve said. He ran back into the house and closed the door behind him. The cat watched him then took out a cell phone from his pocket and made a call.

“Hey Benji my man, it’s Tony... Yeah... Yeah don’t worry I’ll get the money to you by tonight... Don’t worry I got a plan... Yeah... I’ll pay it all and more... Yeah the usual spot... Later.”

Fauve whistled when he got back inside, seeing the floor clean again. Jamal patched up the hole they made in the wall and hung the clock back up.

“What took you so long out there?” Jamal asked.

“Oh... Nothing, just taking in the air,” Fauve reassured. “What do you have to do next?”

“What do you,” Jamal said as he pointed to the rabbit then back to the living room “Have to do? Fix the living room.”

“Hey, the living room wasn’t my fault remember?” The rabbit huffed and folded his arms.

“Either you move the furniture back the way it was or I mix you in with the underpants load for the laundry.”

Fauve’s eyes widened. “You wouldn’t...”

Jamal sighed and rubbed his head. He took a deep breath, closed his eyes, cracked the knuckles on his fingers and turned to face Fauve.

“Okay! Okay! I’m going!” Fauve grumbled, walking with his hands in his pocket. As he walked into the living room he noticed Zen wasn’t there. “Where’s that fox at?” He asked, lifting the table up reluctantly.

“He went upstairs to inspect the place,” Jamal said.

“Why does he care? He doesn’t have to live with a smelly dog all day.” Fauve went around, grabbed the couch cushions, and grinned when he found the remote, hiding it under the couch for later.

“Are you deaf or something? He pays for us to live here. Or would you rather go back to being his beanbag chair huh?”

“I’ll use you as a beanbag chair,” Fauve stood up and folded his arms.

Jamal scoffed and started hammering a nail into the wall to hang the clock up.

Fauve huffed and mumbled under his breath as he continued working. A few minutes later, Zen came back downstairs as they were finishing up.

“Alright boy, you’ll be happy to know I’m lending you each about \$300 to spend at the mall cause I don’t want you arguing again with limited funds.”

Jamal's ears flicked up in surprise. "Did you just say th-" The Shepard bashed his thumb by accident and howled. He dropped the hammer and grabbed his hand, whining and grunting as he tried to ease the pain. Fauve burst out laughing after seeing Jamal dance around. Jamal looked at his thumb, swollen red and pulsing comically. He flattened his ears and sucked on it lightly. Fauve fell on the couch, clutching his stomach and wiping his face of tears.

"That's not funny Fauve," Zen said as he tried to hide his smirk.

Jamal shook his hand and the swelling disappeared, making him sigh in relief. "I'll never understand how this magic you have on us works... But it comes in handy sometimes."

Zen cleared his throat. "Anyways, rules before you both go..."

Fauve was still laughing on the couch with his feetpaws dangling off the armrest. Jamal came over and yanked him up by the ears to his feet. Fauve yelped and swatted at him, still snickering but straightened himself up.

"Yes you each have a budget to spend on the mall today. Jamal, your usual job is to watch him and make sure he doesn't get into any trouble. And Fauve," Zen glared at him. The fur on the back of the black rabbit stood on ends and he gulped. "Do not get into any trouble at the mall. Understand? I don't want to come home and find out I need to bail you out because you shoplifted. You cause any sort of problem whatsoever, you will not be doing it again, your TV and video game privileges will be suspended a month, and you'll be handling all the chores around the house."

"WHAT?!" Fauve shouted. "That's totally unfair! You can't just lay down all these rules for me!"

"Either abide by them or you're not leaving, period." Zen folded his arms.

Fauve grunted and stomped his foot rapidly as he folded his arms and pouted like a child without Ice-cream after dinner. Fauve looked to the side and twitched his nose thinking. He thought back to the offer that bum made him and a quick smile came to his face before it disappeared. Zen raised an eyebrow but said nothing until Fauve responded.

"Fine..." Fauve said.

"Look me in the eyes and say that," Zen demanded.

Fauve turned his head and met Zen's pink eyes with his orange ones. "I said fine, what more do you want?"

"It's a start," Zen said. He walked to Jamal and gave him the money for both of them. "I included a little extra for bus money and food unless you guys wanna walk."

"How come Jamal gets my share?!" Fauve squeaked.

"Because the last time he told me you had money you tried to buy three weeks worth of pizza in one night," Zen replied.

“They had a good sales and I was starving,” Fauve grumbled.

“I want you both home by 5pm. Whatever you buy just remember you have to carry it with you.”

After catching the bus and traveling for an hour, Jamal and Fauve stepped out and marveled at the super mall downtown. Fauve yawned and rubbed his face.

“I can’t believe you made us waste an hour of our time with a stupid bus ride,” Fauve frowned as he scratched his back.

“It was either that or walking for a few hours,” Jamal snorted while stretching.

“Or,” Fauve started sarcastically “You go to Zen, ask him to open a freaking portal, and walla! Ten seconds and we would have been here!”

Jamal covered his mouth. “Shut up Fauve!” He shushed. “People around here don’t take too kindly to magic, alright? We don’t need to cause a scene.”

Jamal looked around to make sure no one heard him. Fauve grumbled while muffled, grinned, and opened his maw slowly to bite down on the Shepard’s paw. “And besides, if you behave yourself and we get to go out more, then you’ll need to get familiar with being outside and trave- Yelp!”

Jamal yanked his hand back and grunted, rubbing it while it pulsed red and inflated.

Fauve snickered. “Don’t worry, I’ll be free soon enough.”

Jamal growled lowly and shook his hand back to normal. “Not off to a great start,” he frowned.

“Oh lighten up! We’re finally here! Now take me to go get food! I’m starving since someone failed to mention we’d have to wait an hour longer after cleaning!”

Jamal sighed and rolled his eyes as the two walked up the stairs and passed the double doors. Fauve smiled widely with his hands behind his back, looking at the stores, plants, clean floors and food everywhere. “It’s... glorious...”

“I suppose we should look at the map,” Jamal suggested. “There’s a lot of food to choose from so we’ll need to pic-”

“Breakfast!” Fauve grabbed Jamal by his orange collar and yanked him towards the food court. Jamal yelped and stumbled as he followed, flailing his arms from the slight choking. Without the foggiest hint of direction the black furred rabbit followed his nose to the source of food. His tail wagged, his floppy ears flicked a little and his stomach growled at him. Fauve licked his lips and gasped, letting go of Jamal’s collar.

Jamal fell to the floor, panting a little, then stood up and cleared his throat. “Why you...”

“Look at this!” Fauve said, giving a wide gesture. After walking down the hall the two stood in front of the seating area. In front of them was an oval shaped room and the walls lined up with food from pasta to fast food to deep fried burgers to ice cream and desserts.

“I’ve never seen so much food in one place!”

“Yeah I’ll bet,” Jamal dusted his clothes and looked at each food station. “Well, there’re about eight of them and each one has a line.”

“Wait... we gotta wait even longer?! Come on I’m starving!”

“Fauve, calm down. We’ll wait in line, get your food, then go shopping. You’ve waited all morning, what’s a few more minutes gonna hurt?”

“It’s gonna hurt me if I don’t eat now! I’ve gotten up, cleaned the house, took out the trash, listened to a thirty minute lecture from Zen about what I can and can’t do while I’m her-”

“Hey guys, long time no see,” said a small otter walking towards them.

“Not now,” Fauve said, waiving his hand dismissively without looking at Jax, keeping his attention on Jamal. Jax folded his arms, swaying his rudder annoyed. “Where was I? Oh! Had to sit and wait on a bus for a freaking hour next to a man coughing the whole way here and now we finally get to the mall and I have to wait?!”

“Fauve,” Jax said.

“What?!” He turned around and looked at him. The blue eyed otter tapped his webbed footpaw on the ground.

“Are you always this annoying?” Jax asked then leaned slightly to look at Jamal. “How can you stand living with him?”

“He makes a good paw rest,” Jamal snickered. “How’ve you been Jax? Haven’t seen you in a while.”

“Doing good, Adryx and I came by to-”

“Wait, he’s here?!” Fauve looked around for the scaly creature.

“Yes...” Jax said frowning. “Over there,” he pointed. The tall green dragon stood in line for a burger and looked towards the group. He waved his arm and gestured for them to come over.

Fauve glared at the dragon and stomped his foot a few times, fuming a little.

“You guys wanna join us for lunch?” Jax asked. “Adryx and I came here because I wanted to get something for my girl. Zen said this was a good place to be. We got here about half an hour ago and went window shopping for a bit.”

“Thanks, sure, we’ll join” Jamal said.

Fauve closed his eyes and took a deep breathe. He turned back to Jamal and opened his eyes with his palms together. “So, where’s the next mall at?”

Jamal turned Fauve around and pushed him by the shoulders towards Adryx. The rabbit grunted, folded his arms, puffed his cheeks, and let his ankles skid across the ground as they approached.

“Long time no see Jamal. Hey Fauve, how’s it going?” The dragon asked.

Fauve said nothing, keeping his arms folded and looked to the side.

“We’re doing good,” Jamal spoke for them. “Didn’t expect to see you guys here.”

“I didn’t either,” Adryx responded. “It’s a little surprising to see Fauve out here too.”

“What’s that suppose to mean?” Fauve grumbled.

Adryx shook his head. “Nothing, I just mean it’s nice to see you again. You’re not still sour about me turning you into gum last time... right?”

“Gee I don’t know, I only felt you chewing everywhere on my body so you tell me.” Fauve retorted.

“Hey, what’s your problem?” Jax asked folding his arms.

“My problem is I want this overgrown lizard shipped back to whatever egg he came from,” Fauve said turning to Jax.

“Watch it rabbit. That’s my brother you’re talking about,” Jax cautioned. Jax’s right hand under his arm slightly cracked with lightning.

Fauve raised an eyebrow and looked between the two. “So what? Not enjoying the glamorous lifestyle of being a pet like him too?”

“That’s my brother’s choice, not mine. You really are foulmouthed.”

“And you’re delusional if you think a green reptile and otter can be brothers,” Fauve scoffed.

“We’re not related by blood but so what?” Jax frowned and his chest rumbled in annoyance.

“Alright, that’s enough,” Jamal said as he stepped between the two.

“Um... excuse me,” said a badger waiting for them to order. Fauve looked up from Jax, seeing they’d walked up in the line since they were arguing. “Can I take your order?”

Adryx smiled. “Yeah I-”

“Me first!” Fauve pushed his way through Jamal, Jax, and Adryx, standing in front and looked at the menu. Adryx growled and folded his arms, trying not to cause a scene.

“How in the world can Jamal deal with him?” The tall dragon wondered to himself, frowning.

Fauve quickly gave his order then smiled and went to go wait in the seating area. He stuck his tongue out at Adryx as he walked, the green dragon trying his best to ignore him. Jax frowned and went to wait in the seating area too, while Jamal sighed and waited to order next. Fauve sat down and plopped his feet up on the table with his hands behind his back as he waited.

Jax came over and pulled a chair out, climbed into it, and sat on the table.

“What’re you doing?” Fauve asked, eyeing him.

“I need to sit on the table,” Jax said folding his arms.

“Why? Call one of the workers and get a baby seat or something. You can fit those right?”

Jax glared at the rabbit who gave an uncaring smirk in return. “I’m not getting in a booster chair!”

“Fine, then get a few chairs and stack em up. I don’t wanna eat with your feet and tails on the table when it gets here.”

“You’re one to talk,” Jax retorted, looking at Fauve large heavy feet, leaning the table towards him just a little. “Why don’t you get your feet off the table?”

“Cause the food’s not here yet and this is comfortable.”

Jax rubbed his face, trying to stay calm while Fauve whistled, waiting. Jax looked at Fauve’s orange collar around his neck then back at Adryx’s and Jamal’s. “Why do you have a collar?”

“What?” Fauve asked.

“I said, why do you have a collar? What did Zen do to you?”

Fauve grumbled and pulled at the collar. It stretched slightly before snapping back into place, a faint orange glow emitted in that instance then faded. “Because my stupid old master thought I was a lousy demon and traded me to get me out of his hair. Serve the old dead geezer right too,” Fauve ranted.

Jax blinked for a moment and cleaned his ear. “Wait, wait... You’re... a demon?”

“Ya got that right rudder butt,” Fauve smirked. “Demon rabbit but ever since I was traded, Zen stripped me of my magic. Stupid fox... I use to go wild and do whatever I want, now I’m stuck as a freaking prisoner with a smelly mutt for a roommate.”

Jax narrowed his eyes skeptically. “Yeah right, and I’m the god of thunder,” he scoffed.

Fauve gritted his teeth at that remark then grinned. He took one foot off the table and slammed his heel down with the other. Jax yelped as he flew off the table, over Fauve's head, and landed on another table. Jax fell onto a chair and down to the floor. People in the line looked at the two, as well as Jamal and Adryx after they managed to get their food.

"Oh Trinity..." Jamal said.

Jax stood up and dusted himself off, glaring at Fauve.

"What're you looking at me for? The table was floppy," Fauve said, demonstrating by wobbling the table a little.

Jax growled and his groomed fur stood on ends slowly. The lights in the food court flicked on and off repeatedly the more Jax cracked his knuckles. Between each finger a small stream of lightning passed through, illuminating his hands slightly.

"I am gonna roast you and stick you on a-" Jax yelped as he was picked up by Adryx. The otter growled and kicked around. "Lemme go Adryx!"

"Fauve's a jerk but you can't roast him in the mall Jax!" The dragon hugged Jax to his chest while the Otter ranted. Jamal noticed people started to gather to see a fight but he pushed through till he got to Fauve.

"Yeah sorry Adryx, we'll have lunch another time," Jamal insisted then grabbed Fauve's ear tightly. "A word, rabbit!"

"OW! Hey! Ah! Stop!" Fauve yelled out loudly as he was dragged into the bathroom.

"Adryx let me go! I'm fine now... I'm fine..." He said through his teeth. Adryx dropped his brother to his feet and he stormed off.

"Jax, where're you going?"

"Away from here and to get a fish!" He shouted back. Adryx looked towards the bathroom, sighed, and ran after Jax.

"What is wrong with you?!" Jamal spiked, pushing Fauve against the wall. Fauve whined and held his ear, rubbing it soothingly and glared at the Shepard.

"He started it!" Fauve retorted. "He insulted me when I told him I was a demon."

"Who cares!" Jamal growled, slightly baring his teeth. "You were about to start a fight in there! I don't know what happened and I don't care but you're gonna go out there and apologize to Jax right now."

"Screw that!" Fauve snapped. "Why should I have to do anything you say huh? All you do is complain about rules, keep me on a leash, tell me what I can and can't do, and yank me around like a rag doll."

“Because you’re a spoiled, pompous, arrogant, self righteous, condescending, pretentious, brat!” Jamal finally snapped. “I’ve tried hard to go easy on you! I’ve tried to live with you, tried to show you how to behave, and have tried to keep my patience in dealing with you but I’ve had it! We’re going home right now to tell Zen. I’m sick of all the crap you put me through and I’m sick of dealing with you!”

Fauve was silent, his eyes wide a little. Jamal tried to control his breathing but the anger in his face caused the rabbit to step back a little.

“No more,” Jamal said. “Now let’s go.”

Jamal turned around to walk out the bathroom. Fauve held his chest and his hand shook a little as he looked down with his ears drooping. He walked slowly behind the Shepard as he processed what he said to him. Fauve looked up at him again, and his he curled his fingers into a fist. Without thinking, he reached into his pocket and pulled out the vial from earlier.

“Hey mutt!” Fauve shouted.

Jamal turned around. “What?!” The German Shepard barked and whined, covering his face when Fauve threw the vial at his face. The shattered glass fell to the ground and the liquid scent filled the K-9’s snout. Fauve watched with a deep frown, waiting to see if this would work.

“What the heck is wrong with y-”

After Jamal took a big wiff of the stuff his body froze. His eyes turned bloodshot and glossy, his neck fur stood on ends all the way down to his tail and he fell backwards like a statue off balance. Fauve, surprised, walked over and looked at Jamal. Due to the nature of the magic they both had over them, Jamal’s eyes were marked with X’s, symbolizing a K.O or knock out.

“It... It worked,” Fauve said, a mix of surprise and happiness. “It actually worked...”

Fauve raised a foot and placed it on the Shepard’s cheek, tapping it. Jamal remained motionless. Fauve covered his nose as the smell started to kick in around the bathroom. He looked towards the door then grabbed Jamal.

“And now I don’t have to deal with you anymore.” Fauve dragged Jamal into one of the stalls and propped him up on the toilet seat. He looked at his passed out friend for a brief moment in silence then scoffed. “And I’ll be free of that fox too.” He reached into Jamal’s pocket and took out all the money he had then patted him down for anything else. He refused to take the house keys and after feeding his pockets, he walked off. He stopped however and walked back. Rubbing his chin.

“I feel like I’m forgetting something...” He took a good look at Jamal from head to toe and spotted it. “There it is.” He reached over and grabbed Jamal’s collar, yanking it over his head. Jamal’s neck stretched for a moment from the toonish magic but he got it off.

“I don’t need you calling for help or controlling me from a distance either.” He bent forward and tapped his cheek a few times. “Later.”

Fauve put the collar in his pocket then walked towards the door. He stopped before opening it and looked behind him. Thoughts of his life with Jamal filled his mind. The rabbit sniffed a little, wiped his nose, and frowned. He pushed the doors and walked out with his hands in his pocket.

“Stupid mutt...” He grumbled under his breath. “I won’t be needing him anymore.” Fauve looked up and walked away from the food court. He looked himself over, wearing black pants with a black shirt on. “I better get a change of clothes first. Don’t need scale face and that stupid otter pup to find me out.”

The rabbit looked around and went into the first store he saw. After twenty minutes, he came out with light brown pants, a long sleeve white shirt and a blue short sleeve shirt over it. He smiled. “So that’s how that works. Get clothes, buy it and walk out with em... Sweet!” In his right hand he held a bag containing his old clothes. He grinned and threw them in the trash. “And I still got plenty of money to spare.”

Fauve looked over at the clock, eyeing another hour till noon. “I got some time, there should be another food court somewhere.” Fauve snickered and put his hands back in his pocket. As he searched for another food court he went into random stores that piqued his fancy. He bought a black hat, new watch, light brown toeless socks, a silver necklace, and a fancy belt. He found the food court shortly after and filled up to his hearts content, eating a double cheese burger with everything on it, a large fries, and a vanilla shake. In his last few minutes before he was suppose to meet at the rendezvous point behind the mall near the dumpster, Fauve stopped in front of one last store. He eyed the kids playing with stuffed animals of different kinds and smiled a little. He looked around and after a bit of hesitation, went inside.

“Where is he?” Tony grumbled, looking at an old watch around his wrist. He paced back and forth around the garbage can, pretending to be on the phone in case someone got suspicious. “He’s freaking late!” He started growling a little then took a deep breath, calming down. “He’ll be here Tony, don’t worry. It’s all gonna work out.” He told himself.

“Hey Tony!” Fauve said, dusting the remaining crumbs off his outfit.

Tony looked over him and smiled widely. “There ya are, man. Thought you weren’t gonna show for a minute.”

“And miss out on freedom? Fat chance!” He tugged on the collar around his neck. “And you’re sure your friends can get this thing off? It’s heavily enchanted.”

Tonny looked confused at that last statement. “What?” He shook his head. “Oh! Yeah, yeah, my boys can get it off no problem. Rest assured my friend, we’ll get you out of that.” He looked him over. “Nice outfit. I’m guessing my little gift worked?”

“Like a dream,” Fauve took out Jamal’s collar and spun it around with his finger. “I’m gonna have no more problems from that guy.”

Tony looked that item over. “What’s that?”

“Oh, this is the collar my frie-” He paused and corrected himself. “That mutt had. I took it to sell.”

When Fauve stopped spinning and showed it to Tony, the cat’s eyes lit up in happiness. The same type of jewels rested on that collar. He smiled wickedly and gave it back to Fauve for now.

“Well follow me my new friend, we got some work to do,” Tony walked towards the alley with Fauve following.

Tony looked around cautiously and made sure they were far enough away from the mall. He walked over to a garage and banged on the door. “Hey! It’s me, open up!” Tony shouted.

A small sliding door opened, showing a pair of black eyes scanning over the cat and rabbit. “Oh it’s you. What do you want Tony?” The voice asked from the other side.

“My friend here needs some help removing a certain neck wear. And afterwards, I gonna repay my debt.”

The other guy laughed and shook his head. “Yeah right, come back when you mean it Tony.”

His voice deepened, threateningly. “Or you won’t leave here again the next time you show up empty handed.” He slid the gap closed.

“Not the most friendly of sorts,” Fauve noticed, folding his arms.

“May I?” Tony asked, holding his hand out to receive the collar.

“Ugh... Sure... I guess,” Fauve handed him Jamal’s collar from his pocket. He took it and banged on the garage door again, waiting patiently.

The mini slide opened and those black eyes returned. “I said beat it Tony, or I-”

Tony held up the collar to his face, showing him the jewels. “Let me in already!”

The eyes widened from seeing the sparkling gems. He said nothing for a moment then closed the slide. The garage door lifted up and the other side showed a large brown bear in torn blue jeans, a white tank top, and a cap on his head. Fauve looked inside, seeing him work on a few motorcycles with bottles of beer and other drinks lying about. Fauve shivered from the smell.

“Ugh! Smells like a dead squirrel in here!” He said aloud, covering his nose.

The bear glared at Fauve, his eye twitching a bit.

“Don’t worry about him,” Tony said, chuckling nervously. He ran behind Fauve and pushed him inside. “Let’s go, come on!” He said.

The bear poked his head out to look around then slid the garage door down. Tony opened the door into the bear’s yard where a few people sat around in lawn chairs playing cards and one stood up as a

bodyguard. Tony gulped and slowly approached the group. Fauve tilted his head as he watched the five muscular bears concentrating on their game.

“What do you want now Tony?” Growled one of the larger bears under an umbrella. Compared to the other bears, he wore a fancy outfit, rings on his finger, a chain over his neck, and had a guard, big broad gorilla, watching over him from behind. The rest of his friends weren’t greatly dressed. They turned to the cat and rabbit.

“Yeah, right, sorry,” Tony stuttered then cleared his throat. “I’m here to pay you back the debt I owe but I... We need a little help.”

Fauve folded his arms, tapping his foot lightly on the grass as he waited.

“Tony,” said the boss bear “I want you to listen, and listen good. Understand me?”

“Y-yes sir,” Tony responded.

“The next time you show your face here again, without my money, let’s just say you won’t be walking out of here next time.” The boss bear didn’t raise his head from the card table then slapped his hands down, showing all his card. The other bears groaned in misery as the boss smiled triumphantly. The other bears admitted to their game and took out their wallets, counting the money they placed on their bets and handed it to the boss.

“B-but boss listen I’m serious this time. Look,” he yanked Fauve to his side, making the rabbit squeak. The bear rubbed his brow.

“Oh boy, oh boy,” he muttered quietly with a hint of agitation in his tone. The gorilla behind him snorted at Tony.

Tony pointed to Fauve’s neck. “Look, see, this guy, my buddy, he has it.”

“Hey! What’re you think you’re doing?!” Fauve huffed, pushing him but Tony had a firm grip.

“Shut up or they’ll skin us both. You want your freedom then play along,” Tony hushed with a dark look on his face. Fauve scowled at him and tapped his foot faster in irritation but tried not to say anything.

The sound of the foot tapping irritated the bears and they looked at Fauve. Some of them scoffed at Fauve’s weak exterior but one of them noticed the jewels around Fauve’s neck and his eyes widened after scrutiny.

“Boss, you’ll wanna check it out.” He said.

The boss bear turned his attention to Fauve with an unamused glance. When he saw the gems around Fauve’s neck sparkle brightly he got up and walked over to him. The gorilla followed. The bear hooked a finger under the collar looked it over. Fauve held his breath, smelling day old fish in the boss’s maw and shivered in disgust. The bear hummed to himself, eyeing the stone’s authenticity.

“And what’s the problem with you? Can’t take it off yourself kid?” The boss asked.

“If I could take it off myself you think I would have by now?” Fauve said.

The other bears and Tony stared at Fauve, lightly gasping under their breathes. The boss growled at Fauve lightly, frowning. Fauve kept his arms folded, irritable and impatient. “Can you get this thing off me or not?”

The lawn grew silent. Tony broke out into a cold sweat while holding his breath and waited for the Boss’ reaction. The boss snorted and after the rabbit stared him down without fear, the boss petted his head and chuckled.

“You got moxie kid, I’ll give you that.”

Fauve grumbled lightly but said nothing as the boss went back to his seat. He snapped his fingers while looking at the gorilla. “Take em both downstairs. Tell Lenard to get that thing off his neck and to make it snappy.”

The gorilla nodded and walked over to Fauve, pushing him by the shoulder. “Hey! What do you think you’re doing?!” Fauve retorted.

Tony went next to Fauve, grabbed his arm, and yanked him before he could cause a bigger scene. “Come on pal, this way,” he hurried, making Fauve lose balance for a moment.

The two walked into the house, led by the gorilla through the kitchen. The gorilla opened a white door and walked down a few stairs into the basement. Fauve listened to the wooden steps squeak loudly under each step they took and bent forward to look down. The basement was huge, with a concrete floor, wide open space but sectioned off by curtains, and smelled of oranges and smoke. Fauve rubbed his muzzle while hearing the sound of smooth jazz coming from somewhere.

“Hey Lenard,” spoke the gorilla for the first time. “The boss says to get this one taken care of.”

A mole came out from behind the curtains, wearing glasses and holding in his hands a hammer and nail. He wore a black sheet around his neck, similar to what barbers where and he stood fairly tall for his species, around 4’8. His beady eyes smiled a little.

“Which one am I handling?” He asked.

“You’re not handling anything,” Fauve said stepping forward. “Just get this stupid collar off my neck.”

The mole looked at Fauve, a little annoyed by his lack of disrespect. When he saw the four small gems in the rabbit’s orange collar, he smiled and whistled, impressed. “How’d you get something like that?”

“Long story. Can we hurry this up? I have thing I wanna do and I’m tired of all this waiting for approval. Just take it off and be done with it?”